Negotiating Belongings
Stories of Forced Migration of Dinka Women from South Sudan
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Belonging is an issue that affects us all, but for those who have been displaced, unsettled or made ‘homeless’ by the increased movements associated with the contemporary globalising era, belonging is under constant challenge. Migration throws into question not only the belongings of those who physically migrate, but also, particularly in a postcolonial context, the belongings of those who are indigenous to and ‘settlers’ in countries of migration, subsequent generations born to migrants, and those who are left behind in countries of origin. Negotiating Belongings utilises narrative, ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches to explore the negotiations for belonging for six women from Dinka communities originating in southern Sudan. It explores belonging, particularly in relation to migration, through a consideration of belonging to nation-states, ethnic groups, community, family and kin. In exploring how the journeys towards desired belongings are haunted by various social processes such as colonisation, power, ‘race’ and gender, the author argues that negotiating belonging is a continual movement between being and becoming. The research utilises and demands different ways of listening to and really hearing the narratives of the women as embedded within non-Western epistemologies and ontologies. Through this it develops an understanding of the relational ontology, cieng, that governs the ways in which the women exist in the world. The women’s narratives alongside the author’s experience within the Dinka community provide particular ways to interrogate the intersections of being and becoming on the haunted journey to belonging. The relational ontology of cieng provides an additional way of understanding belonging, becoming and being as always relational.
Negotiating Belongings
STUDIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
Volume 30

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Scope
This series addresses the many different forms of exclusion that occur in schooling across a range of international contexts and considers strategies for increasing the inclusion and success of all students. In many school jurisdictions the most reliable predictors of educational failure include poverty, Aboriginality and disability. Traditionally schools have not been pressed to deal with exclusion and failure. Failing students were blamed for their lack of attainment and were either placed in segregated educational settings or encouraged to leave and enter the unskilled labour market. The crisis in the labor market and the call by parents for the inclusion of their children in their neighborhood school has made visible the failure of schools to include all children.

Drawing from a range of researchers and educators from around the world, Studies in Inclusive Education will demonstrate the ways in which schools contribute to the failure of different student identities on the basis of gender, race, language, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status and geographic isolation. This series differs from existing work in inclusive education by expanding the focus from a narrow consideration of what has been traditionally referred to as special educational needs to understand school failure and exclusion in all its forms. Moreover, the series will consider exclusion and inclusion across all sectors of education: early years, elementary and secondary schooling, and higher education.
Negotiating Belongings

*Stories of Forced Migration of Dinka Women from South Sudan*

Melanie Baak

*University of South Australia, Australia*
For the women, Kuol and all those who have experienced displacement from their homes.

And to my parents, Henry and Lynda. Thank you for instilling in me a love of learning.
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I met William Kuol Baak on the first day that I went to see the first family from Sudan that I ever met.¹ It was 2004. I had volunteered to support a family during their process of re-settlement in Australia, a duty that William had been undertaking until that time as one of the few members of the Mading Aweil² community in South Australia who could read, write and speak English. I took over supporting this family from the man who introduced himself to me as William. Subsequently I bumped into William occasionally when I took the family that I was assisting to visit other families, and we would greet each other cordially. I met many Jëëng³ families during the period that I was volunteering, and I was always received very warmly, and given tea, food and much hospitality. The women, men and children with whom I chatted would tell me stories of their lives, and I felt that we were engaged in intimate exchanges, friendships and knowledge sharing.

At the end of 2004 I spent four months in Nairobi. While staying with a Sudanese family who were living there as refugees, I met a man who was picking up the flight tickets for his family who had been accepted to come to Australia under Australia’s resettlement program.⁴ He said that a man called Kuol Baak in Adelaide had sponsored his family to go to Australia. At the time I had no idea who he was talking about. The man in Nairobi asked for my phone number and said that when he got to Australia he would call me. I thought nothing more of it.

Several months later I had settled back into my university studies and was in the process of moving out of home. I distinctly remember standing in the trailer outside my parent’s house as my mum came running out with the phone saying ‘I think it’s someone from Africa’. I answered the phone, and it turned out it was the man I had met in Nairobi. He had arrived in Adelaide with his family and wanted me to come and meet them. I went to visit the family with a car full of second-hand sheets, blankets, clothes and anything else my mum thought would be useful for a newly arrived family. When I arrived, I found William playing with six children in the front yard. It was then that I discovered William was in fact Kuol Baak.

I started visiting the family frequently, three or more times a week. William, who from then on became known as Kuol, practically lived there as his house was just around the corner. He would help the children with their homework and the parents with reading and filling in forms as well as just providing them with general emotional support during the sometimes challenging experience of resettlement in Australia. On my visits I would help the children with homework, take them shopping, eat with them, watch TV with them, chat, play and laugh. It was during these frequent visits that my relationship with Kuol developed. One thing lead to another, and Kuol and I ended up living together, and in the Jëëng sense this meant we were husband and wife.
This was the beginning of a difficult period in both Kuol’s and my lives; we went from being central to this family’s life, and the Jëëng community (in Kuol’s case), to being outsiders and ostracised by the community. Before Kuol and I started living together, Kuol would receive at least ten phone calls a day from people in the Jëëng community in Australia wanting assistance or just wanting to chat, invitations to community gatherings and functions, and calls from Jëëng in Africa most commonly requesting financial support. As soon as we started living together Kuol’s phone stopped ringing. I recall even checking on several occasions to make sure it was still working. We had both crossed the perceived ‘boundary’ that lay between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Kuol, by living with, and therefore in the eyes of the Jëëng marrying, a khawaja, a ‘white’ person, was considered lost to the ‘other’. And I suddenly went from being a nice ‘white’ volunteer who supported the Sudanese community but was still sufficiently distant so as not to pose a threat, to a ‘white prostitute’ who had stolen one of their good men.

When we attended community gatherings I would be shunned, and people whom I had previously drunk tea and laughed with would not even talk to me. More than anything I wanted our relationship to be recognised as a legitimate relationship between a man and a woman regardless of our skin colour and backgrounds. I wanted to be recognised as a Tiengjäng, a Dinka wife, to feel some sense of belonging within the Jëëng community, but it seemed that the harder I tried to belong, the more I was rejected.

We were excluded through the ways that the community treated Kuol, including comments such as ‘the khawaja have stolen you’, said not only to reflect the belief that as a ‘white’ woman I controlled Kuol, but also the perception that he was lost from his own people and his own culture. We were excluded through the ways the community treated me. I was no longer invited to gatherings which I had previously been invited to as a volunteer, and when I visited families whom I had previously supported, they were noticeably uneasy in my presence. While, at first appearances, Kuol and I had apparently lessened the divide between ‘black’ and ‘white’, ‘Australian’ and ‘Sudanese’, my personal everyday lived experiences told me that never before had the divide been so great. While Kuol and I had created our own little union, we ultimately felt excluded from the very communities of which we desired to be a part.

Kuol continued to tell me ‘Just wait, as time passes things will get better’. As time passed, our relationship with the community slowly started to heal. It was different, but some trust and understanding began to creep back in. My efforts to learn Thuongjäng and behave in a manner deemed appropriate for a ‘good’ Tiengjäng were recognised. Eleven years later, we have had to work hard to earn back the respect of the community members that we took for granted prior to our marriage. We have made four trips to Africa together including three to Sudan, we have three children with whom we have made a concerted effort to teach Thuongjäng and to socialise with the Jëëng community, but we are still both constantly negotiating our belonging, whether in Sudan, in other countries in Africa or in Australia. Things have
certainly changed since that fateful day in 2005 and while on one day I can think ‘Yes, I am Tiengjang, I belong’, the very next day I can feel as much an outsider as ever.

Within the Jëëng community in Australia, Kuol is still sometimes thrown the taunt that he has become a khawaja, as a criticism of some of his actions and ways of thinking which people perceive have changed because he married a ‘white’ woman, but his phone is back to ringing many times a day. My position in the community has clearly shifted from being the nice, friendly, helpful, ‘white’, volunteer girl, to being a member of the Jëëng community, a Tiengjâng who can be loved, criticised, backstabbed and adored just like any other member of the community.

Regardless of our frequent visits to Sudan and our financial support of Kuol’s family, Kuol is still considered ‘lost’ to his family and community in Sudan, and I will always be nyan khawaja—‘the white girl’. And yet every time we return to Sudan we return to our family, our friends and our community—a community of which I have become a part through my marriage and through my ongoing interactions with the people and the place. It seems that, regardless of birthright, marriage, kinship, community or any other factor, belonging remains an emotionally charged, contested desire and the question remains—is it ever really possible to belong?

NOTES

1 Since the mid 1990s, 27,679 people who identify their birth place as Sudan have migrated to Australia (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011a), with a majority having been resettled under Australia’s Humanitarian Entrant Program. The peak years of resettlement of Sudanese-born migrants was in the period from 2003 to 2006. These figures do not include the large numbers of children born to those of Sudanese origin while living in countries of exile such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt and Uganda. Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2011b) statistics suggest that since 1991, 12,279 people who resettled in Australia were of Dinka (Jëëng) ethnicity, with the main concentrations being born in Sudan (10,137), Kenya (1,141), Egypt (709), Uganda (149) and Ethiopia (123). It is therefore difficult to put an exact figure on the number of people currently living in Australia who identify as being of ‘Sudanese’ or ‘Dinka’ background. Of the 27,679 Sudanese-born people, 2,341 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011c) initially settled in South Australia. However this figure does not account for internal migrations across state borders subsequent to the initial settlement nor for those who were born of Sudanese parents in other African countries (Baak, 2011c).

2 A regionally based sub-community of southern Sudan.

3 Jëëng are a group of people originating from South Sudan who share a common language and culture with some territorial variations. Jëëng are referred to outside of Sudan as ‘Dinka’ but, as with many groups of people, they have come to be known in the West by a name with which they did not recognise themselves (Southall, 1976). There are an estimated 2.5–3 million Jëëng predominantly living in South Sudan but also dispersed globally particularly in the United States, Canada, the UK and Australia (Gurtong, 2011).

4 Under the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship Offshore Special Humanitarian Program, a sponsor who is a permanent resident or citizen in Australia may propose an applicant who is living outside their home country, and is subject to discrimination in their home country, for consideration to be accepted to Australia as a Special Humanitarian Entrant (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009).

