Whose Culture, Where and Why? – Identity, Culture and Artistic Expression

by

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS


Future Publications

Rosunee, Nishta D. 2013, Artistic Expression in Negotiating and representing my cultures and gendered identities within borderlands and spaces, Eighth International Conference On The Arts In Society, Volume Eight Of The Collection.

Paper presentation at AARE – 2013 conference - Shaping Australian Education Research (Adelaide) - in connection with this project. Title of the paper- The religious dimension of Asia literacy with Dr Roderick Neilsen, Dr Ruth Arber, Dr Michiko Weinmann, Dr Alex Kostogriz, Ms Nishta Rosunee

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Professional Development Session for Art Teachers


CREATIVE WORKS

SOLO ART EXHIBITION – Whose Culture Where and Why? – Identity Culture and Artistic Expression

Venue - Deakin Phoenix Gallery, Deakin University, Burwood Campus, Melbourne, 18th – 21st September 2012

This exhibition was opened by Professor Fazal Rizvi, Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University and Associate Professor Mary Dixon, Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Education, Deakin University.
Art exhibition of my artworks of my Doctoral research with the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University. This exhibition consisted of five series of paintings (31 canvases) - 'Talk Back', 'Down memory lane', 'Down under Xperience', 'Metaphorical dialogues', and 'Breaking silences', as an ensemble represent semiotics, signs, symbols, messages and meanings, and metaphors of cultural transitions.
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Abstract

Art emerges through “lived and embodied experiences – leading to art creation, representation and appreciation” (Heidegger, 1977b, p. 1). Research on the concept of ‘identity’ so far is highlighted through critique, deconstruction, paradoxes and subjectivities (Hall & Du Gay, 1996), which leaves it to the limits and intervals of thinking in terms of questions and politics about agency. Identification is among the least understood concepts as it is “constructed on the back of recognition” and Stuart Hall defines “identity as a construction, a process never completed - always ‘ in process’”(Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 2).

In this research, I use the visual and artistic expression as a means to represent how I understand and negotiate my cultures and gendered identities as I transit through different sites. My journey transits through the ‘ontic’ to map my cultural inheritances from ancestry and postcolonial influences from home country, my childhood memories, life experiences and migration transitions when moving to Australia and I represent these through an artistic expression. I use a series of my own artworks to represent cultural markers, a sense of belonging to patria, childhood memories, nostalgia and challenges through migration transitions and how these artworks represent how I am currently understanding and negotiating my cultures and gendered identities.

A/r/tography as framework merges my professional roles as an artist/researcher/teacher and highlights ‘the researcher as subject’ in depicting my perspectives through my own narratives and artworks and my analysis in using ‘reflexive iteration’ and a ‘phenomenological’ approach. I define my engagement in art making as a ‘generative’ process and I use a self-reflexive standpoint to annotate my artworks and to deconstruct the visual signs, semiotics, messages and meanings in them. The ‘interplay between text and image’, art as representation, and ‘the interface between interpretation and analysis’ (Leavy, 2009), I suggest involves metaphors. I refer to the use of art and the visual that surpasses the limits of ‘space’, and how it reinforces a sense of ‘place’, as I use the visual as an interface to give ‘voice’ to my experiences and to unveil often silenced issues about migration and gender. I refer to feminist perspectives and concepts around affect theory to support my artistic expression and discussion. My analysis departs onto rhetoric of intersubjectivity situated in and through a dialogue. I refer to an ‘interpretivist approach’ that supports negotiation of meanings and a “rhizomatic thinking” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21) that highlights ambivalence and hybridity about my cultures and gendered identities.

In my discussion I describe how I negotiate my identities as I make reference to culturally inherited and socially constituted traits and my new experiences in making new sense of belongings, spaces, places and time along with the changes and pressures of globalisation. I define how I transit from the real, imaginary to the symbolic and metaphoric as I try to situate the ‘self’. I argue that my research goes beyond representing ancestry, history, and the ontic to demonstrate symbolic and semiotic orders and changes that inform my identities. While my artworks give a ‘voice’ to salient issues, I suggest it highlights artistic expression as a powerful means that can enhance understanding of diversity and differences in regards to social identities. In representing identities through the visual I argue can contribute to extending innovative research methods and practices. I further
suggest expression within such paradigms can have implications for Art Education, curriculum and teaching practices that can change misconceptions about diversity, differences and representation within global cities.
INTRODUCTION

“Self-expression is but [a] reaction against the environment” - and self-expression through art in itself is complete (Krishnamurti, 1996, p. 19).

Overture - Situating my research

My diverse roles as an artist/ researcher/ teacher (a/r/t), informs how I use art and the visual as a medium that transcends self-expression through my study. I underscore the power of the visual and visual semiotics to provide avenues for representation in three different ways through my inquiry. First, I define artistic expression as a means of addressing and transcending complex concepts around notions on culture, ancestry, postcolonial diasporic inheritances, identity processes and identity construction, migration, dislocation and relocation transitions, and cultural hybridisation. I use a series of my own artworks represent how I understand and negotiate my identity through the visual. Secondly, I describe mixed research methods as an innovative approach that builds my data and analysis. My approach binds my experiences through the ‘ontic’ as personal stories to be represented through visual narratives and artworks. Thirdly, I suggest that my inquiry opens new avenues to use art expression and visual semiotics to forge “affective links” (Amin, 2012, p. 29) in understanding a sense of belonging, identity construction and identity crisis, my gendered identities, as I transit through migration and relocation transitions. My artworks send powerful messages and meanings as a ‘voice’ in understanding and negotiating processes of identification in a changing global context. I underscore ambivalence and hybridity in defining social identities which is complex and challenging within transnational spaces, where differences and changing social structures in communities need to be re-imagined with the flows of transnational migration and the influences of globalisation.

This research looks through the notions of cultures and identities, and processes of identification and I refer to my own experiences in locating the ‘self’ while I transit through different sites. I trace the roots of my ancestry, and the history of my home country. I also refer to the inheritances from ancestry and diaspora, my childhood memories and life experiences, and my migration transitions. I picture
this journey through different sites through the visual, and I use my artworks and narratives to analyse and discuss my understandings within the context of current theory that addresses to broader socio-cultural perspectives. My artworks relate to ancestry, cultural historical and diasporic inheritances, postcolonial influences, my childhood memories and life experiences from home country, migration, dislocation and relocation transitions, and my observations when moving and currently living in Australia, as well as the metaphors in negotiating and representing gendered identities.

A series of my own artworks (31 paintings and other sketches and photographs) are visual narratives that represent how I negotiate my cultures and gendered identities through a journey within different sites. The five series of artworks are: ‘Talk Back’, ‘Down memory lane’, ‘Down under Xperience’, ‘Metaphorical dialogues’, and ‘Breaking silences’. These artworks help me trace my pathways through different sites from the past to present and future.

The ‘Talk back’ series 1-3 makes reference to my ancestors, cultural history, post-colonial influences and inheritances from a diaspora that informs my cultural lineage and heritage and linguistic capital. The ‘Down memory lane’ series 1-9 depict childhood memories, nostalgia of places and events that frame lived experiences in a multicultural context of my home country, Mauritius. The ‘Down Under experience’ series 1-2 relates to snapshots of my observations and new encounters arriving as a new migrant in Australia. The transitions of migration I describe as happening within a ‘liminal space’. The ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series 1-2 are about migration transitions. ‘Breaking silences’ series 1-3, is the last series of my paintings which represent my gendered identities.

In essence, the artworks are my data and I annotate them by describing what they represent as themes, concepts and ideas, and my experiences, perspectives and arguments are analysed and discussed. These paintings reference my observation and experiences as an artist/researcher/teacher, and my feminist perspective that define my gendered identities. These artworks support give ‘voice’ to issues that I identify and address as crucial and needing attention.

My inquiry refers to concepts, themes, ideas, and traits I mentioned earlier, however my observation and experiences in my current environment also contributes to what I represent. There are important markers I pinpoint through the different sites I transit, these frame how I define a sense of belonging, a sense of space, place and time including identity processes and structures. In this ‘démarche’ I go beyond self-expression through art to give ‘voice’ to ideas, themes and issues that send symbolic messages and meanings. As I analyse my artworks through an iterative reflection and phenomenological approach, I uncover visual semiotics, messages, meanings and metaphors represented through them.
My discussion is directed towards the concepts such as the ‘time lag’ and the uncertainties and subjectivities within my journey in understanding my gendered identities and how I renegotiate them through migration and relocation transitions and the experiences of finding myself as a woman. I underscore the ambivalences, subjectivities and hybridity in understanding identities, cultures, and the ‘self’ within the ‘liminal space’ and the shifting spaces, places, the temporal within a globalised context and its influences. I discuss the impact and pressures of technology, the changes and challenges through migration and relocation, and the increase in diverse and transnational societies in global cities as Melbourne, where I currently live. I also underscore feminist concepts and ‘affect theory’ (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) and discuss how these notions can be represented in my gendered identities.