5 I use inverted commas around words such as ‘white’, ‘black’ and ‘race’ to acknowledge both the contested nature of these terms and their status as social constructs (Maylor, 2009, Peach, 2000).
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The journey through writing this book and conducting the research has been exhilarating, devastating, joyous, heart breaking and life changing, among a myriad of other emotions. But the journey would not have been possible without the support of the host of people with whom I have felt some degree of belonging over the course of the project.

First and foremost, to the women, thank you for joining me on my journey and sharing your journeys with me. Your guidance, friendship, teaching, understanding and honesty have taught me more than you can imagine. I hope that when your children read your stories they better understand your journeys.

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Pan da, my home of birth, Mum, Dad and Steph. You started me on the journey long before any of us knew where it would lead. Yet through all the twists and turns it has taken you have never left my side. Dziękuję, спасибо, thank you.

Last, but most certainly not least, to my husband Kuol and children Akon, Achol and Yuew. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel for everything you have shared with me over the journey through this research and book writing. Wek aa ca leec is the best I can do. From the endless journeys between Port Pirie and Adelaide where gauntlets were thrown down, battles were fought, and worlds were changed, to the journeys we took together to interstate conferences and learnings in Africa, and who could forget the late night translations. The journey would not have been possible without the innumerable ways in which you have stood by me, supported me and
challenged me when I needed challenging. Kuol, your belief in me encouraged me to begin the journey. Your strength, patience and devotion saw it completed. I hope that this book is only the beginning of my journey to become a better Tiengjâng, and that in some small way it will help to improve our belongings as a transnational, ‘mixed-race’, ‘cross-cultural’ family.
EXPLANATION OF KEY DINKA WORDS

Ciɛɛŋ (written in anglicised form as cieng and pronounced chieng)—It is very difficult to formulate a concise definition of cieng, and this will be explored further in the body of the book. Jëëŋ anthropologist Francis Mading Deng (1984, 1998, 2007, 2009) provides a very broad definition. He suggests that, as a verb, cieng means ‘to look after, to order, to rule, to inhabit, to treat [a person], and to relate to a person’, and as a noun it means ‘human relations, conduct, behaviour, habit, personality, custom, law, rule, way of life, culture, essence, and nature’ (Deng, 1984, p. 185).

Dhëëŋ (written in anglicised form as dheeng and pronounced as written)—‘a concept of normative and aesthetic dignity’ encompassing ‘individual and collective pride, honour and dignity’ (Deng, 2009, p. 42).

Jääŋ (singular) Jëëŋ (plural) (written in anglicised form as Jääng (singular) Jëëng (plural) and pronounced as written)—a group of people originating from South Sudan who share a common language and culture with some territorial variations. Jëëng/Jääng is translated as meaning person or people. In everyday conversation, Jëëng people commonly refer to themselves as Muonyjäng (Jääng man). However in more recent years, particularly in academic and scholarly fields, the word Jëëng has been acknowledged as the gender-inclusive term. This term has not yet gained wide acceptance in everyday usage. Jëëng are referred to outside of Sudan as Dinka but, as with many groups of people, they have come to be known in the West by a name with which they did not recognise themselves (Southall, 1976). There is much debate over where the name Dinka originated from. Some have said that the English is a corrupted version of the Arabic name for the Jëëng which is Dengka or Dengkawi (Seligman & Seligman, 1932; Jackson, 1923). However, some groups of the ‘Arab’ north call the Jëëng by names stemming from Jëëng, such as the Baggara name Jäängi (Howell in Southall, 1976). Jëëng sources suggest that the name Dinka stemmed from the interaction between a Jëëng chief, Deng Kak, and British colonisers in the early 1900s. Deng Kak is said to have introduced himself to the British after which the British began referring to all Jëëng as Dinka (perhaps an anglicisation of Deng Kak).

Muonyjāŋ (singular) Muonyjëëŋ (plural) (written in anglicised form as Muonyjäng (singular) Muonyjëëng (plural) and pronounced as written)—the name that Jëëng (male and female) use to refer to themselves as a group of people in everyday conversation. Literally Jääŋ man/Jëëng men. Jëëng is the gender-inclusive term which has been adopted in more recent academic and scholarly fields but has not yet gained wide acceptance in everyday usage.
EXPLANATION OF KEY DINKA WORDS

Khawaja—Arabic word adopted by Jëëng to refer to ‘white’ people.

Pan Muonyjäng (written in anglicised form as Pan Muonyjâng and pronounced as written)—literally means the home (pan) of the man (muony) of the people (jâng). Originally used to refer to any part or the whole of the territories inhabited by Jëëng. However usage since colonisation has changed so that Pan Muonyjâng now specifically refers to village (rural) areas of Dinka lands, and towns are referred to by their individual names.

Thuongjâng (written in anglicised form as Thuongjâng and pronounced as written)—the Jëëng language (commonly referred to in English as Dinka). As with the words Jääng and Muonyjâng, the phrase Thong Muonyjâng is most commonly used in everyday usage. However, Thuongjâng has been recognised as the gender-inclusive term in recent scholarly fields.

Tik (singular—becomes tieng when combined with another word), Diäär (plural)—woman or wife. A female only becomes tik once she has had sexual intercourse for the first time, which is traditionally not meant to occur until she is married.

Tiengjâng (singular) Diäärjâng (plural) (written in anglicised form as Tiengjâng (singular) Diäärjâng (plural) and pronounced as written)—literally the wife of the people. Means both Jëëng woman and Jëëng wife. Jëëng do not differentiate linguistically between a woman who is Tiengjâng by birth and a woman who is Tiengjâng by marriage.
MAPS

Figure 1. Map of Africa (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2008)

The location of Sudan and the main countries of initial asylum of the women, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda.¹
The states of Sudan as defined by the British including Bahr el Ghazal (spelt Bahr al Ghazal on this map), the original state with which all of the women in this research had a connection.
Figure 3. States of South Sudan 1993–2015

This map shows Northern Bahr El Ghazal, the region with which all of the women identified (referred to as Mading Aweil by the women). Also on this map is Lokichoggio, the processing centre at which some of the women were registered as refugees before being transferred to Kakuma refugee camp.

NOTE

1 Sudan was divided into the new countries of Sudan and South Sudan on July 9th, 2011. However, for the substantive period of this research including the data collection period, as well as for most of the duration of the lives of the women involved in the project Sudan was one country. As such, the map illustrates the pre-2011 country of Sudan.
CHAPTER 1

HAUNTED JOURNEYS

Being, Becoming and Belonging

All lands are haunted. Every place bears its ghosts. All flesh has a surface that is penetrated. All borders are real but provisional. We are all hybrid, on a journey somewhere. And all the nations of the world—all its races, religions, creeds—travel constantly in search of certainty. On that journey we set down anchor lines, roots, traces of neglect and hope. These journeys—call them songlines if you must—create a web that we get tangled in, connecting us, joining the reluctant masses, even as we claim separation, difference, distance. To acknowledge such connections, however, is not to spin a humanist tale. It isn’t to make a claim for universals. Rather it is to acknowledge the palimpsest of journeys and the way they shape and texture interactions. (Turcotte, 2007, pp. 110–111)

INTRODUCTION

The concept of belonging has been frequently explored in recent years (see for example Anthias, 2015; hooks, 2009, Pries & Pauls, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Probyn, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2009, 2011), particularly with relation to migration. Belonging is an issue that affects us all, but for those who have been displaced, unsettled or made ‘homeless’ by the increased movements associated with the contemporary globalising era, ‘the ideas and practices associated with belonging are under constant challenge’ (Ilcan, 2002, p. 1). As Pollock (1994) has suggested, ‘we all have “a dream of belonging”, made acute not because of tourism but precisely because of the twentieth century’s epidemic condition of migration, refugeeism, diaspora’ (p. 84). Migration throws into question not only the belongings of those who physically migrate, but also, particularly in a postcolonial context, of the indigenous and the ‘settlers’ of destination countries, of subsequent generations born to migrants, and of those who are left behind in countries of origin.

If we all have a ‘dream of belonging’ (Pollock, 1994, p. 84), a thorough questioning of what this belonging entails for particular individuals is timely and necessary. Belonging has frequently been examined through isolated consideration of disparate categories such as citizenship, nationality, gender, ethnicity, community and family, but how do these multiple and sometimes conflicting belongings operate at one and the same time for people who have been displaced and unsettled by the current era of migration? This book considers this question by exploring the negotiations
of belonging of six Diääřjäŋ (Dinka women/wives) across multiple categories, in multiple locations, through stories of whole lives. Five of these Diääřjäŋ were born in the Dinka lands of southern Sudan before subsequently migrating to Australia through a variety of pathways. The sixth is me, who as a ‘white’ Australian woman who married a Dinka man has, in the words of my mother-in-law, ‘raan cë ye cök jɔt bë met wun jëëŋ’ (started a journey to join/become a Dinka person).

This introduction begins with an overview of the development and conceptualisation of my research, before introducing the main theoretical tools and lenses that I utilise and explore throughout the book. The ideas that are outlined in this introduction continue to grow, shift, unfold and ‘become’ throughout the remainder of the book.

Initially this research grew from a desire to explore and present the stories I had heard from many Diääřjäŋ in the period since I commenced my involvement with the Jëëng community in 2004. The stories I had heard were full of difficulty, trauma, hardship, injustice, pain and exclusion, yet these stories also revealed resiliency, agency, love, luck, perseverance, determination, camaraderie and humanity. The stories that I wanted to tell were those that were largely absent from discourses of Sudanese migration to Australia, of refugee women and of African women. They were stories of Diääřjäŋ who continued to negotiate their everyday lives when the everyday seemed impossible. To explore these stories I considered the narrative stories of life of five women (Nyanut, Abuk, Nyalong, Achol and Atong) originally from southern Sudan. As I began to explore these narratives, two challenges became increasingly apparent.

First, the women’s narratives clearly illustrate, as Gordon (2008) has articulated, that ‘even those who live in the most dire circumstances possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing them as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents’ (p. 4). Gordon’s further observes that ‘[i]t has always baffled me why those most interested in understanding and changing the barbaric domination that characterizes our modernity often—not always— withheld from the very people they are most concerned with the right to complex personhood’ (p. 4). The challenge became how to understand and present the women’s narratives in a way which acknowledged this right to complex personhood.

To acknowledge and articulate the complex personhoods of the women was a challenging task in the academic realm where, as Krog (2011) describes it, one becomes aware of ‘how the quality of “on-the-ground experience” is “being crushed into a dispirited nothingness through weak English and the specific format of academic papers’, how ‘an important story’ easily dies ‘within the corset of an academic paper, how a crucial observation’ is ‘nothing without a theory, and how a valuable experience dissolved outside a discipline’ (p. 383). Respecting the complex personhood of the women required a particular way of hearing, doing and writing the research which will be outlined in Chapter 2. It required a form of interdisciplinarity described by Barthes (cited in Clifford & Marcus, 1986):
Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it’s not enough to choose a ‘subject’ (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one. (p. 1)

As Gordon (2008) argues, this type of interdisciplinarity is ‘[n]ot owned by anyone yet, this interdisciplinarity is in the public domain, which does not guarantee anything except that there is still some room to claim rather than discipline its meaning into existence’ (p. 7). Negotiating belongings draws on fields as diverse as migration, ethnic, kinship, family, critical whiteness, African feminist, globalisation, cultural and gender studies, and on sociology, African philosophy and literature. All of these fields are overburdened with particular theories, particular ways of knowing and particular ways of doing, that obscure the complexities that are inherent in the everyday lived experiences of the women. So, while this book draws on all of these fields, it neither originates from nor sits comfortably within any of them. Rather Negotiating belongings grew from a desire to be able to understand and articulate adequately the complex personhoods of six women, the result of which has been ‘a new object that belongs to no one’ (Barthes, cited in Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 1). In addition to this interdisciplinarity, respecting the complex personhoods of the women has also required a particular constellation of theoretical tools which I will outline later in the introduction.

The second challenge that arose as the research proceeded was a recognition that I had another, perhaps initially unconscious, research interest. As I began to listen to the women’s narratives, what struck me time and again were the portions of their stories which centred on desires and negotiations for belonging. On questioning what it was that drew me to these narratives of belonging I was forced to acknowledge that, as a woman who had ‘started a journey to join/become a Dinka person’, my desire to understand the women’s lives went much deeper than simply wanting to tell their stories. Rather, I thought, or even hoped, that through listening to and better understanding the other women’s stories I would learn something that would make my own journey as a becoming Tiengjäng (Dinka woman/wife) somewhat easier. In addition, I found that to understand the women’s narratives of belonging adequately also had to reflect on my own journey that had made my desire to belong so strong. On the whole, the experiences of ‘white’ women in ‘mixed-race’ relationships are hugely under-researched, leaving women such as myself to forge our own alliances and make our way through somewhat isolated struggles. While this book is not singularly or explicitly an exploration of the deeply troubling, vexed and compromised issue of my journey as a ‘white’ woman ‘being/becoming other’ through my ‘mixed-race’ marriage, it is haunted by my journey and experiences as a becoming Tiengjäng.

Negotiating belongings therefore became a dual exploration, as it became clear that I could not hear the narratives of the women outside of my own experiences,
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desires and negotiations for belonging. The book explores the narrative stories of lives of the five women alongside my own autoethnographic reflections. While my narrative autoethnography overlaps and intertwines with the women’s narratives, it is important to note that I am not aiming for any sort of equivalence between mine and the women’s stories. Rather I interweave my narrative with theirs as a means to understand my own relationship with the women and their narratives, as well as adding layers to the theoretical concepts which unfold throughout the book. Through the six narratives, the book examines various sites of belonging: from belonging within and among friends to belonging in nation-states and ethnic groups, from ‘glocal’ place-based belongings to belonging within and among family and kin. Exploring how the journeys towards desired belongings are haunted by various ‘social’ processes such as colonisation, power, ‘race’, class, gender and sexuality, I argue that human beings are constantly moving between being and becoming, a movement which is shaped not only by the self, but also by others.

There are three main arguments that are explored throughout *Negotiating belongings*. Each argument unfolds in a different way. The first and most salient argument that is made through a variety of different explorations is that belonging is not fixed, but is a continual negotiation and process of becoming. This argument builds on the work of Elspeth Probyn (1996) and Ann-Marie Fortier (2000), who consider belonging as an ongoing process negotiated through the combined processes of being and becoming. This book offers new ways of considering the intersections between being, becoming and belonging. Through examining belonging to different sites from friendship (Chapter 2), to the nation-state (Chapter 3), to gendered ethnicities (Chapter 4), to ‘glocal’ place-based communities (Chapter 5), to families and kin (Chapter 6), *Negotiating belongings* presents ways to rethink some of the taken-for-granted notions around belonging. By considering the experiences of belonging through the diverse and multiple in-depth narratives of migration of six Diäärjäng, the book provides increased depth and layers of understanding to what is a continually developing and increasingly important body of academic work in the fields of belonging and migration. Each woman’s story of life told a different narrative of the complexities of being, becoming and desired belongings which shifted and changed throughout the journey through her life. The women described a shifting in importance of different modes of belonging depending on context, place and people, and the women’s stories were never simply about feeling a sense of belonging and inclusion, but also very much about exclusion and not belonging.

Each of the women’s narratives focused on journeys toward particular belongings which held the most significance for that woman, either through the difficulties and challenges it had given her in her life, or through the support and comfort that site of belonging provided her. Abuk’s narrative centred around difficulties in negotiating a sense of belonging on a national level in Sudan, then in Egypt (the country in which she initially sought asylum), and finally in Australia. Nyalong’s narrative focused on her challenges in negotiating belonging within the ‘glocal’ community
of Mading Aweil in exile in Kenya following the death of her husband. Atong’s narrative centred on place and regionally based belonging, as she married a man who was from a different region of Sudan than her family of birth. Achol’s narrative centred on several sites of belonging including the challenges in being the granddaughter of an immigrant to the Dinka lands as well as how she negotiated her gender-based belonging as a Dinka woman who found it difficult to become pregnant. Nyanut’s narrative centred on the importance of her immediate family (father, mother and siblings) in maintaining a sense of belonging, and how this had been challenged and impeded as a direct result of the civil war in Sudan, her experiences in exile and finally her resettlement in Australia. Finally, my own narrative centred around a perpetual search for belonging which led me on the journey to and through this research. Each chapter of the book explores one particular site to which the women described desiring and negotiating their belongings.

The second of my main arguments is a demand for ‘new’ ways of doing research that encompass ‘new’ and different ways of listening to and really hearing the narratives of the ‘subaltern’ (Spivak, 1988). This argument draws on the work of Antjie Krog (2008, 2011) and is most salient in Chapters 2 and 7. Throughout the book I use the term ‘new’ in inverted commas when referring to ‘new’ ways of doing, hearing and knowing in research. I use ‘new’ in acknowledgement that what I am calling for is not really new. For over thirty years, scholars (particularly postcolonial and feminist) such as Clifford and Marcus (1986), Denzin (1995) and Haraway (1991) have been calling for new and different ways of doing research that acknowledge the partiality and situatedness of knowledge, and the difficulties and challenges of really hearing research participants. While the approach I am calling for is not really new, this research approach still remains to be taken up successfully and widely within the fields of research in which this research is situated. As such, I continue to refer to it as ‘new’. For me, this ‘new’ way of doing research required that I engage a methodological process which included ethnography, autoethnography and listening to what I call the ‘living oral (hi)stories of life’ of the five women. These ‘new’ ways of ‘doing’ research allow and even require an intense challenge to many of the ways in which ‘subaltern’ groups are understood and ‘known’. Hearing the stories of the women who participated in this research through these ‘new’ ways of listening challenges many of the ways in which these women are commonly understood whether as, among other things, women, refugees, Africans, ‘black’ or mothers. Hearing the narratives in this way returns to the women a respect for their complex personhoods. In addition, these ‘new’ ways of doing research involve a degree of reflexivity which recognises the inability of the researcher ever to write themselves out of their research. This book explores both the challenges and necessity of this reflexivity, as well as providing an example of one way to articulate this reflexivity. Hearing narratives in these ‘new’ ways also requires particular translations and interpretations that are often not possible through hearing these stories through Western epistemologies and Western lenses. Learning how to understand a narrative through an epistemology that is not embedded in Western
ontology and philosophy is perhaps the most challenging aspect of these ‘new’ ways of hearing. However, to be able to do so ultimately leads to the third revelation of the book.

While the links between belonging and the negotiated journey of becoming receive most attention throughout the body of the book, the third main argument was initially ‘hidden’ by the limitations of my own Western epistemologies. As the research evolved, and I gave precedence to the importance of ‘new’ ways of listening, a particular aspect emerged as the most important in understanding not only the women’s negotiations for belonging, but the very ways in which they ‘are’ in the world. Understanding the ways in which Nyanut, Abuk, Achol, Atong and Nyalong negotiated their belongings was not possible without an understanding of the Jëëng ontology that governed their ways of being in the world. As such, this book is also an exploration of cieng, a key concept of relationality for Jëëng that emphasises a relational ontology underpinned by a relational ethical responsibility which underscores the way in which Jëëng exist in the world. The salience of this ontology became clear towards the conclusion of the research process and writing of the book. As such, the concept unfolds throughout the book with a detailed exploration in Chapter 7. The women’s narratives and my own experiences within the Jëëng community provided particular ways to interrogate the intersections of being and becoming on the haunted journey to belonging, and the relational ontology of cieng provided an added layer to the understanding that was developed.

The following sections introduce the three main theoretical tools and lenses that are utilised and explored throughout the book. The first concept which is outlined is belonging and its intersections with being and becoming. Second, the phrase ‘haunted journeys’, which includes the theoretical ideas of both haunting and journeying, is introduced. Finally, the Jëëng concept of cieng is explored. All of these sections serve only as introductions to these concepts, and all are further built upon throughout the book.