Mapping my journey

I use two of my artworks to open and close my thesis. ‘Embarking on my PhD journey’ is the first painting and ‘Vortex of Hope’ closes my work. I define and use art as my medium for self-expression, yet I also describe how importantly I use visual representations to structure my narratives and observation in tracing my journey of understanding, renegotiating and representing my gendered identities as I engage in the analysis and discussion. My initial thoughts highlight my ‘démarche’ and procedures to encompass ways to engage with art making, artistic expressions and iterative reflection. Such an approach addresses my roles and experiences as an artist/researcher/teacher, but it also highlights the importance of understanding theoretical discourses that support my arguments.

‘Embarking on PhD journey’, 2010
60 cm x 45 cm / 23.5 in x 17.5 in
Acrylic on canvas

76 cm x 102 cm / 30 in x 40 in
Acrylic on canvas - Mixed media
'Embarking on my PhD journey’ depicts my first attempt to use my artwork to visually represent my thinking to situate my thoughts and ideas in regards to my research question. I started working on this painting in mid-2010 in my office space at Deakin University on Elgar Road, on a quiet Saturday morning. I started by building shapes, lines, colours, textures and strokes and I remember engaging in self-talk, which I always do when deeply immersed in reflection after a painting is completed. I asked myself – “Why did I do this? What am I trying to do?” In fact, I now know, I was trying to build from scratch an understanding of research processes which involved stripping away certain understandings from previous experience and knowledge about research methods, in order to devise my own research approach that would work to address my research question. It is important to mention, that initially I was confused about finding an appropriate research method to frame my investigation. When I finished this painting, I found my approach of using the visual and artistic expression to be more meaningful. I extended this initial approach by researching the field of a/r/tography as an innovative method that would merge art making, artistic expression and reflection. It provided an opportunity to use the visual and narratives as mixed method and also allowed me to directly involve my experiences as an artist/researcher/teacher. I describe extensively how I adopted and adapted my methodological approach in Chapter four.

‘Embarking on my PhD journey’ is important in my introduction as it shows my initial enthusiasm and engagement with art, the process of art making, and my reflection. This work stretches to dimensions of exposing the ‘self’, as well as to the aesthetics, elements and principles of art. The use of lines, shapes, colours, tone variations, light and shades, forms and structures give agency to inner perceptions and feelings. It outlines art expression as a means to visually represent notions which words alone cannot address. I discuss this work further in Chapter six and seven to describe and deconstruct the visual semiotics, meaning, metaphors and messages my artworks convey in how I understand negotiate and search my identities.

Suturing art, theory, method and approach, and reflection

‘Embarking on my PhD journey’ as a painting has helped me to extend my thinking and to situate other pathways and paradigms of understanding cultures, identities, migration transitions and globalisation that refer to broader lenses of socio-cultural, post-structuralist and feminist perspectives and also to post humanist critics and affect theory. Culture, identity construction and processes of identification, cultural hybridity, and transculturalism are terms that I address through this study. These notions overlap onto discourses on postcolonial diaspora theory, cultural capital and inheritances, my childhood and lived experiences and migration transitions, and how I negotiate new identity structures within my current life experiences. I review in depth in Chapter three my knowledge and understanding of different theories
that involves personal life trajectories and discourses about my ancestry, colonialism, and postcolonial influences and history, diaspora, cultural capital and inheritances, race, ethnicity and cultural hegemony, feminist and affect theory in relation to postmodern conditions. My review of literature ambitiously pulls together theoretical concepts covering socio-cultural theorists from Stuart Hall to Rosi Braidotti, however, such discourses have been crucial and relevant in how I have understood concepts about identity and processes of identification within the changing global context. Other theories as feminist perspective and affect theory have forged my knowledge and reflection on how to use my art as an expression of ‘affective links’ through my personal stories and how to negotiate my identity.

The dimensions of culture are extensive, broad and complex and it is challenging to understand them. The conventional definitions of culture from a Marxist, Durkheimian, and Weberian perspective helped me to build meaning around it. Post-structuralist, post humanist, and feminist critics on the other hand elaborate on other interdisciplinary strands that connect definitions of culture and identity within the global. Postcolonial diaspora theory, migration transitions, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and transnational spaces are issues that help define the complexities around identity and the processes of identification.

Current feminist theorists argue about postmodern conditions, nomadic subjectivity, challenges of transnational spaces, and cultural shifts and how women with differences struggle to negotiate their identities and to find a ‘voice’ (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007; Berlant, 2011). Looking through post humanist critics and feminist perspectives, I situate how to understand my gendered identities. I thus find my approach to art-making and reflection inclines to a feminist approach. From affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), I take up the concept of giving ‘voice’ (Berlant, 2011), as represented my artworks and reflection. Art as an expression of my personal stories forge ‘affective links’ through what I experience within an émigré (migrant) identity.

My engagement as an artist/researcher/teacher and the methodological approach of an arts-based and reflexive inquiry create the ‘spaces’ for representation and ‘voices’ that define experiences, as well as the challenges and dilemmas within my different roles. Following Benjamin (1992), and Adorno, (1997) - the use of ‘mimesis’ express the relationship of cultural forms and processes that refer to identities and cultures. In using ‘ethno-mimesis’ (O’Neill, 2010) as a concept, I am able to refer to my narratives and link them to my artistic representations. Ethno-mimesis in this inquiry works to embed many traits from social, cultural to various experiences, and I focus on a visual framework to underscore both the ‘mimesis’ and ‘dialectical’. I agree that if the ‘representational and the interactional functions’ (Wortham, 2001) and are at play, then the fusion of my narratives and artworks is the most appropriate approach to understand and represent my gendered identities.
My engagement in art making, (I coin it as a ‘generative’ process) is reflected and recorded in a log. Such a process is described as a production, an improvisation, and even a recall of nostalgic memories that transit from the conscious to subconscious, while it reproduces meanings and representation. I use a reflexive and a phenomenological approach in my analysis and I draw attention to an iterative procedure and a rhizomatic approach in art making and interpretation. The iterative process of reflection, analysis and discussion, I describe as a “construction” (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 10-11) that provides coherence and meaning to my arguments. This process I describe as ‘circumspective’ in allowing the ‘new’ to emerge (Heidegger, 1996). At the same time I seek to combine ‘reflexivity’, a ‘phenomenological’ approach and ‘rhizomatic thinking’ to take upon the concepts of Deleuze & Guattari, (1987) that lead to the three registers of exploring identities - from the real, imaginary and symbolic to the metaphorical and abstract. I use the term ‘mimesis’ (Heynon, 1999) not only to represent the visual as performative but also to develop and represent other traits that are significant through my artworks. Such traits challenge reflection on issues of cultural transitions and hybridisation, changes in identity processes, and I argue that such notions are being neglected within current discourses.

The phenomenological analysis underscored variances and flows, and literal meanings and to more metaphoric ones. The decoding of the visual semiotics, signs, symbolic and messages in my artworks make reference to socially and culturally constituted meanings, affective links, cultural transition and hybridity. The metaphors are classified as interrelating concepts, patterns and discourses that set up a dialogue that gives ‘voice’ to my arguments. An exhibition of my paintings was another means to get other perspectives and views on what my artworks represent besides my own analysis, and the occasion led to further reflection. I elaborate on such discourses that open new avenues for discussion and reflection on visual methods to research on identity processes, migration and cultural transitions and intercultural understanding through art.
'Breaking silences series’ - ‘Vortex of Hope’, 2012
76 cm x 102 cm / 30 in x 40 in
Acrylic on canvas - Mixed media

‘Vortex of Hope’ is the last painting, and I discuss this work in Chapters five, six and seven. I refer to this painting here as it offers some insight to the reader about my journey and the approach I have taken when addressing more complex ideas about cultural transitions. This work outlines the power of the visual to say more than words can say, while it works to uncover how, why and what I represent in the other series of paintings. Next, I present my research questions and sub questions.

Research questions

My initial research question was - How culture and identity can be enacted through an artistic expression? This question was refocussed to a set of key questions:

1. How might I represent my understandings of gendered Identities through cultural shifts, life experiences and migration transitions?
2. How might I analyse my representations of cultural shifts and transitions of my gendered identities through my visual narratives and artworks?
3. How interrogations of cultural shifts, transitions and contingencies inform representation in:

- Understanding negotiation of cultures and spaces within gendered identities
- Artistic framework as a means to represent and understand such implications from a broader perspective and for art teaching practices

These questions map how I attempt to address my arguments, although these were rephrased on several occasions, as I progressed through my inquiry. These key research questions and other sub questions guide and frame my arguments and discussion in Chapter six and seven.

Framing this research

The first Chapter, (Re)modelling – refers to parameters that build my data. I first look into the why, where and how?, and this reflection situates how I situate myself in this research and how my personal stories frame my art expression and the visual semiotics in them. This section asserts the importance in locating the geographies of home, space, and place from my home country and the tracing my ancestry and roots. I elaborate on the living conditions of ancestors and the implications of diaspora, colonial and postcolonial traits and I describe a ‘time lag’ through history as I use a series of old family photographs (collected from a field trip in Mauritius in 2011) that decode semiotics, signs and meanings. I describe my experience and visit in India (field trip in 2011) into a little village where my ancestors belonged and I use a series of my own photos taken on site to situate and reinforce my understanding of traditions, cultures, values, and cultural inheritances and lineages. These photographs and its annotations describe the current living conditions in that place. This section also helped me to understand a time lag in history and a sense of belonging and identification. I refer to my family migration to Australia and my new perspectives upon arrival as a new migrant in Melbourne to frame my perspectives in building my data and reflection in this inquiry.

Chapter two - (Re) strategising and (Re) orienting describes the initial inquiry I embarked on and how I went about reworking my research approach and strategies after reflection and discussion that ensued during and after my colloquium presentation. It sets out my ‘personal perspective’ as I sought a new research direction and how I reoriented my approach by using narratives of my life, my professional experiences and art as a process in making a series of my own artworks towards representation. I overview my role as the researcher as ‘subject’, while putting myself into the picture as I decide to use my personal stories of transiting through different sites as visual narratives. My diverse roles and
experiences as being an artist/researcher/teacher and my teaching experiences provide the spaces that build reflection on art as process, and a platform for representation and communication. I describe how I resolve the paradox within these different roles and how as an artist I engage into my own art making. I acknowledge my experiences within a culturally diverse context, and how it highlights my engagement in art as process, teaching and reflection. I contextualise art as a mode to be used in representing cultural shifts and identity. In outlining the significance of this inquiry I describe artistic expression as a tool to communicate such cultural transitions and renegotiation of identity structures. I define art as a ‘medium’, that communicates meaning and messages and gives ‘voice’ and agency to issues about my cultures and identities. My suggest how the findings from my inquiry can inform how art teaching practices and the use of art can address issues around intercultural understanding. I argue that the contribution of the artist/researcher/teacher perspective can bring about more inclusiveness, intercultural understanding, acceptance and tolerance in diverse societies.

In Chapter three, (Re)viewing - literature I explore the extensive ways of defining and understanding culture and identity from different standpoints as notions, philosophies, and ideologies through different literature and discourses. I draw upon an extensive span of theoretical concepts from postcolonial diaspora theory, identity politics, and migration, place, belonging and feminist theories. The theoretical concepts covering of social-cultural theorists from Stuart Hall to Rosi Braidotti is ambitious, however these notions where invaluable towards my understanding and reflection in this inquiry.

I understand culture from Marxist, Durkheimian, and Weberian perspectives that address traditional catch-alls such as race, ethnicity, values, traditions and rituals, social and cultural hegemony that frame how culture is interpreted in society. I then consider discourses of postmodern cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Bauman, Spivak, Austin, Jameson and feminist epistemologies. Such discourses introduce and develop new processes such as ‘hybridity’, ‘liminality’, ‘diasporization’, ‘mediatization’ and ‘deterritorializaton’, (Tomlinson, 1999) in defining culture. Discourses on race, ethnicity, postcolonial diaspora theory, hegemonic structures, migration transitions and the consequences of globalisation are crucial in building my understanding and arguments on how culture functions with the social system. Critical theories about Diasporization, narratives of life experiences, migration transitions, ‘liminality’, are notions that relate to my personal experiences, and I try to situate how my identity is contingent upon such processes. The complexities surrounding culture and identity inform how I define, theorise, and conclude my own interpretation in defining culture. In this chapter, I summarise literature and discourses and my arguments that are framed around them.
The fourth Chapter (Re) positioning contextualises my research approach and design, and I define how I devise a methodological framework in using my artworks, the visual and narratives that direct towards ‘ethno-mimesis’. ‘A/r/tography is a method that fuses art as a process and representation, and it involves the artist/researcher/teacher as the subject. I define my engagement in art making and how it takes a ‘generative’ process in building my data. I describe how I understand the reading of visual semiotics to decode messages, meanings, signs and metaphors through my artworks. The last part describes reflexivity and a phenomenological approach towards analysis. It also underscores the concept of ‘visuality’ and representation.

In Chapter five (Re) searching and constructing - I annotate ‘Embarking on my PhD journey’ as the first artwork that opens my research and defines my strategy in this research. I define art making as generative process that bridge my ideas and themes towards a mimetic representation of historicity, cultural inheritances, belongings, memories, life experiences and migration, and cultural transitions through reflective analysis and ‘techné’. I describe the importance of keeping a log and other analytical memos that map my experiences and reflection.

I annotate the five series of paintings. ‘Talk back’ series trace my ancestry and roots. The messages and meanings, semiotics, signs, metaphors involved are described by narratives around Diasporic and postcolonial inheritances from ancestry and birth country. These works reflect the influence of cultural identity and capital. The ‘Down memory lane’ series bridge my childhood memories, life experiences, nostalgia, a sense of belonging to patria and how these inform my identity. ‘The Interval’ describes my mindset before migration to Australia. I define such experiences and migration transitions as the hidden iceberg. The nexuses and complexities within such transitions and negotiation of identities happen within a liminal space.

The ‘Down under Xperience’ series picture my new experiences and perspectives while living in Australia. These works are based on observation and my experiences in a new environment. ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series define further migration transition and other reflections on the sense of belonging and ownership and how I renegotiate my cultures and identities. A feminist perspective defines my journey and experiences as woman and an artist, while transiting through different sites. I assess the dilemmas and challenges of gender roles through the ‘Breaking silences’ series as a witness of how my identity is transitive and generative as directed in future. An ensemble of my works give ‘voice’ to salient issues that often remains silenced through discourses. I use the visual as a tool that transcends the archetypes around few feminist discourses as well as art. I describe how an exhibition of my paintings in the Deakin Phoenix Gallery extends my research to an audience and how viewers open and contribute in new ways of interpreting my artworks.
In Chapter six, Re (interpreting) - I decode the visual semiotics in the five series of my paintings. I discuss inheritances from postcolonial history from ‘Talk back’ series and affective links from childhood memories from ‘Down memory lane’ series, my migration transitions through the series on ‘Down under Xperience’ and ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ and the negotiation of my identity as a woman in ‘Breaking silences’ to convey important meanings and messages. I revisit my approach of using mixed research methods and I define how my art making and artworks as ‘performative’. I reinforce my how and why the personal matters in negotiating and understanding my identity. And I reiterate my roles as an artist/researcher/teacher in my research. I refer to visual narratives and art as representation that sets a dialogue. I discuss how my art exhibition, a reflection and visual mapping approach opens new avenues to understand art expression as performative and how it can be a social vehicle to promote and forge “affective links” (Amin, 2012, p. 29). I describe how my paintings can be used to develop pedagogies for intercultural understanding in multicultural Australia.

Chapter seven (Re) thinking and reflecting - I revisit my arguments that refer to narratives and interpretation of artworks in tracing meaning about identity and culture. I develop vignettes and constructs, that describe the logic behind representation that breaks ‘silences’ and brings ‘voices’ and ‘spaces’ in resolving certain myths and dilemmas about identity and identification processes within postmodern conditions. I discuss how I recognise my culture and identities within postmodernity and how I construct and negotiate my Identities. I elaborate a discussion on cultural capital and Inheritances and life experiences and how I transit through lived experiences, memories and nostalgia from home country. The section on migration and its contingencies address to transitions and experiences that happen within the complexities in a ‘liminal space’. I discuss issues around identity and the hybridity and ambivalence in negotiating identity and a sense of belonging. I discuss how and why I use my art for breaking silences?, and how it informs identity through performative stances. In moving beyond critiques section, I discuss identity crisis as an issue that is about change, liminality or hybridity. My discussion extends to how my identity is performative or transitive through what I experience and through my art. I underline identity processes as subjectivities and uncertainties, and I expose the ambivalent and hybrid nature of culture and identities.