**DESIRING BELONGING AND ITS POLITICS**

In common usages, the term belonging moves from ‘being the property of someone, something’ to the sense of ‘fitting in socially’, ‘being a member’, and that ‘belongings’ designates ‘possessions’ and ‘baggage’. Belonging for me conjures a deep insecurity about the possibility of really belonging, truly fitting in. But then, the term ‘belongings’ also forefronts the ways in which these yearnings to fit in will always be diverse: at times joyous, at times painful, at times destined to fail. Perhaps more immediately, belonging brings forth images of leaving, carting one’s possessions and baggage from place to place. Thus, while belonging may make one think of arriving, it also always carries the scent of departure—it marks the interstices of being and going. (Probyn, 1996, p. 2)
While experiences of belonging have been extensively examined in recent years,\(^7\) the meaning of the concept itself is often implicitly assumed and is certainly not uniform. My conceptual understanding of belonging resonates with the above quotation from Probyn.\(^6\) Probyn emphasises the diversity of the term belonging, but also signifies most of the key dimensions. First, she uses the word ‘belongings’ to illustrate the multiplicity of belonging. Secondly, she refers to the relationality of belonging through connections to people, places and objects. Thirdly, she alludes to both the affective dimensions of belonging and the politics of belonging by emphasising the insecurities and instabilities of belonging. Finally, she observes that belonging is linked with the movement of leaving and arriving. This emphasises the processual nature of belonging, its ongoing development and negotiation through movement. I draw on these points to elaborate my understanding of belonging below.

First, belongings are multiple. ‘People can “belong” in many different ways and to many different objects of attachments’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006a, p. 199). This multiplicity of belongings was evident in the narratives of all the women, who described negotiating belongings on many different levels—from the nation-state, to the ethnic group, to the family. However, it is also through this multiplicity that belonging is frequently conflated with identity, and it is important here to clarify and differentiate between the two briefly. While identity is undeniably linked to the question of belonging (Mason, 2007, p. 274), belonging ‘cannot be reduced to identities and identifications’ (Kannabiran, Vieten, & Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 189). As Anthias (2006) has argued, it is possible to identify and not feel that one belongs or, alternatively, to feel like one belongs but not identify with a particular group. Additionally, Probyn (1996) has argued that the idea of identity describes ‘categories of belonging’ (pp. 152–153) and therefore does not engage with the singular specificity in which individuals and groups live out their belongings. Fortier’s (2000) description is particularly useful in clarifying the intersections between belonging and identity. She asserts that ‘[i]ncluded in the formation of belonging, then, is identity as a momentary positionality which is always already becoming’ (p. 2). The idea of identity as a ‘momentary positionality’ in the ongoing negotiation/formation of belonging is therefore central to understanding the connections between being, becoming and belonging.

Secondly, belonging is a process which is always located in place (hooks, 2009). Reflecting on her first experiences of a geographical shift from her home in Kentucky to university in California, hooks (2009) recalls ‘I felt for the first time the way in which geographical origins could separate citizens of the same nation. I did not feel a sense of belonging at Stanford University, I constantly felt like an unwanted outsider’ (p. 12). Probyn (2005) uses the phrase ‘being out-of-place’ to describe this process of ‘when you feel like a fish out of water’, a process ‘the body registers in social and cultural contexts when it doesn’t belong’ (p. xvi). For the women involved in my research, belongings were always negotiated in places and place always underscored the recollections in which belongings were recalled.
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From their descriptions of exclusion from national belonging in Sudan, based in part on geographical location as southern Sudanese in a nation dominated politically and economically by northern Sudanese (Chapter 3) to their ‘glocal’ belongings in Australia which were shaped by allegiances to small, local regions and villages of birth in Sudan (Chapter 5), place-based belongings permeated their stories.

Thirdly, belonging occurs not only in place, but also among people (Nsamenang, 2008; hooks, 2009; Rose, 2000; Probyn, 1996; Garbutt, 2009). hooks (2009) also alludes to these relational experiences of belonging. She recalls her efforts to build a sense of belonging with a ‘white’ male student from a Mormon background at Stanford, a young man who was also ‘more often than not alone and isolated’ (p. 14). This negotiation for belonging was based on a shared religious upbringing in which she suggests:

We talked to one another and endeavoured to make each other feel less like strangers in a strange land. We talked scripture. But talking scripture was not powerful enough to erase the barriers created by racism that had taught us to fear and beware difference. (p. 14)

This begs the question, then, when are the similarities between the self and the other enough to override the differences so that a sense of belonging can be felt? Are the differences between people from different ‘race’, class and gender backgrounds, for example, so great that there can never be any sense of belonging across these divides? The women’s narratives posed more questions than answers in relation to belonging within and among groups of people. From belonging among the Bëëng community in Australia (Chapter 4) to belonging among kin and family (Chapter 6), reflections on belonging with relation to ‘others’ all signified that ‘belonging cannot be an isolated and individual affair’ (Probyn, 1996, p. 13).

This relational nature of belonging means that belonging can never be stable. It is ‘tenacious and fragile’ (Probyn, 1996, p. 8) and performed in the knowledge that one can be excluded from belonging just as quickly as one is included. In this way, negotiating belongings is always processual. One’s belonging is never fixed. This vulnerability and instability of belonging also results in the strong affective connections and connotations that belonging holds (Kannabiran, Vieten, & Yuval-Davis, 2006; Anthias, 2006; Ilcan, 2002). As Probyn (1996) has acknowledged, belonging ‘designates a profoundly affective manner of being, always performed with the experience of being within and in-between sets of social relations’ (p. 13). This book considers how these affective dimensions of belonging underscore the desires of the women to belong and ultimately unsettles the very possibility of ‘ever really and truly belonging’ (Probyn, 1996, p. 8).

The instability of belonging also results in what has frequently been termed the ‘politics of belonging’ (Alinia, 2004; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Crowley, 1998; Geschiere & Nyamnjo, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 2006a). Several authors have argued that it is important to differentiate between belonging and the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1998; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006a, 2009, 2011). As
Yuval-Davis (2006a) has argued, ‘[b]elonging tends to be naturalized and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way’ (p. 197; see also Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006). The women in this research described various ways in which they felt excluded from belonging across all levels, from the nation-state to the family, and through this exclusion their belongings were threatened and became politicised.

Crowley (1998) has described the politics of belonging as ‘the dirty work of boundary maintenance’ (p. 30). Yuval-Davis (2006a) has elaborated on this by explaining that ‘[t]he boundaries that the politics of belonging is concerned with are the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into “us” and “them”’ (p. 204). The borders and boundaries that mark and maintain the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, who does or does not belong to a particular group, are fraught with complexity. To begin with, the types of borders are limitless. There are ‘geographical borders, cultural borders, national borders, linguistic borders, generic borders, specular borders, and disciplinary borders’ (Henderson, 1995b, p. 2), borders as metaphors ‘for psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, class and racialised boundaries’ (Brah, 1996, p. 198), and borders ‘between outside and inside, self and other, public and private, subject and object’ (Henderson, 1995b, p. 2). Borders are

arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership—claims to ‘mine’, ‘yours’ and ‘theirs’—are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over. (Brah, 1996, p. 198)

These borders and boundaries are not fixed, which is in part what makes belonging so malleable. The very nature of their social construction and maintenance determines that there is a continual ‘staking out’ and contestation of their location—not only by those located inside the borders, but also by those who are outside.

Brah (1996) has emphasised, however, that the critical questions lie in interrogating ‘when and where these borders are imagined and instituted, or how they may shift, change, weaken or dissolve’ (p. 175). Interrogating these questions provides insight into how the politics of belonging operates. This is central to my argument. This research explores the lives of six women as they move, shift and are shifted across borders and boundaries (both physical and metaphorical), negotiate and desire various belongings and blur the boundaries between being and becoming. The book provides a means for rethinking and adding depth to some of the ideas around belonging which are currently taken for granted, primarily the notion of belonging as a process of becoming (Fortier, 2000; Probyn, 1996), as well as the multiplicity of beings, becomings and belongings.
INTERLUDE I: ON DESIRING BELONGING

As I have been considering the belongings of the other women I am haunted by my own experiences of belonging and not belonging. I am repeatedly drawn back to an issue that I have tried to ignore. I am not quite sure how or even if I should examine it in light of the women’s stories. The women’s words of suffering and hunger throughout the war and their years in exile are always heard by me as something that was done to them; something outside of their control. I can see the larger picture of what led to their suffering and periods of hunger. On the other hand, because I lived my own experience of suffering and hunger and because of the stereotypical connotations that go along with these, I feel almost self-indulgent considering it in light of what I have heard of the women’s experiences. However, finally something forced me to.

It was a day I’d spent studying like any other, mostly contemplating Jëëng identity, examining some early writings of British colonisers about Jëëng women. I went to pick up my daughter Akon from childcare and thought I’d grab a copy of Adelaide’s Child, a magazine for parents about all things child related. I scanned the articles on the first page and found one about recovering from anorexia nervosa. I flicked through the magazine until I came to the article; a sketch of a skeletal young woman sitting at the bottom of a well greeted me. I started reading. One paragraph, I stopped, turned away. Started reading again, the bottom dropped out of my stomach. I turned away again. I made it through one more paragraph before tears came into my eyes. I walked away. I could not keep reading. I sat with the article open on the table next to me but struggled to keep reading. This is what has shaped a part of my life, my own search for a sense of belonging, and as much as I think I’ve recovered, reading the article written by another anorexia survivor brings back memories I’d rather forget. I thank Rachael Hyde (2009) for putting into words what I can still so painfully and vividly remember. Her words ring true to my experience down to every last word. ‘I had lost my health, my hair, my self-esteem, my energy, my height, my ambition, my friends, my ability to think, to reason, my trust in myself, others’ trust in me, my pride—in short, my identity’ (p. 14). This sentence made me realise that if I am to consider my own negotiations for belonging, emphasised by my identities at given points, I must consider what first alerted me to the intense desire I have to belong.

I had to examine all of my previous experiences of belonging and not belonging before I could understand my journey of becoming a Tiengjäng. I do not see myself still as having an ‘anorexic’ identity, and I also do not feel as if I have a sense of belonging with survivors of anorexia. Perhaps because anorexia is such a competitive, distortive and selfish illness, it is impossible to see yourself as having connections and a shared identity with any other sufferers. Plus, to me, anorexia is a negative, self-destructive identity, one that I no longer wish to have any sense of belonging with. I do not want to go to great lengths to examine my experience with
anorexia, but I do want to acknowledge my own personal battle to, as Hyde (2008) puts it, ‘regain an identity for yourself’ (p. 14).