In the conclusion I revisit how my life experiences, nostalgia and memories frame identification processes and how I identify myself as ‘migrant subject’ within the ‘liminal space’. I refer to new ways and the search for new identity, processes of identification and representation and the complexities that surround social identities in a changing global context. I summarise on how my approach and method in using art expression and my personal stories forge ‘affective links’ in understanding cultures and identity as a stranger on the land (Amin, 2012, p. 29).
suggest how there can be further research in the use of art expression and visual semiotics. I discuss art as a method for representation and how artistic expression has the power to communicate. I emphasise on art expression as a ‘medium’ that represents how I understand the ‘self’ through cultural transitions and the idioms and conditions of postmodernism, in an increasingly diverse and globalised world. I conclude with a discussion of how the findings inform a pedagogical model of using art expression for intercultural understanding and how new approaches within Art Education can contribute to bring intercultural understanding, inclusiveness, tolerance and agency of other cultures.
Chapter 1 - (RE) MODELING - Parameters that build my data

Introduction

This chapter introduces the parameters and processes involved in building my data. I first look into the why, where and how?, and this reflection situates how I situate myself in this research and how my personal stories frame my art expression and the visual semiotics in them. This section asserts the importance locating the geographies of home, space, and place from my home country and tracing my roots. I elaborate on the living conditions of ancestors and the implications of diaspora, colonial and postcolonial traits and a time lag through old family photographs I collected through a field trip in Mauritius in 2011. I describe my experience and journey in India into a little village I visited in early 2011. The village is near to where my ancestors belonged and I included a series of my own that have helped me in understanding traditions, culture, values and cultural inheritances and lineages and the current living conditions of the people as I refer to issues of ‘time lag’ and a sense of belonging. I refer to my family migration and my perspectives upon arrival as a new migrant in Australia to contribute in how I frame my data and reflection in this inquiry.

Looking through - Why, Where, and How?

Sparkes, 1994, (pp. 165-183) asserts that “the ability of life history to focus upon central moments... gives a greater sense of process to a life and gives a more ambiguous, complex, and chaotic view of reality.”

In reference to Sparke’s statement, I emphasise on the importance of tracing my roots and the geographies that link to space, place and time. The experiences from home country and the shifts in spaces, places and cultures and through migration are issues that define my identities and cultures.

Geographies – Home country - Space, Place, time

My home country, Mauritius is an insular Island which is also known as the star and key of the Indian Ocean, and it has a colonial past both from the French and British rule. The richness and diversity of ethnicities, religions, and cultures is well-known as a ‘postcard cliché.’ Such diversity is there with descendants of the colonisers,’ the slaves from East Africa, the indentured labourers from India, and the migrants from China. Each community share a peaceful and harmonious living with much tolerance and sharing for each other’s diverse beliefs, traditions and cultures, besides the complex and hybrid notions of socio-cultural dimensions in terms of power and hegemonic structures in place (Eriksen, 2002). A postcolonial vestige survives through language patterns, the educational system and judiciary
practices which is based on French codes, and the naming of districts and places, the architectural concepts of ‘cases créole’ and beach resorts, and the heritage of botanical gardens. The Mauritian ‘Créole’ is the patois, the common language spoken and has recently been accredited officially as part of school curriculum as another language. English is the official language, but Mauritians use French language more fluently and currently. Both postcolonial and current traits inform the sovereignty of Mauritius that sustains democratic ideals for politics, media, social cohesion which promotes respect for languages, cultures, festivals, traditions, cuisines, music, and films running from Western to Bollywood tastes.

At the outset of this study, I had some understanding of how my inheritances and cultures construct and represent my identity. From the field trip, I was able to gain specific information about my ancestry. For example, I now know I am a fifth generation Indo-Mauritian with an inherited diaspora, and I feel bonded to a cultural heritage and linguistic legacy that has perpetuated through my parents and my grandparents. Mauritius is a vibrant multicultural country with multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic cultural legacies and practices, with a diverse population and culture. It is an example of peace and unity in the world where people cohabit in harmony. I recognise that such an environment has significantly influenced my upbringing, education and my perception of cultures, values, and tolerance of difference. There are pressures and ambivalence in advocating inherited cultures and in perpetuating belief systems which often clash with new patterns of thought. Globalisation and technology and the influences of Western concepts and its archetypes do reach insular places too. Being brought up in a modest family, I had limited opportunities to resources libraries, books and art museums and galleries, with minimal exposure to the outside world.

My interest in art since my childhood inspired me to be an art teacher and artist. My teaching experience in Mauritius contributed to my views, interests and concerns about Art Education. The educational system I experienced was based on the British educational system, and although that school curriculum recognised the importance of the expression of cultural identity and capital, it did not do justice to it. As an independent country, the educational system was not free from distortions brought about by colonialism and post-colonial influences. I have always found such an approach limited educational equity for a diverse range of cultural, ethnic and social groups and emerging youth.

TRACING MY ROOTS

In tracing my roots, I refer to the history of Mauritius, its post-colonial influences and the inheritances from Indian diaspora which as attributes are part of my cultural lineage, capital and linguistic heritage. I respond to questions such as: Who were my ancestors? When did they arrive in Mauritius? Where did they come from?
During my field trip to Mauritius in 2011, I traced documents about my ancestry. The Indian Immigration Archives at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) had the documents about my ancestors. The first Indian immigrants of my family came to Mauritius from India as indentured labourers under the British colonisation between 1854 and 1858. Immigration of indentured labourers from India started around 1834, when the abolition of slavery in 1835 withdrew slaves from sugar plantations (Teelock, 2009). Around 453,000 indentured labourers were brought to Mauritius under the Indenture Agreement.

My great grandfather’s name was Heeramun and his father’s name was Dusoruth. He was from Cheetawoo village, in the Arrah (Zillah) district which is in Bihar Uttar Pradesh (U.P) in India. He departed from the Port of Calcutta on a ship named as Futtay Allum and he landed at the Aapravasi Ghatt, Port Louis in Mauritius on the 27th October 1854. His immigrant number was 146167 and he was eighteen years old. He was sent on a Sugar Estate near St Felix in the district of Savannah in the south part of Mauritius to work in the fields as a labourer.

Nawoory Dwarka was my great grandmother who was also from Arrah (Zillah) district, Bihar, U.P, in India but from Bhuddar village. She was eight years old when she arrived to Mauritius and her immigrant number was 208722. She departed from the Port of Calcutta and her ship of embarkation was the Shah Jellan. She arrived in Mauritius on 20th September 1858.

My great-grand parents Heeramun and Nawoory’s son was born in 1876, later they were married in March 1882. They both lived and worked as labourers on a Sugar Estate near St Félix, thereby creating a lineage which I map in a family tree to show how I reside as a fifth generation descendant. This family tree maps our genealogy from the first ancestors from India through to the current day.
Living conditions of my ancestors

It is difficult to trace a detailed account of the lives of my ancestors. I was always fascinated and keen to listen to my grandmother talking about her parents, her childhood, and her life experiences. I think that lived experiences of my first ancestors, their lives and experiences must have been different in the 1850’s compared to my grandparent’s experiences in 1900’s.

I did some research on how the indentured lived and were treated in those days. One thing was sure that life was not that simple, as they were accommodated in slave camps, with poor sanitation and other facilities. In the beginning, only males were allowed to work on the Estates, and later they were allowed to settle as families and have children, and this change was to the advantage of the planters as they had ongoing access to labour. Like other indentured labourers my ancestors were also on a contract to work on sugar estate. The duration of stay in the colony, the working hours, the wages, rations, lodging, clothing and other medical care were part of the contract offered to them. They were provided with shelter on the
sugar estate. Barrack-style housing or thatched huts were provided to them. These habitations had only one room, they were low and lacked ventilation. The huts were built of ‘palissade’ and earth, cut or uncut stones, bricks, boards and cane straws. The walls were white washed, and plastered with thin layer of mud and cow dung (Deerpalsingh, Ng Foong Kwong, Govinden, & Teelock, 2001)

Indentured labourers had few rights and their wages were low. This meant they were exploited and had no means to retaliate in fear that they would be fined. They had rudimentary living conditions and they tried to supplement their food rations by growing vegetables and staple crops such as maize and tapioca. Some raised cattle and goats that they would sell in order to buy food feed their families. It was only from 1860’s that they had proper accommodation when the plantation owners built more convenient barracks near the mills to accommodate labourers. Life was not easy for them as they did not own any property for many years and they had to toil very hard to earn and save for a plot of land. The transition from the camps to the village where people of the same religion, caste and kin could live was an important step towards recreating and building a community, the emergence of a ‘hybrid culture’ (Teelock, 2009). They married within the caste and kin, however there were few inter-ethnic marriages. I briefly enumerate on the historical and changing social context that tracked their lives in this research, however there are salient features within the colonial period that influenced how inheritances of a Diaspora and its legacies have perpetuated over the generations.

**Diaspora and Colonialism**

My ancestors brought with them Hindi and Bhojpuri as native languages from their villages in India. The ‘saree’ as the traditional outfit for women and the ‘paghri’ as head dress, and the religious beliefs of idol worship, enhanced by the chanting of the verses from the Ramayana were an important part of their daily practice. The ‘Kalimai cult’ which emerged out of the plantation society is still practised to day (Teelock, 2009, p. 250). The traditional food recipes of wheat bread (‘chapattis’ and ‘puris’), ‘dal’ (pulses), and curries all flavoured with spices such as cumin and turmeric were part of their diet. Other religious, ritualistic and traditional beliefs and practices about ‘poojas’ and ‘hawans’, wedding ceremonies, childbirth and cremations rituals are part of cultural markers which accompanied them in the new lands and are still practiced.

However, it is difficult to simulate how they really lived in those days. In the MGI Folk museum there are displays of artefacts which inform the way the indentured lived. Importantly, such references informed my understanding and helped me recreate something of their daily activities. Their houses consisted of a wooden structure, the roof was thatched and the floors were polished using cow dung. These houses were situated near or on the Sugar estates in locations called ‘Camp Sucrier’ and these were rudimentary settlements, low in height, and had scarcely
any windows and few pieces of furniture. The kitchen was usually in a corner of the same room, where food was prepared on firewood or charcoal on stoves made of cow dung. My ancestors led simple lives yet adhered to strict daily routines. There was no access to running water in their home and women and children had the tedious responsibility of collecting water from community taps called ‘la fontaine’, and walked with huge and heavy tin containers known as ‘gammels’ on their heads. The household chores were undertaken by women, where grinding the wheat, rice and the spices known as the masala was all done by hand in special huge mortars and pestles and on the traditional ‘roche cari’. Women also reared animals such as cows and goats and helped in the sugarcane fields and in growing vegetables in their backyards. It was the women who practiced their religious beliefs, customs and traditions and wore ‘sarees’, long skirts, blouses and scarfs and traditional jewelleries such as necklaces, bangles, nose studs and earrings as part of their culture and heritage from India. The vermilion known as the ‘sindoor’ is still applied between the parts of the hair and the red dot the tikka or ‘bindi’ on the forehead symbolises the married status of Hindu women in Mauritius as in India, and it is still highly valued, respected and practiced.

Oxen carts were the main means of transportation for sugarcane from the fields to the mills and also as a means to transit from one village to the other. My grandfather was a ‘Chartier’ who did that job. Neither my grandfather nor my grandmother went to school and they could only read and write in Hindi and speak the Bhojpuri language, as they learnt it from evening schools in their communities called ‘Baitkas’. They could understand ‘Créole’ the patois spoken language in Mauritius and but rarely conversed in that language under the family roof. They were illiterate in French and English languages, but they encouraged my father to attend an English medium fee-paying Adventist college by making huge sacrifices and saving as much as they could. My father had to move to town and stay far from his parents for years and he could only meet them during school holidays. These were the sorts of sacrifices he made just for the sake of getting an education. The efforts his parents put in educating my father links to both a social and economic pressure of that time in 1960’s; a revolutionary period in the history of Mauritius in regards to promoting education, industrial growth and ultimately, improving the economy. There were socio-economic factors that privileged my father to first become literate, then to become a primary school teacher, and later to be a professional accountant. My father always acknowledged the sacrifices and pains undergone by my grandparents. His efforts and choices have had a major impact on my upbringing, education and values.

So far, what I have described through historical texts provides a general understanding of how an inherited culture informs my beliefs and identity. I visually represent these through ‘Talk back series 1 – 3. These works depict my ancestors and how they lived in those days. The artworks depict my creative
imagination based on few collections of texts used as references to represent how my ancestors structured their lives. Yet, the intention is to set a dialogue and a discourse beyond a visual and aesthetic representation, which address symbolic meanings and semiotic messages. They also represent ‘time-lag’ differences. I use some family photographs that suggest the concept of ‘time lag’ through shifts and markers that refer to diaspora and postcolonial influences.

‘Time lag’ – Photographs worth a thousand words

The ‘Talk back’ series suggest how I recognise and identify myself within cultural markers that relate to diaspora and postcolonial influences. However, in suggesting the ‘time lag’ from my ancestors to my generation, there seems to be a gap or lapse in time that goes without representation. I felt it important to underscore the hybrid status of culture and identity that could not be fully acknowledged through the ‘Talk back’ series. During my field trip to Mauritius, I had the opportunity to access family photographs and photographs of places and the house where my father was living in the 1950’s in Surinam village in Mauritius. The family photograph on the next page includes my great-grandmother, grandmother, grandfather my aunt and my father. These photographs indirectly connect as part of my data, as these importantly show cultural signifiers that explain the ‘time lag’ I highlight through the signified. It gives agency, recognition and transit meanings about how I understand my identity. There are transitions and mutations in cultures, practices and linguistic abilities through the generations.

![Old family home in 1945, Surinam village, Mauritius](image)

The huts made of thatch, in which my first ancestors lived, were replaced by the ‘case créole’ as inherited from French colonisation period. I discuss this further through my discussion. This is an old picture of the ‘case créole’ that my father was living in in the 1950’s in the village of Surinam in Mauritius. These photos reflect a vestige of the past and the affective links and visual semiotics they convey in regards to space, time and place. The house is no longer there as it was demolished after a cyclone in 1975.
This photograph depicts my great-grandmother, my grandfather and grandmother, my aunt and my father. This photograph was taken circa 1944. The temporal elements frame transitions and meaning from history and epitomize the intervention of postmodernism and its principles in play.

My description and critique of these photographs not only address the subject content but tells me more about my grandparents and my father (Taylor, 2005). It plays a determinant role in questioning cultural transition and identity construction. These photographs suggest many characteristics informed the
colonial period in Mauritius. Photography in the colonial period was viewed as an objective recording device (Pink, 2001) and family photographs were usually taken in studios and only on special occasions. What I want to point out through this photograph is the cultural and physical changes in terms of how my grandfather is dressed in a western style. The suit, shirt, tie and shoes he is wearing are signifiers that demonstrate cultural change. Such signifiers might seem contradictory to cultural inheritances, but these discursively suggest the implications of colonisation that brings changes by imposing the necessity or desire for identification within society at that time. My ancestors were used to wearing the ‘dhotti’, but my grandfather is wearing a pair of trousers. My great grandmother and grandmother are dressed in the ‘saree’, but there are changes in the way they are wearing the jewellery and posing.

On another picture, my aunt is wearing a dress and sandals and my father is wearing shorts and a shirt. This picture reveals changes that happen in ways of dressing and behaviour as influenced by colonialism. The next section is an appendage of text and my own photographs of my visit in a small village in India, Bihar in 2011. This section informs about cultures, traditions and practices and the current living habits of people there.

My journey in a village in India from where my ancestors belonged

It is out of mere curiosity that on my last trip to India in 2011, I had a stopover in the Arrah Zillah in Bihar, UP, and visited a few villages including Banahi and Shahpur. This visit was not to locate any ancestry or my family. I was more
interested in observing the environment and place of origin of my ancestors. After nearly 165 years from when my ancestors left India, there is no simulation or comparison as I have no initial repertoire of what was India like in those days. However, I was inquisitive and wished to observe the lifestyle of people currently living there. I could see similarities in their way of living with those of my ancestors. In the village, the houses are still made from thatch and plastered with cow dung. People rear cows based on religious beliefs, where it is considered sacred that the mother provides fresh milk to the family. The cow dung is a cheap and convenient combustible fuel source for cooking purposes, and for the making of cooking stoves, and it is also used as a fertiliser for the fields. A series of my own photographs on site has been invaluable for me to understand the paradigms of cultures, values, daily living habits and chores and customs and rituals practiced currently in villages from where my ancestors have belonged. These photographs contributed to how I understand and used visual semiotics later through my artworks and discussions.