BEING AND BECOMING: THE CHANGING SAME

The changing same seizes the ways in which the tension between having been, being, and becoming is continually negotiated, conjugated and resolved. (Fortier, 2000, p. 49)

In the current era of increased global movement there is a growing trend towards understanding identities and belongings as mobile and not fixed; as processes of becoming (see for example Malkki, 1995a; Hall, 1996; Sarup, 1994; Kannabiran, Vieten, & Yuval-Davis, 2006). We are all engaged in journeys through life that in various ways define, shift and change who we are, who we want to be and how we are seen by the world. However, this understanding of identities (and belongings) as transient processes of becoming obscures that fact that, right here and now, we are only ever being.9 There are some things that we just are, that we cannot change (as much as we may like). For example, I am ‘white’, and the five other women are ‘black’.10 However, what this ‘whiteness’ or ‘blackness’ means shifts and changes depending on locational politics which vary over time and space. At other times, we may become something that we have never previously been, for example by marrying Kuol I began my journey to becoming a Tiengjäng. At certain points in time, in certain places, we are who we are, but these beings continue to be haunted, negotiated processes of becoming.

Arguably, being and becoming operate hand in hand. At certain points in time we must simply be, whether or not we are content with what this being means. On this theme Paul Gilroy (2000) uses the idea of ‘the changing same’ (p. 129).11 To me this phrase emphasises both being, as the sameness we have once been or continue to be, and becoming, as the changing movement and shift towards becoming something else.

The changing same is not some invariant essence that gets enclosed subsequently in a shape-shifting exterior with which it is casually associated. It is not the sign of an unbroken, integral inside protected by a camouflaged husk … The same is present, but how can we imagine it as something other than an essence generating the merely accidental? Iteration is the key to this process. The same is retained without needing to be reified. It is ceaselessly reprocessed. It is maintained and modified in what becomes a determinedly nontraditional tradition, for this is not tradition as closed or simple repetition. (Gilroy, 2000, p. 129)
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Through the idea of the ‘changing same’, where neither being nor becoming can exist without the other, it becomes clearer, for example, how the always already there ‘blackness’ or ‘whiteness’ has changed in relation to how it is understood or shapes the lives of the women depending on location and other circumstances surrounding their positionality at any given moment (Wright, 2004). Exploring the various sites in which the women have negotiated and desired their belongings illustrates this quivery nature of being and becoming, and illustrates that belonging is an ongoing negotiation which is always produced ‘through the combined processes of being and becoming’ (Fortier, 2000, p. 2).

HAUNTED JOURNEYS

The women told their recollections of being, becoming and belonging in times and places that were at times far from where these experiences originated. Therefore I needed a conceptual framework that would help understand the nature of these retrograde reflections and how they shaped the present. Utilising theories of journeying (hooks, 2009; Clifford, 1997, 1989) and haunting (Gordon, 2008) I consider the undeniably haunted belongings of myself and the five other women—belongings which not only journey across spatial and temporal transitions but belongings that are haunted by many of the larger ‘social’ phenomena that have shaped the era of modernity: colonisation, ‘race’, power, gender and class.

Journeying

[R]econstructing an archaeology of memory makes return possible, the journey to a place we can never call home even as we reinhabit it to make sense of present locations. Such journeying cannot be fully encompassed by conventional notions of travel. (hooks, 2009, p. 99)

Travel theories have proliferated in recent years and these diverse observations on travel reflect the unsettled nature of an era ‘[w]hen the “Third World” is no longer maintained at a distance “out there” but begins to appear “in here”’ (Chambers, 1994b, p. 2). This is an era in which the world has experienced significant global restructuring, resulting in many new kinds of movement (Hart, 2005). From the way that theories travel (Said, 1983), to the way that ethnographic research is affected by movements of people (Clifford, 1989, 1997), to travel as a way of understanding ‘race’ (hooks, 2009), travel theories have permeated the social sciences. As Knapp (2005) suggests, theories of travel have become their ‘own exemplary case of a fast moving idea’ (p. 250).

Following hooks (2009), I utilise the term journey in preference to travel. hooks (2009) suggests that forms of travel undertaken by people which encompass the terrors of experiences such as ‘rites of passage, immigration, enforced migration, relocation, enslavement, and homelessness’ (p. 100) cannot be easily evoked
under the word travel with its leisurely connotations. The journeying of the women—enforced flight from devastation, destruction and danger, as well as my own journeying—at times physical, at other times metaphorical but always confrontational, is best understood through the idea of journeying which recuperates travel theory from the ‘conventional notions of travel’ (p. 99), providing a more inclusive concept for understanding the complex journeys of the women.15

Travel, journeying and movement also allow for an undoing of the notion that belonging is always rooted in place. As Clifford (1997) has observed, there has long been an assumption in the social sciences that ‘social existence is, or should be, centered in circumscribed places … Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes’ (p. 3). However, recent efforts in travel theory have worked to unsettle this notion, with more and more theorists recognising that, as Chambers (1994b) has described,

[our sense of being, of identity and language, is experienced and extrapolated from movement: the ‘I’ does not pre-exist this movement and then go out into the world, the ‘I’ is constantly being formed and reformed in such movement in the world … In this movement our sense of identity can never be resolved. I might self-consciously try to halt the journey and seek shelter in the comforting categories of being … But the movement in which we all are caught, the languages and histories into which we are thrown, and in which we appear, lies beyond such individual volition. (pp. 24–25)

For the women in this research, it was precisely the displacement from roots and the thrust into routes that catapulted them into their ongoing search for belonging. They are constantly renegotiating the ‘I’ in the movements which they undertake; from home to exile to diaspora, the ‘I’ is constantly reconstructed to ‘make sense of the present location’ (hooks, 2009, p. 99). This is not only an experience common to the five women originally from Sudan who were forcibly displaced from the place of their roots, but also for me as the grandchild of immigrants to Australia, living in a colonial nation to which I, as a ‘white’ immigrant Australian, can claim no roots. In fact in the current era rootlessness seems to affect virtually everyone to some extent: ‘Virtually everywhere one looks, the processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex’ (Clifford, 1997, p. 3).

Haunting

While journeying provides a framework for considering the movement of people, material objects and concrete ideas across places and time, the concept of haunting allows for a consideration of what Gordon (2008) has referred to as the ‘ghostly matters’ that haunt. She describes haunting as a ‘way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life’ (p. xvi). In the foreword to Gordon’s book, Radway (2008) suggests that Gordon is calling for a new sociology that acknowledges that individual ‘subjectivity is always and inevitably
haunted by the social and most especially by those repressions, disappearances, absences, and losses enforced by the conditions of modern life’ (pp. x–xi). By observing and listening to the ‘echoes and murmurs of that which has been lost but which is still present among us in the form of intimations, hints, suggestions, and portents’ (p. x), haunting provides a way to ‘reveal and to learn from subjugated knowledge’ (Gordon, 2008, p. xvii), the knowledge that is always already present, but repressed, disqualified or marginalised.

‘[T]o be haunted’, argues Turcotte (2007), ‘is to be visited by ghosts’ (p. 111). He continues, suggesting that:

Ghosts, one would have to say, are as present today as they’ve always been. They stand as an intangible fact, a luminal presence between the here and now, the now and then … They reassure us only of the insubstantiality of borders, the lie of geography, the myth of purity, the fragility of place. And in a contemporary time framed by the certainties of poststructuralist uncertainties, they are the only universal force—signatures that write across languages, races, bloodlines and maps. The ghost is a tattoo that lives on, within, and beyond the skin. It marks, it covers over; it transforms through its inscription. And yet it is profoundly and at once a part of and alien to—the self and the not self; the other and the same. (p. 109)

These ‘ghostly matters’, the ghosts and spectres of the past, are ‘everywhere but the ground’ (Michaels, 1996, p. 8). They are ‘in our dreams, our language, our ideas, our habits and rituals, our books and paintings’ (Ruitenber, 2009, p. 297); they are in our stories, our memories, they are everywhere—if we only learn to observe them and to listen to what they are telling us. The question then becomes, how ‘do we work productively with the spirits that course through our veins: that infect us, reflect us, threaten and reassure?’ (Turcotte, 2007, p. 111).

In order to work productively with these spirits and ghosts, I have endeavoured to adopt and adapt Gordon’s new sociology—her ‘ghostly matters’—as a method of knowledge production and a way of writing that could represent the damage and the haunting of the historical alternatives and thus richly conjure, describe, narrate, and explain the liens, the costs, the forfeits, and the losses of modern systems of abusive power in their immediacy and worldly significance. (2008, p. xvii)

By considering the hauntings of modern systems of abusive power including colonialism, racism, capitalism and patriarchy I have drafted a meditation that acknowledges, understands, represents and narrates the ghosts that haunt the always-present past of six women’s lives. These ‘ghostly matters’ are present in the times, events and places that led to the initial displacement of the women from their homes, they are present in their reflections on exile in their countries of initial asylum and they continue to permeate their experiences in Australia. Following, acknowledging
and writing about these ghosts has, for me, been a profound experience which has significantly shifted my ways of thinking and understanding of both my own and the women’s narratives. Considering these hauntings has located ‘a profound and durable practice of thinking and being and acting toward eliminating the conditions that produce the nastiness in the first place’ (Gordon, 2008, p. xvii).

Turcotte’s (2007) observation that these ghostly matters ‘infect us, reflect us, threaten and reassure’ (p. 111) encapsulates the multiple affective dimensions of haunting and ghosts. My understanding and use of these terms does not include just the negative connotation that is frequently associated with Western ghosts. Haunting and ghostly matters are not purely negative, but involve side by side, contradictory affect; both affections and fear, reassurance and loss. Haunting and ghostly matters should not be read and understood as having a singular meaning.