‘Photograph of hut made of wooden frame, thatched roof and cow dung rendering for the walls, 2011’
Children use the home courtyard to play and this space also houses the cowshed ('gawshala') and it is a vibrant place for people to sit and do things and chat. Families live in extended families but the courtyard is the meeting and entertainment place.
Household chores are mainly done by women and some skills are passed from one generation to the next. These photographs decode some of the traditions and practices and hierarchical practices with the mother in law and daughters and daughter in laws and children assisting and learning.
There are some traditional equipment and tools used in the household like the ‘jaanta’ and the mortar and pestle. Most of the household chores are done by hand and there is still no taps in some houses and villagers collect water in buckets from the communal taps.
‘Women in village home courtyard operating a manual grass shredder, 2011’
‘Woman carrying water buckets to home, 2011’

‘Woman traditionally covering head when outside the house, 2011’

‘Woman hand washing clothes at the village water pump, 2011’

‘Woman traditionally covering head when outside the house, 2011’
‘House view from the street, 2011’

‘Street view with children riding bicycles and playing, 2011’
Women work hard and they undertake the household tasks such as: chopping fodder for the animals, making the stoves out of clay and cow dung, grinding of wheat using the manual circular twin stone grinder ‘jaanta’, rearing of animals, and looking after the children. They dress traditionally in ‘sarees’ and wear jewellery and adorn themselves in similar ways as women in Mauritius having their
roots in Bihar. Yet, they have opportunities to be educated, although the economic and infrastructural means are scarce and their exposure to media and the outside world is limited. This explains differences of access and opportunities currently for women and young girls in this village as compared to those in Mauritius. Although there is poverty and lack of means, these people are happy and live decently on farming and other jobs in construction sites and textiles. These people are among the poorest in Bihar and they are isolated. My observation informs my understanding of culture and identity from a broader perspective. There are changes with time and beliefs evolve through generations. Contemporary factors dominated by location, financial means, facilities and infrastructure; education and exposure to modern concepts such as media, languages, new ideas have a major influence on the trends and evolutionary process in valuing cultural markers and practicing them, and in reconciling and identifying one’s cultures and identities. This section is an appendage of how I could define ambivalence and hybridity within cultures and identities; however it provides concepts to understand this process, although it does not purport to my main argument.

Family migration to Australia

In locating the why, where and how, I underscore tracing my roots and ancestry, their cultural and social background and living conditions and my own profile from home country. Yet, the decisions to migrate to Australia with my family brought a new shift in regards to understanding such notions.

Unlike many other families in the world, the decision to migrate was fuelled by diverse complex, intra-familial decision-making processes (Hardill, Green, Dudleston, & Owen, 1997). Such a decision is most often linked to economic reasons such as seeking financial security, jobs, access to improved standards of living and education for the children. However, unlike some migrants who might have had some enthusiasm for finding more sympathetic locations in terms of gender roles and family ideals in a host country (Duncan & Smith, 2002), my family members were apprehensive in regard to new social relations and structures for adaptation. At that time there were many concerns about the way the family would cope and face such a move and transition.

The process of migration was a tedious bureaucratic procedure which included screening of qualifications, the lodging of applications that started in 2004, and a long waiting period before the visa was granted in 2008. The decision to lodge the application was associated with much enthusiasm, motivation and the hope of a bright future. Yet the final decision to migrate was indeed difficult to make and accept, as there were so many things at stake, including the sacrificing of stable careers, being away from the family and obviously leaving the home country. The waiting process until the visa was granted was a period marked by indecisions, uncertainties, and fears about whether it was going to be the right move. The
transitions would affect every family member and especially the children. The fears and apprehensions were valid during that period, and an element of secrecy was maintained on purpose, to avoid questions and the curiosity of others. This secrecy did not mean denial, but instead was a part of preparing for a huge transition, keeping the mindset and other choices open, in case the procedures failed. I had a fair idea of the impact and consequences of such a move up until the visa was granted. Then, last six months before the move, we had to tell everyone about the decision as we started to wind up things at home, and psychologically and morally prepared ourselves and others for our departure from our homeland. We left Mauritius in November 2008, to permanently settle in Australia. It was indeed a difficult time for everybody. Later, I make reference to migration transitions to define processes around identity and culture that frame notions of cultural transitions and shifts.

‘The Arrival’ and new perspectives

The process of migration cannot be compared to any other kind of travel such as a trip or holiday, when one knows you will soon return to your home. In departing from Mauritius, I felt like I was emptying a ‘space’ regarded as home and dislodging it to some other ‘space’ that would be home, in a new and unknown country. There is also a very strong sense of grief and dislocation. I especially experienced such feelings when I had to choose among personal possessions and highly valued objects such as family photographs. It was not possible to take everything.

I referred to the ‘space of representation’ and ‘structures’ that keeps people in their places, “both socially and spatially” (Samers, 2010) in the literature review. I also discussed my personal and vernacular understanding of ‘space’ and ‘place’ (Delaney, 2005) in which I made reference to ‘spaces’ as lived in my home country, and the transitions of migration that takes me to other ‘spaces’ and ‘places’. Such narratives and experiences, I believe underscore my understanding of the transiency within identities and cultures.

In Shaun Tan’s, (2006) picture storybook, ‘The Arrival’ the main character undergoes difficult experiences and intense moments of sadness when leaving his family. He overcomes the fears of the unknown when moving in a new place. My experience when leaving Mauritius is consistent with this ‘fictional’ account.
My ethnicity, cultural history, and background...versus my lived experiences

What am I about to get myself into?

In the drawing above, I included the following question, 'On which footsteps?' This interpretation of something of my lived experience of transition may be consistent with what most new migrants feel and question, when moving onto new grounds. In my experience it is all about trying to find out new paths within one's own ideologies, vision, and expectations, while concurrently facing constraints, challenges and dilemmas within unknown grounds, not knowing which footsteps to follow. Within this artwork, I began a search for some answers to the questions posed. These footsteps mean more than what is depicted, as it can evoke in those willing to pay heed, multiple meanings, messages about cultural identity, cultural inheritances, similarities and differences, memories, things desired, things lost, decisions and choices never entirely grasped or understood so far. Similarly the footsteps reminds me of a well-appreciated Mauritian artist, (Mangra, 2008), who uses the footsteps of her grand-children born and settled in Germany in one of her artworks entitled, 'Footprints'. This artwork suggests her concerns about the identity crisis that her grand-children might face in terms of what culture to adopt and follow besides those of her roots, whilst she expresses her fears and joy all about it.
On the other hand, my picturing of ‘On which footsteps’ is only a means to express my concern about the way I feel with my family here in Australia. My sons born in Mauritius, having an Indo-Mauritian background and culture, are now settled and growing up in Australia. So what are my concerns?

- **Will they not face an identity crisis, similar to so many other migrant children in Australia?**

- **What about how they will perpetuate their inherited culture and traditions, faced by new influences of a new environment, society and culture?**

- **In such circumstances, how can one anticipate and consider that there will be no inhibitions and constraints in this view?**

These questions were at the back of my mind when I was moving to Australia. Besides my concerns about the children, I also pondered on the consequences of the move on my own career and the economic consequences I would need to endure. I knew that without a job it would have an impact on my sustainability and sense of autonomy as a woman. Such questioning and concern, informed the way I geared my study in exposing the ‘self’, however. My narratives and artworks also refer to my family as the experiences I relate to in some ways also encapsulate their feelings, concerns, and transitions. As the direction of my inquiry shifted, my inheritances as history, cultural inheritances, life experiences and transitions of migration gained importance in my effort to explore the interconnectedness of spatialities of histories, geographies, home, profession, social relations, gender roles, and how and why these would impact on the process and outcomes of identification and representation. Such notions and perspectives tentatively linked to how I understood and gave meaning in situating the ‘self’.
Conclusion

This chapter defines my views about home country - space, place, and time. It outlines how I trace my ancestry and my visit to India in a small village from where my ancestors belonged. I outline the family migration to Australia and the transitions as crucial events that inform my personal stories, experiences and perspectives in building my data in this research. The next chapter looks through my initial inquiry and how I went reorienting my research based on my personal perspectives and profile as an artist/researcher/teacher and my teaching experiences.
Chapter 2 - (Re) strategizing and (Re) Orienting

Introduction

This chapter outlines my initial inquiry and the shifts in taking a personal perspective in re-strategizing and reorienting my inquiry. It contextualises art as mode of representation that puts the researcher as the subject and it situates the significance of this study in ways it might contribute to art teaching practices and intercultural understanding.

The initial inquiry

My key research was initially focussed on understanding the implications of culture and identity on artistic expression. As a new migrant in Melbourne in 2008, I was fascinated by the multicultural context of this Cosmopolitan city. Being an art teacher and having worked for many years in Secondary Education in Mauritius, my interests in Art Education took me to visit the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Art exhibition in March 2009, at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGVA). I had just embarked on PhD study, and this exhibition set me on writing a paper of my experiences and perspectives on art expression of VCE art students (Rosunee, 2010a). As a pilot study, this was a first initiative to investigate how culture manifests through VCE art students’ works.

At this point, I looked at culture through discourses that linked to social theories and notions such as: social and cultural reproduction; cultural hegemony; educational policies and inequalities; cultural and linguistic capital; cultural identity; school culture and youth cultures; and the role of artists and Art Education in the school curriculum and community. This theoretical framework was strategic in framing and situating how social and cultural processes are swayed by consequences of social theories, postmodernism, globalisation and its pressures and technologies and its implications in regards to Visual Arts Education. My argument was geared toward understanding the implications, tendencies, influences and differences it has on the artworks of VCE art students in Victoria. The focus of my initial study was more a case study approach to observe and analyse artworks from current and past VCE art exhibitions (as online resources) and visit to schools with VCE art students and teachers to get their views, opinions and responses through questionnaires and interviews. This study would have primarily set forward how and to what extent VCE art student artworks reflect intercultural understanding and diversity. It would have addressed how Art Education is inclusively approached and accessed by all young Australians.
As a newly registered overseas qualified art teacher, with Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), I was attending art workshops and conferences in Art Education in Australia. However, at this stage of my PhD candidature I had no teaching experience in Visual arts and Studio Arts in Secondary schools in Australia. In such circumstances, a lack of experience was a hurdle that narrowed my insight to focus this research on VCE student’s artworks.

Re-strategising

My colloquium paper overviewed my personal perspective that informed my insight in researching about culture. This part was given much recognition and focus by the colloquium panel. After much reflection, I shifted my research focus to the ontic through narratives of my own life experiences and perspectives and how to use my artworks to represent how I understand and negotiate my cultures and gendered identities. I include the section that described my personal perspective from the colloquium document that underlined my mindset and views at that time, and reoriented my study.

My personal perspective

The sketch - ‘On which Footsteps’

To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world, in broadly similar ways (Hall, 1997b, p. 2).

The decision to research how culture manifests through Visual Art Education was initially guided by my role as a researcher, art teacher and artist, and by who I am as a person. I underscore my personal perspective to hint how I understand the theoretical framework that supports my engagement and commitment to this inquiry. How I framed my research problem was linked to my inheritances, teaching and artistic experience, my gendered role as a woman and also my ethnicity.

My previous research experience in the field and now as a new migrant in Victoria, all contributed to my keen interest in broadening my knowledge and experience for further researching in Art Education in the Australian context. ‘On which footsteps’, describes my mindset while settling down with my family in Australia, and raises several pertinent questions about new paths within one’s own ideologies, vision, and expectations and not knowing which path to follow. These questions relate to identity crisis, how to perpetuate inherited cultures in a new environment, society, and culture, and how to deal with inhibitions and constraints in this view (Rosunee, 2010b)

When I wrote this section of my colloquium paper, I was a new migrant in Melbourne going through the processes of relocation and assimilation into new social structures. However, I was rather unaware that I was undergoing culture
shock, cultural transitions and shifts, and may be also an identity crisis, while I was negotiating and adapting to new ‘spaces’. More importantly at this point, I was making connections concerning how my research would unveil my experiences. Next to my different roles as a mother, teacher, artist and a new PhD researcher, I had just embarked on reorienting my research in understanding and negotiating culture is, and how I viewed my identity and how to represent them both through my art.

(Re) Orienting

In reorienting my research focus to my personal perspective, I had a fair idea of how looking through my history of my home country, my cultural inheritances from ancestry and diaspora, life and professional experiences and migration transitions would inform and frame my understanding of identities and cultures and how these traits could be represented as narratives and artworks. My intention was to understand the impact of cultural transitions and shifts and how to represent them. I extended my theoretical framework to interdisciplinary and overlapping discourses around postcolonial diaspora theory, cultural inheritances, cultural identity, identity construction, lived subjectivity, migration transitions, feminist perspectives, globalisation, and transnational spaces to guide my research through the ‘ontic’ and thereon to build my arguments. In Chapter six, I discuss and reflect on how and why the personal matters, in understanding and representing my cultures and identities.

‘On which Footsteps’, was an initial step that involved the merging of narratives with visual representation, and this sketch initiated reflection on how to reorient my study. In the first painting entitled ‘Embarking on my PhD journey’, I describe my mindset and perspectives when starting my inquiry. It was my way of merging the textual to the visual. Thereon, I reoriented my research journey of transiting through different sites and represented it through a series of my artworks.

I could only locate minimal research that used a combination of narratives and visual methods as artworks. The issues about migration, identity crisis, social interaction, integration and inequalities that refer to personal stories are often overlooked or silenced through discourses. My approach was geared to using my artworks to give ‘voice’ to such issues but which creates a new interface for reflection. As a woman, I aimed to address taboo and silenced issues about cultural shifts, patriarchal concepts and migration transitions as challenges I experienced in defining my gendered identities. I define my role as the researcher as ‘subject’ that uncovers the ontic.
Defining the researcher as ‘subject’ -- Putting myself into the picture

I repositioned my role as the researcher as ‘subject’ that provides the opportunities in exposing my experiences, in its own right (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Auto or interpretative ethnography and personal narratives simulate a crisis towards representation within research. Yet, such frameworks emphasise authors as becoming engaged as characters in narrating their own stories. In setting a dialogue, such inquiries generate arguments, discussions and justifications of their importance in addressing salient issues, that otherwise are often overlooked in general academia.

The aim in this study was to bring - the researcher into picture, where my narratives and artworks hold a ‘voice’ that gives ‘agency’ to individual experiences, while it also brings significance and meaning to a broader audience and the educational community. Such an approach had to work to theorise my arguments, whilst providing a methodological framework that highlights my engagement in art making and interpretation of my artworks, as the researcher. This research is about addressing my arguments about cultures and identities and how to represent them through an artistic expression. Hence, the intention was to describe my experiences through narratives and the visual in an innovative way that prompts reflection. My approach and findings probe for ways that lead to multicultural understanding that can make a difference to society. The reason for mounting an exhibition was to enable the audience to interact with the artworks and reflect on the moral and social dilemmas about identities and processes of identification and representation. The focus was to bring a different outlook on how such notions are challenged, whilst throwing some light on issues such as cultural identity, human mobility and global pressures. This approach validates art as a powerful means to communicate through ‘ethno-mimesis’ and how it is represented both through the textual and visual.

Artist/researcher/teacher (a/r/t) - Is there a paradox within these roles?

I look through my diverse roles as an artist/researcher/teacher that empowers my engagement and reflection in art and how I overview art as a means in building communication, understanding and agency to culture and identities.

Throughout my teaching career, I have adopted a constructivist and reflective approach that develops and fosters art learning for student’s lifelong understanding of the arts, and values individuality and creativity, rather than only focussing on the acquisition of skills and performance. I believe in teacher growth through collaborative workshops, encouragement of teacher portfolios, and the bridging of theory with practice. Successful teaching and learning resides in a cordial environment and healthy relationship between colleagues and students. I have used innovative ideas to implement a Western oriented art curriculum in a multicultural classroom. I have encouraged creativity, individual response and the
discovery of the limits and possibilities of expression through art even with limited resources, and the constraints of a prescriptive art program which in all its length and breadth, reflected Eurocentric frameworks. My research interest focuses on how art can promote harmony and tolerance and intercultural understanding. Art Education is often framed by examination, however if students explore themes and ideas that deal with socio-cultural awareness, they can produce innovative and creative responses. Visual Art Education can be a valuable tool for fostering social and cultural values, cultural identity and capital.

(Atkins, 2002, p. 34) describes “the developments in contemporary cultural life, and how the subject orientation of Art Education is shifting from the art of the institutionalised art world to the sites of contemporary cultural experience”. It is important to understand how Art Education is influenced by cultures and personal life stories and experiences. My experiences as an art teacher with students in Mauritius have been instructive as to how art as a ‘medium’ creates ‘spaces’ to interact with students. Art communicates messages and meanings which have implications on the processes of agency, identification and representation. These experiences empower artistic expression, interaction and representation, and as an artist/researcher/teacher. I build upon these in my research.

I share the same feelings as Ball, (1990, p. 54) who explains that “it is not possible to separate the artist ‘within’ from the art teacher ‘without.’ I have always tried to negotiate a right milieu between my diverse roles in a/r/t. I refer to Ball, (1990) in relation to these questions: Have I always aspired to be an art teacher? Have I always aspired to be an artist? For me these two roles have never been dichotomous. As an art teacher teaching in public secondary colleges in Mauritius, I found it difficult to merge the different roles and qualities in a/r/t, but was in a way “performing a/r/tography” (Pinar, 2004b, p. 17) through the same experiences as described by Porter, (2004). Importantly, I define my own teaching experiences and perspectives to underline my ‘démarche’ and how my current research is informed by my diverse roles.