At times, both the women’s journeys and my own took us to locations and through experiences which forced us to change the places and groups with which we desired belonging. For example, my relationship with Kuol resulted in me desiring belonging within the Jëëng community, while the women’s migration to Australia resulted in them desiring belonging as Australians. Our journeys towards these desired belongings were haunted, and these hauntings made belonging to particular groups exceptionally complex. Appiah (2005) argues that there are constraints on how we may live that derive from our historical circumstances and our physical and mental endowments: I was born into the wrong family to be a Yoruba chief and with the wrong body for motherhood; I am too short to be a successful professional basketball player, insufficiently dexterous to be a concert pianist. But even when we have taken these things into account, we know that each human life starts out with many possibilities … And for a person of a liberal disposition these choices belong, in the end, to the person whose life it is. (p. xii)

Appiah, however, does not appear to take into consideration the full extent to which historical circumstances and physical and mental endowments limit the ability for some people to make choices about what sort of life they want to live and to which groups they wish to belong. While every person endeavours to ‘make’ their lives (Appiah, 2005, p. 15), some lives are haunted to such an extent that there are severe limits to just how they ‘make’ their lives.

The stories of the women in my research illustrate that certain lives are haunted in a way that ultimately limits how they can ‘make’ their lives. While they continue to negotiate and resist many of the ghosts that haunt them, the ghosts are always already there. To be born with ‘black’ skin or ‘white’ skin, for example, can haunt individuals in particular ways—these ghosts took centuries to come into being and will take centuries of resistance to cease to exist.
The particular moment detailed below forced me to consider the prevalence of ‘ghostly matters’ in my own everyday life. It also made me think beyond the scope of my haunted belonging in relation not only to Jëëng, but to the readings of our bodies in haunted spaces. In this moment I was forced to realise the haunted nature of the space in which I live. Australia is haunted by the ghosts of a colonial past. To acknowledge the space in which I am writing, researching and living means also to acknowledge the haunted nature of the space in which we exist. This was a haunted journey in which I became profoundly aware of the nature of what I was researching.

I was catching the bus from Port Pirie to Adelaide for an Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Symposium (ironic considering what follows). The bus had driven through from Ceduna, some 550 kilometres from Port Pirie, and was already mostly full. Kuol carried Akon, our one-year-old daughter, onto the bus as he usually does while I loaded the bags. He went to our allocated seats of 5C and 5D, but found that they were already occupied by some blankets and bags on the floor in front of the seats. He asked what I wanted to do. I said ‘I guess we’ll move them’ because there were no people around who took ownership of them and no other spare seats. A young guy said he was sitting in a seat he was not meant to be in, but that was not the seat we were allocated. I put my luggage in the overhead rack and started putting the other blankets and things up there as well. Kuol put Akon into the seat. Then an Aboriginal woman who had been out for a smoke got back onto the bus and started talking to another Aboriginal woman who was sitting in the seat in front of us holding a baby. They were speaking in a combination of an Aboriginal language spliced with English, so I could not understand what they were saying, but it was the kind of talking where you begin to think you’ve done something wrong without necessarily understanding what it is. Perhaps it was in the body language, the facial expressions or the tone. I got that feeling you get when you’re trying to do the right thing, aware, perhaps too aware, of the racial nature of what is unfolding. A ‘white’ woman, a ‘black’ man—foreigners, invaders—two ‘black’ women—natives, the invaded—and two babies—could they have been neutral? Then the bus started to move and Kuol was still on board so he quickly left and I sat down. The lady in front of me was still talking to the other lady, who had since sat opposite in the seat that had been occupied by the young man. It turned out that the blanket and bags belonged to the woman who had been out for a smoke, but during their long drive from Ceduna, the passengers had all spread out and occupied other seats, and that lady had occupied the seat allocated to me.

The women kept talking to each other, and although I could not understand everything, I could understand enough English words in their conversation to know that they were still talking about me and the seat. Feeling uncomfortable
and guilty, as if I needed to justify my actions, I said ‘I’m sorry I did not realise this was anybody’s seat. There were no other seats that did not have people sitting in them, so I took the only seat I found, and the one that was allocated to me’. The response caught me off guard, especially given my relation to Kuol and Akon. One of the women said ‘That’s the difference between black women and white women’. I responded saying ‘It didn’t have anything to do with race or skin colour, I simply sat in the only seat I could find’. She said ‘Black women would sit in any seat they found’. I decided not to respond to this simply saying ‘I think we’ll leave it there’.

As a person who has spent so much of their life trying perhaps to deceive myself that there is no difference between ‘black’ women and ‘white’ women, I was taken aback. I spent the rest of the trip in silence, contemplating the incident and the exchange of words and thinking what a terrible ‘white’ woman I must be. I wondered if the exchange would have been different if Kuol was ‘white’, I wondered what I could have said or done differently, but most of all I wondered if there really was a difference between ‘black’ women and ‘white’ women. I sat for the three-hour journey deep in thought, but also listening to the ongoing conversation of the two women, wondering if they would say something that revealed to me why ‘black’ and ‘white’ women were different.

They were sitting in front of me and talking at a level that could be heard by most people surrounding them. They arrived at a point in their conversation that struck me, as not only had they shaken me with their off-hand remarks about ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’, which most likely they have not thought about since, but they then began talking about ghosts. Granted, the ghosts they were talking about were slightly different to the sociological nature of the ghosts that I had been considering, but they were ghosts that were present in the everyday lives of these women nonetheless. One spoke of going in to her baby at night and finding him tucked into bed but knowing that neither her nor her partner had tucked him in. They spoke of feeling the presence of people who have died, sometimes protective, other times violent. One of them asked the other if she had ever asked one of the ghosts what they wanted, because maybe there was something they needed.¹⁷

That was when I realised that we all have ghosts; ghosts of different sorts, ghosts that show themselves in different ways, we all have different ways of acknowledging and dealing with our ghosts. But just as much as those two women had acknowledged their ghosts, even if they did not know why they were haunting them, I too have my ghosts. My ghosts haunt me in a way that I had never previously been aware of, but now that I was aware I found them everywhere. Gordon (2008) has argued that ‘[f]ollowing the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located’ (p. 22). Once I had begun ‘following the ghosts’ I was struck by their presence in conversations, in altercations, in movies,
in books, in everyday exchanges; they were always already there. Perhaps I had previously been aware of them, but by acknowledging them as ghosts I was finally able to appreciate that these were the links between institution and individual, social structure and subject, and history and biography that constitute the haunted nature of my life (Gordon, 2008). Examining some of my past was critical to understanding the haunted process of my becoming a Tiengjäng.

CIENG: A JÉÉNG ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

As argued above, belonging is a relational concept. As such, it became clear towards the end of the research process that it is impossible to consider the negotiated belongings of a group of six Diäärjäng without considering a key concept of relationality for Jëëng. This is expressed in the Thuongjäng word cieng which emphasises relational ethical responsibility. For Jëëng this encompasses a particular way of being in the world. It is difficult to formulate a concise definition of cieng. Jëëng anthropologist Francis Mading Deng (1984, 1998, 2007, 2009) provides a very broad definition. He suggests that, as a verb, cieng means ‘to look after, to order, to rule, to inhabit, to treat [a person], and to relate to a person’, and as a noun it means ‘human relations, conduct, behaviour, habit, personality, custom, law, rule, way of life, culture, essence, and nature’ (Deng, 1984, p. 185). He further argues that cieng underscores all human relationships for Jëëng and, in essence, is the ‘concept of ideal human relations’ (Deng, 1984, p. 185, 2009, p. 42). ‘At the core of cieng’, Deng (2007) states, ‘are the ideals of human relations, family and community, dignity and integrity, honor and respect, loyalty and piety and the power of the word’ (p. 100). For the women in this research cieng remained a very important element underscoring how they negotiated their belongings through the ways in which they existed in relation with others.

Cieng, argues Deng (2009), exists alongside another term dheeng,18 which he interprets as being ‘a concept of normative and aesthetic dignity’ encompassing ‘individual and collective pride, honour and dignity’ (p. 42). He suggests that cieng provided standards for evaluating conduct, while dheeng classified people according to that conduct; cieng requires that one should behave in a certain way. While dheeng labels one virtuous for behaving in that way; cieng is a normative concept, a means; while dheeng is a concept of status, an end. (p. 42)

To understand cieng and how and why it operates, it is important then to understand it in the context of dheeng. For Jëëng ‘[r]espect for human dignity’, or dheeng, ‘is an integral part of the principles of conduct that guide and regulate human relationships and constitutes the sum total of the moral code and the social order’ (p. 45). To be recognised as adheng (a person living with dheeng), a desirable status, one must
practise and live in *cieng path* (good *cieng*) but, as Deng (2007) has argued, *cieng* ‘is largely an aspiration that is only partially adhered to and, indeed, is often negated’ (p. 100). So not every person practises *cieng path* at every moment in time. It is a desired way of living that is not always adhered to in its fullest. The presence of *cieng* as a *Jëëng* way of life certainly does not mean that all *Jëëng* live in ways or practise acts that are commensurate with the ideals of *cieng* at all times. When people do not practise or live in the ideal ways of *cieng* it is referred to as *cieng rac* (bad *cieng*).

Unfortunately, aside from Deng’s definitions, there is a scarcity of research on the concept of *cieng*, and what does currently exist is problematic and far from extensive. With the exception of Biong Deng (2010), who briefly describes *cieng* both as the ‘traditional Dinka way of life’ (p. 233) and ‘social relations’ (p. 234), all of the current writing on *cieng* draws on the original definition from Deng (1984). With such a broad definition, it is easy to see how the term could be misappropriated and misunderstood. For example, Swedish health researchers Jeppsson and Hjern (2005) utilised the concept of *cieng* to try to ‘contrast the Western medical model of traumatic stress with the particular political and cultural context of the Dinkas of southern Sudan’ (p. 67). They formulated their understanding of *cieng* based on the work of Deng, and arrived at the following definition:

The Dinkas have a way of describing the balance between the aggressive and the compassionate, the egoistic and the social—in other words, the world in harmony. When things are in balance the world is in accordance with *cieng*. The accompanying feeling is *adheeng*. *Cieng* literally means home, a place and a situation where things are well-known, in unity and harmony, as opposed to places and situations where things are not so. It is a concept of ideal human relations. It starts in the relations and good manners in the family but acquires, in the context of the wider society, the meaning of law. As circles widen it becomes blurred, aggressiveness being acceptable against peoples that are foreign to the Dinka. (pp. 69–70)

Jeppsson and Hjern then surveyed 147 Dinka children aged between 10 and 18 years who were living in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya to try to understand how these children made sense of traumatic events that had occurred in their lives and how they sought comfort and support in the refugee camp. In their findings, they stated that, for *Jëëng*, a definition of mental health should be ‘based on whether life was in accordance with *cieng* and *adheeng*’ (2005, p. 77). Finding that 90 per cent of their cohort stated ‘that their current lifestyle was in accordance with the traditional concepts of *cieng* and *adheeng*’ (p. 74), they argued that this, in part, described the remarkable resilience to adversity and trauma that many of the children seemed to have. This understanding of *cieng* as a mental health concept is very limiting and certainly does not encapsulate how I have come to understand *cieng* through my involvement with the *Jëëng* community. While living in *cieng* may be one aspect which contributes to *Jëëng* perceptions of well-being, this is by no means the only
way of understanding cieng, nor is cieng the only marker of mental health for Jëëng. In addition, arguably it would be very difficult to find a Jëëng who said that they did not live in accordance with the concepts of cieng and dhëëng, as these in fact underscore what it means to be Jëëng in relation to others.

Drawing directly from this article is Pickard’s (2006) PhD thesis entitled Southern Sudanese concepts of cieng/ciang in America: The transcultural experience of well-being and adaptive functioning. Pickard uses the concept of cieng to explore the mental well-being of Dinka and Nuer resettled in the US. He examines cieng from a psychological standpoint and argues that cieng represents a ‘set of values or ideals existing at one end of a continuum of well-being’ (p. 2). He suggests that when a ‘southern Sudanese’ is what he refers to as ‘in cieng’ they will be in ‘a state of well-being’ (p. 56) and when they are ‘out of cieng’ they will be in a ‘state of distress’ (p. 58). Pickard’s thesis is problematic on more levels than there is scope to detail here. However, I do wish to address two major problems that I fear may hinder further developments in the understanding of the concept of cieng.

First is the conflation of two uses of the word cieng into a ‘southern Sudanese concept’. Throughout the thesis Pickard utilises the Nuer and Dinka concepts of cieng as synonymous. This is not the case. As Deal (2010) has argued, ‘[c]ieng, as I found expressed and defined among the Dinka Agaar, is distinct from the identical word used by the nearby Nuer’ (p. 571). For the Nuer, cieng signifies differing descriptions of physical places of ‘home’ encompassing ‘homestead, hamlet, village, and tribal sections of various dimensions’ (Evans-Pritchard, 2010, p. 81). While it appeared from his literature review that Pickard was utilising the Jëëng concept of cieng, his conflation of the Jëëng and Nuer terms with these differing meanings was highly problematic and meant that it was hardly surprising that Pickard’s participants had obvious difficulty in enunciating a description of cieng. Secondly, by drawing on Jeppsson and Hjern’s (2005) research on cieng which defined cieng as predominantly a mental health–related concept, Pickard’s thesis once again presents a narrow understanding of cieng which focuses on just one possible outcome of living in cieng, which is positive mental health and well-being.

Three additional articles have provided particular case studies of the enactment of cieng in various locations. The first is Deal’s (2010) captivating article ‘Torture by cieng: Ethical theory meets social practice among the Dinka Agaar of South Sudan’, which captures the notion of cieng well, but unfortunately due to the particular case study presents the negative outcomes of cieng in an extreme situation. The other two are articles I have recently published (Baak, 2011c, 2011b) which reflect on the experiences of the Jëëng community in Australia following the murder of a young Jëëng man in 2009. Like Deal’s article, my articles also reflect on community responses in a negative and extreme situation. In these articles I argue that cieng encompasses a relational ethical responsibility that underscored how the community mourned the death of this young man. In his article Deal reflects on a series of experiences he had during a period he spent living and working in the Dinka lands of South Sudan from 2003 to 2008. Early in his paper, Deal details ‘A lesson
in cieng’ in which he was summoned by the local community elders of a Dinka village in which he had recently opened a medical clinic. The elders requested that he account for why he had opened the clinic without liaising with the community leaders. Deal articulates that ‘[t]hey [the community leaders] observed that we were acting independently, rather than as members of the community, and it made them uncomfortable’ (2010, p. 565). He further reflects that he had been called before the community’s leaders not because of the product of our decisions but because of the process we used to reach them. In my mind, our decisions had resulted in the correct actions and were therefore proper. In the minds of the elders, however, the process that brought us to act as we did was devoid of cieng and therefore improper—regardless of the rightness of the eventual decision. (p. 565)

This reflects the communal mentality inherent in cieng, in which decisions that impact on particular individuals or communities should not be made in isolation without consulting with and involving members of that community within the decision-making process.

Following the detailing of this experience, Deal continues in his article to explain his observations of the tensions and violence that occurred between two sections of the Agaar Dinka. This violence resulted in the deaths of over fifty people from the two communities (including a chief) in a series of retributional attacks. Subsequently a number of people who had not been directly involved in the violence were imprisoned and flogged by the army that was responsible for governing the region at that time. These people included the mother and other relations of the man who was accused of killing the chief. These people were imprisoned ‘because of their clan affiliations with the murderer, rather than any individual infraction’ (p. 568). Deal was surprised and confronted by the imprisonment and beating of people ‘without a trial or any reasonable idea that they had committed a crime’ (p. 568). In the months following the violence and imprisonment Deal interviewed in excess of 112 people and found that

the sociocentric ideas, positively expressed as cieng, accounted for coalitional guilt not in the need for the accused murderer to turn himself in but, rather, in the widespread justification by both victims and perpetrators of violence of the punishment of the entire clan. Within this framework of reason, no innocent person was being punished: there was a guilty family being punished using the body of an individual mother as the receptacle of wrath. (p. 568)

This is an extreme example of the communalism that cieng defines. In order for the communities to live together, those who are related to the individual who has committed the crime can be held accountable, as these relations mean that there is a sense of coalitional guilt and responsibility. From his experience, Deal surmises that ‘the concept of cieng may be best understood here to mean that the good of the group supersedes the needs or even safety of the individual. Cieng puts material values
and individual welfare subordinate to social human values and community interests’ (p. 571). From this conclusion, it starts to become clearer that cieng represents a form of communal ontology which challenges the Western focus on individualism (Swanson, 2009; Keevy, 2008; Krog, 2004; Kamwangamalu, 1999).

This description draws much closer to the way that I have come to understand cieng as a way of life which is relational to others. However, it is not only a way of life; it is a way of being, a way of thinking and a way of looking at and understanding the world. It is a component of a philosophy, an ontology, an epistemology, which requires a particular relational ethic and governs how Jëëng exist in the world. As such it very closely (if not precisely) equates with other similar African notions such as ubuntu in the Nguni languages (Caracciolo, 2009; Gade, 2010; Swanson, 2007; Tutu, 1999), umunhu in Chichewa (Sharra, 2009), hunhu in Shona (Taringa, 2007), botho in Sotho (Metz & Gaie, 2010) and the many other indigenous African terms that represent this way of being that, it has been argued, exists in most regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Metz & Gaie, 2010; Taringa, 2007). Much has been written on all of these terms and I will briefly explore just some of the increasing body of literature on these terms, most specifically how they relate to cieng and to belonging.

All of these terms signify a particular relational ontology, and this relational ontology has much to contribute to the ways in which belonging is understood and negotiated.

Ubuntu has undergone the most thorough analysis of any of the linguistic terms that identify this epistemology and ontology, perhaps as a result of its use as a founding aspect of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). One of the most frequently cited definitions of ubuntu is Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s (1999) description in his reflection on the TRC process:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, ‘Yu, u nobumtu’; ‘Hey, he or she has ubuntu.’ This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, ‘a person is a person through other people’. It is not ‘I think therefore I am’. It says rather: ‘I am human because I belong.’ I participate, I share. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are. (pp. 34–35)

This description is by no means exhaustive, but does encompass many of the main aspects of ubuntu and other related discourses. First, it encompasses the humanity or humanism underscored by these terms (Swanson, 2007, 2009; Gade, 2010; Ramose, 2001; Kamwangamalu, 1999). Secondly, it illustrates that there can be varying degrees to which someone can practise or ‘have’ ubuntu, and that practising
ubuntu results in people being recognised in particular positive ways including being generous and hospitable (this reflects the practice of cieng and resulting dhëëng outlined by Deng which are detailed above). Thirdly it illustrates the relational, interdependent, communal nature of these concepts through the phrase ‘a person is a person through other people’ (Swanson, 2007, 2009; Nussbaum, 2003; Kochalumchuvattil, 2010; Gade, 2010; Metz & Gaie, 2010; Kamwangamalu, 1999). This phrase is captured in the Thuongjäng saying ‘Raan ee ya raan ë raan dà’ (literally a person is a person in reliance on another person). Fourth, it alludes to the ways in which ubuntu provides a possible site of belonging (Taringa, 2007; Segrest, 2002). Finally, it elucidates some of the diminishing outcomes of not practising ubuntu including torture and oppression (Ramose, 2001).

My understanding and use of cieng (and related concepts) will be developed further throughout this book. I argue that cieng offers a different way both to conduct research as well as to co-exist ethically in the world. Cieng offers a ‘new’ way not only to understand relational ethics but also to formulate an understanding of how we can all belong in the world as human beings. This way of living together offers a way of being and belonging that would enable Others to simply become others, co-existing unhampered by the confines of citizenship, nationality, ‘race’, gender, class, sexuality or the many other ghosts which haunt modes and ways of belonging.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The introduction has set out the main theoretical and conceptual ideas that underscore the book. The remainder of the book explores different sites and ways in which the women negotiated their belongings.

Chapter 2 considers how friendship, as one articulation of cieng, formed a key component of both my research methodology and method and became the grounds for what Gandhi (2006) has referred to as ‘the co-belonging of nonidentical singularities’ (p. 26). The chapter begins to engage with some of the questions of belonging that unravel over the following chapters through considering how I was positioned as an inside-out/outside-in researcher and how this reflected my ongoing negotiations for belonging as a Tiengjäng. It also considers how the research was conducted in an ‘ethic of friendship’ (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). This chapter forms the basis of the argument for ‘new’ ways of hearing narratives, conducting research and learning about and understanding Others.

The terms citizenship, nationality and ethnicity are frequently conflated or subsumed under other concepts. Many of the current writers on concepts of belonging in relation to migration do not clearly differentiate between the uses of these three concepts (see, for example, Fortier, 2000; Salih, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006a, 2009). While, arguably, there is overlap in how these various categories operate to control and determine belongings, both Oommen (1997) and Castles and Davidson (2000) suggest that careful differentiation between these particular categories is needed. The women’s stories further signified the importance of differentiating between
citizenship, nationality and ethnicity, illustrating how each operated in particular ways to shape their journeys and negotiations for belonging. Chapters 3 and 4 emphasise the distinctions between nationality, citizenship and ethnicity and they are explored further in the two chapters.

Chapter 3 considers belonging to the nation-state through lenses of citizenship and nationality. Chapter 3 was shaped most significantly by Abuk’s narrative of desiring belonging through the rights and responsibilities most commonly associated with citizenship, while she also recognised the impossibilities and challenges of obtaining these in Sudan, Egypt and Australia. In addition, this chapter came about through an intense consideration of what it was that made it so difficult for the women to feel a sense of belonging to the larger unit of the nation-state in all of the locations in which they had lived. Through the women’s narratives, it became clear that nationality and citizenship operated in different ways to control these belongings.

Chapter 4 was predominantly drawn from one word which haunted not only the women’s stories, but also my own experiences: Diäärjäng. Diäärjäng (or its singular form Tiengjäng) is a compound word which draws together Diäär (women/wives) and Jääng (Dinka person)—in this way making a consideration of ethnicity outside of gender virtually impossible. While gender operated in every realm of the women’s lives to shape how their belongings were negotiated, the women’s stories illustrated that it was particularly salient in how they negotiated their belongings as Jëëng. Therefore Chapter 4 considers how they negotiated belonging through both gender and ethnicity. By considering the women’s reflections on what it has meant to be female in the Jääng context across the spatial and temporal transitions they have made during their lives, this chapter questions whether there is any one way of being Diäärjäng, and therefore whether there is really any way to categorise who exactly belongs as Diäärjäng.

There is a general assumption in much of this literature that more ‘global’ sites of belonging in transnational migration override the more ‘local’ sites of belonging (Robertson, 1995). Chapters 5 and 6 consider some of these more ‘local’ sites of belonging. These are the levels in which everyday interactions frequently take place, and in which communities are constituted less through the ‘imagined’ (Anderson, 1991) and more through the physicality and intimacy of knowing, face-to-face, others who negotiate their belongings in these sites.

Chapter 5 considers how ‘local’ regionally based communities in South Sudan continue to haunt the women’s lives on a global scale. It considers how these ‘glocal’ sites become increasingly significant as a result of migration and then explores the politics and contestations of belonging within that site across a range of locations. Chapter 5 explores how the ‘local’ region of Mading Aweil continues to haunt the women’s belongings through their global migrations. The chapter centres around the narratives of three of the women which describe not only how these glocal communities were produced through ‘global’ migrations but also how belongings within these communities are politicised through the hauntings of family histories, fear and jealousy. Ultimately the chapter illustrates how the
politics of belonging results in an impermanency and complexity even within this ‘local’ site belonging.

Chapter 6 considers the women’s negotiations for belonging within and among their families and kin of birth. It begins by arguing for a broader conception of kin and family and then examines how the women negotiated their belongings within this site in spite of the global dispersion of their family and kin. Chapter 6 explores the most intimate of the sites in which the women negotiated their belongings, the family. It focuses particularly on negotiating belongings within and among kook pan da (the family and kin of birth), first suggesting that even who is considered kin and family is never permanent and then arguing that migration further complicates belongings within and among family and kin.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws together the various themes which permeate the book, arguing for the need for ‘new’ ways of ‘hearing’ in order to hear narratives within the embeddedness within particular ontologies and epistemologies. Through this, I argue for the importance of indigenous epistemologies, such as cieng, to understanding the haunted journeys through being, becoming and belonging.

NOTES

1 I utilised this methodology which I have described in long form as ‘living oral (hi)stories of life’, abbreviated to stories of life, which draws on the narrative methodologies of life history, living stories and oral history.

2 Pseudonyms have been used for the names of the women and for some place names that could identify the women. Although some of the women were happy to be identified, others were not, so I made the decision to make all of the women as anonymous as possible as I thought that this was ethically in the best interests of each woman, her family and myself in the small and often politically turbulent Jëëng community in Australia.

3 This quotation is drawn from an article originally published in French (Barthes, 1972) and appears to have first been translated into English by Clifford and Marcus (1986).

4 See also, for example, Abu-Lughod (1993), Behar (1996), Collins (1990), Couldry (2009) and Lammers (2005).


6 This description is also similar to that of a number of other authors including Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten (2006). They describe belonging as referring to ‘patterns of trust and confidence’ relating to community and society. Within this, they suggest ‘we have to think about the shifting meaning of identity, family, the influence of spatial (migration) and existential (material) displacement and, further, the actually confused (and diffused) longing for stable emotional attachments as they are articulated in national, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations’ (p. 4).


8 Throughout the book I draw on a literary technique of Markus Zusak (2005) in his incredible hauntology *The book thief*. In this text, Zusak splices the main text with interjections from the narrator, who identifies himself as Death. Zusak uses indented passages, highlighted by the use of bold and italic script, to interpose particular information into the story. These are used to signify narrative shifts or as an aside from Death. The first interjection, for example is:

*** HERE IS A SMALL FACT ***

You are going to die. (p. 1)
CHAPTER 1

The final note from Death is

*I am haunted by humans.* (p. 584)

I use this technique to splice the main body of the book with autoethnographic vignettes (labelled as interludes) which illustrate my personal experience of the pertinent themes being discussed. In this introductory chapter, there are two interludes which illustrate my connection with two of the key themes. Chapters 3 to 7 each begin with an interlude which illustrates my own experience of negotiating belonging in relation to the site of belonging discussed subsequently in the chapter.

9 Much philosophical work has been done on ‘being’ (for example Heidegger, 1962; Lévinas, 1991; Warburton, 2001; Overgaard, 2004; Sartre, 2005; Lovejoy, 2009; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). While I acknowledge that my work draws on the contributions of these authors, I do not attempt to attend to the debate on ‘being’.

10 For an interesting further exploration of this concept see Krog’s (2009) *Begging to be black.*

11 Gilroy draws this term from the work of LeRoi Jones (1967) who traces the continuities in forms of ‘black’ music. McDowell (1995) also uses this term to explore ‘black’ women’s fiction from the nineteenth century to the present.


13 The physical journeys of migration made by the individual women as well as the root causes of their displacement are explored in Appendix A.

14 The notions of haunting, ghosts and spectres have been used by many different writers in a variety of fields. These range from Derrida’s (1994) argument for a hauntology through which ghosts and spectres are considered to transcend time in his consideration of the spectres of Marx in philosophy, to Morrison’s (2006) use of ghosts in her American literary classic *Beloved,* from Ronnell’s (1993) examination of the hauntings of Goethe in the writings of Freud and Eckermann, to O’Riely’s (2007) consideration of the use of haunting in postcolonial theory. Much other work has also been done on the concepts of haunting, spectres and ghosts (see, for example, Davis, 2005; Etking, 2009; Hart, 2006; Hofmeyr, 2007; Holland, 2001; Kenway et al., 2006; Lai, 2011; Mansfield, 2008; Munos, 2011; Bell, 1997; Lahanyi, 2001; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001; Taiwo, 1998). While I have considered all of these texts, I draw most strongly on the work of Gordon (2008), whose feminist analysis of ‘ghostly matters’ most robustly resounds with the lives and stories of the women in this research.

15 This particular moment, as with most of the autoethnographic reflections detailed in the interludes in the book, provided moments that Barthes (1981) might describe as ‘punctum’ (p. 27). This multilayered encounter provided a moment in which identity, ‘race’, ghosts, journeys and belonging collided in one punctumous moment.

16 For a majority of the research period I lived in Port Pirie, a regional town of South Australia approximately 240 kilometres north of South Australia’s capital city of Adelaide.

17 Ghosts play an important role in Indigenous Australian cosmology and dreaming. While these do not parallel Western ghosts or haunting, it is nonetheless salient given the ways in which my journey was haunted by this ghostly occurrence. Clarke (2007) reports:

> Contemporary Aboriginal people … inform me that they believe ghosts are the spiritual remains of people who were once alive. In the case of southern Aboriginal people, they have told me that during the period immediately after death, the person’s spirit is torn between the desire to stay with loved ones still alive and the imperative to return to the Spirit World where it merges with the Ancestors … The spirits of the dead are still said to be able to have an impact upon human lives. (p. 148)

He further suggests that ‘[n]ot all contemporary ghost sightings in southern Australia are necessarily seen as negative. Aboriginal people consider that the dead often appear to close family members and friends to console them’ (p. 153).

Luka Biong Deng is also a *Jääng* and is not related to Francis Mading Deng.

While not referenced, it would appear that Deng’s definition draws, in part, on the work of Godfrey Lienhardt (2004), who writes that the Dinka ‘have a word, *cieng* or *cieng baai*, which used as a verb has the sense of “to look after” or “to order”, and in its noun form means “the custom” or “the rule”’ (p. 106).

Pickard (2006) states that, to his knowledge, the concept of *cieng* has been examined only once in the literature, citing Jeppsson and Hjern (2005).

Nuer are an ‘ethnic’ group of South Sudan whose home regions neighbour *Jëëng* lands. *Jëëng* and Nuer (Nath in the Nuer language) are both Nilotic groups who have lived in neighbouring regions for many centuries. As such they share some linguistic and cultural characteristics (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, 2010). Kelly (1985) suggests that ‘[t]he Nuer and Dinka speak genetically related Western Nilotic languages that are derived from a common proto-language’ (p. 10). However, he further argues that ‘Nuer and Dinka would have ceased to be mutually intelligible dialects of the same language’ between approximately ‘A.D. 700 and 1300’ (p. 11).

Two other writers (Asante, 2011; de Ngor, 2006) have very briefly alluded to the similarities between *cieng* and *ubuntu*.

Again, I use the word ‘new’ in inverted commas, this time because it is not ‘new’ for everyone. Relational epistemologies and ontologies are at the forefront of many indigenous ways of knowing and being. However, they offer ‘new’ ways for those of us situated within Western epistemologies and ontologies to understand relationality.