The art room has been a ‘space’ to nurture, develop and fuse my aspirations and roles in a/r/t. There are many challenges when teaching with scarce resources. I had to improvise and build a ‘space’ I could use to empower my students. In setting ‘this space’, I included a display of notes on artistic techniques and processes, artist’s works, news articles on art exhibitions, sayings, poems, and my own demonstrations of techniques and media as preparatory work, as well as books, magazines and a computer that students could use for referencing purposes. The term ‘space’ refers to practicability, organisation and setting up an environment conducive to and inspiring artistic expression, where students feel comfortable. Such ‘spaces’ provide opportunities and possibilities for art reflection, discussion, production and recognition.
Art teachers can rarely find time to engage and develop their own art making, yet I had a corner for working on my paintings in my art room, and my students were inquisitive about my personal work and often asked questions. For the students “the logic of the conventional classroom [seemed] to exclude teacher creativity” (Pinar, 2004b, p. 14). It was interesting to see how students deciphered the thematic, symbolic, and semiotic concepts and observed the use of techniques and media that I used in my artworks. Such interactions initiated discussions about art and my engagement in art making.

Porter, (2004, p. 106) refers to Ted Aoki, (1994) in describing that ‘teaching and living to happen in specific ‘spaces.’ My experience of the space created between my students is similar to what Porter, (2004) defines as the human space. I created ‘spaces’ for students of grades nine to twelve to engage in discussions about art. Discussions within such ‘spaces’ develop understanding, sharing of ideas, incentives and collaborative work. There were several projects and activities that happened including the mounting of school art exhibitions; stage decorations for school events; mural paintings in the village community primary school; field trips to art ateliers and other art exhibitions. The setting of such ‘spaces’ provided platforms for interaction with and for students. Laurie Ball, (1990) “explores her relationship of art and teaching as ambiguous and fraught with difficulty” (Porter, 2004, p. 106). I define my experiences as ambiguous in some ways; however, it empowered my teaching and reflection, which established trust, enthusiasm, and understanding with students, colleagues and the school community.

Students were motivated to understand and reflect on their own work, their approach and engagement in art marking and their own self. It is important for students to develop a liking for the subject. I share the same thoughts as Pinar, (2004b, p. 15) who describes Porter’s experience that “students learn by watching, and becoming engaged in the process of aesthetic creation.” This experience links to what Porter, (2004, p. 111) suggests about the development of the art teacher:

“ the key is that the teacher wants to be active in his or her field - that learning and growing is a reward in and of itself ” and that “ one must continue to ask questions, to inquire in art in order to “know”” and she goes further to say that teachers need to “ model lifelong learning if we really value it.” (p.111)

Resolving the paradox as an artist /researcher-/teacher

Is there a paradox within different roles as artist- researcher- teacher? There is no clear cut answer as such, yet I try to demystify why there are apprehensions and misunderstandings in negotiating within these roles. I agree with Ball, (1990) as I have put forward my own experience and views about what fed my creativity and pedagogy. The artist nurtures the teacher (Ball, 1990) in keeping abreast with an
ongoing inquiry in working with media and techniques that the teacher wants to teach, and simultaneously “the teacher feeds the artist by allowing more time and experience to objectify and develop personal processes through art history, art criticism and aesthetics” (Porter, 2004, p. 106). This framework allowed me to engage in further reflection about my practice and undertake earlier action-research projects and comparative studies in Art Education. Through such a teaching model, I shared a sense of immediacy, “excitement and commitment” (Detmers, 1996, p. 23) vis à vis to art in general. There is a need to establish a switch in “[demystifying] the art process and the mythic cult of the artist” (Detmers, 1996, p. 23) as it makes the art marking process more “transparent” and exposes the [artist/ researcher/ teacher] within, in more “approachable” terms (Detmers, 1996, p. 23). Such an approach initiated reflection between theory and practice (Pente, 2004). The “dynamic dialectical relationship” between theory and practice (Pearse, 2004, p. 184) is defined as ‘praxis’ and within such praxis there is action, reflection, critical analysis, evaluation and interpretation (Pearse, 2004, p. 184).

Teaching by its very nature involves “a challenge to pose questions, to seek out explanations, to look for reasons, to construct meaning, and it instigates provoking of dialogues with the classroom space” (Greene, 1995, p. 26). Art making as a process in this regards has been a crucial part of my teaching practice and experience within my a/r/t journey, where it has given me more possibilities to describe, explore, and reach for other dimensions of understanding and interaction as ‘generative’. This demystifies the paradox I raised earlier. Pearse, (2004, pp. 184-185) relates to “the essence of learning and teaching [as] relational, and its context is always social (and the social is always contextual) and ... praxis is a way of being in the world.” This experience can be extended to other artist teachers and researchers if research is undertaken and exposed to them within such paradigms.

My professional experience as artist/researcher/teacher and artist is crucial to how I embarked on this research. The use a/r/tography and ethno-mimesis with narratives and art as representation reconciles my journey from the personal to my professional experiences. In the next section, I underline the decisions to migrate to Australia which is part of how I later understand and define my identities.

**CONTEXTUALISING THIS STUDY**

*Art, culture, Identity and Representation*

My approach in this inquiry underscores the relevance of art and the power of the visual. The arts have been defined as generating passionate self-expression to express artist’s emotions, imagination and artistic experience across the ages transiting through different civilisations, cultures, beliefs that purport to serve
different motives and purposes. Culture has been the main motive and focus surrounding such happenings. Hierarchal ranking in the arts have perpetuated as linked to ‘culture’ which nurture, promote and develop through social constructs such race, religious and cultural beliefs involving different civilisations and societies and equally through concepts such as emerging technology, politics, activism, nationhood and feminist and gender issues.

Contemporary arts breach in some ways the rigidity in classifying the arts as hierarchal, and it is described as crude, devoid of aesthetics and cultural bonds and more suggestive of an urge for freedom of expression. Art now stretches to popular and visual culture and new technologies that touch base to new forms of art in situ, body and tattoo art, fashion, virtual imaging, games and social networking sites. Globalisation accelerates the speed and access to new technologies and its effects on contemporary art practice is disconcerting, although it is apparent in subtle ways, and often homogenises and fragments engagement with and towards responses to art (Ben-Rafael & Sternberg, 2002). If we consider looking through the current impacts of social theories and the cultural implications and changes in the arts, there is an overwhelming degree of compromise going on. There is more encouragement for artists to engage in cultural specific interpretation based on their location, although some artists produce artworks that are intentionally de-centred and dispersed over time, space and location. Such artistic responses become absorbed within a globalised economy as commodified art objects (Ben-Rafael & Sternberg, 2002) and Turner, (2001) believes how art can provoke interrogation and breakdown the rigidity and rules that stereotypes art as high art and aesthetics. Such forms of art are less likely to be related to the artist’s feelings and emotions vis à vis his artwork. This also relates to the concepts of visual literacy, visual artistic and aesthetic literacy as described by Doug Boughton, (1994) and how we understand, read, interpret and assign value to art forms.

Through my research, I consider my artworks powerfully represent my cultures and identities, while it reflects my different perspective in relation to sites, spaces, and places and time. On these terms, my artistic expression communicates messages and meanings about identity, belongings, sites and shifting ‘spaces’ and locations. “The conception of artworks as framings of experience” (Fleming, 2003, p. 99) is what defines the artists intentions. The context and culture in which artists perform and their experiences inform their intentions in responding in different ways to the framing of expression. This research addresses both the visual and textual and how to use art and spaces for representation that uncovers my journey.


SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

Art, culture, identity - cultural diversity and art teaching practices

When considering the arts and representation, it becomes imperative to reconsider the implications of such changes equally in and through society and education. This study refers to art, art practices and ways to use artistic expression and representation to refer to culture, context and identities. These concepts can be used as a tool for intercultural understanding that brings inclusiveness, acceptance and tolerance. I refer to my experience working as an art teacher in Mauritius. From my professional experiences in art teaching and as an artist, I argue that there is need to acknowledge and recognise cultural diversity so it can be valued and encouraged through art practices in schools. Art can be a medium that brings intercultural understanding and how students learn to share their experiences and express themselves in other ways than being only passive consumers of art.

Current debates refer to how Australia “has undergone significant structural changes,” (Lewis, 2008, p. 1). The National Cultural Policy (Australian Government, 2011) acknowledges the growing diversity in population needs and in this view there are measures to match reform policies and advocacy for economic, social and technological changes and issues of global interdependence. The National Cultural Policy uses ‘culture’ as a means to facilitate assimilation, inclusion and recognition of diversity and it extends to shifts in ways of thinking to depict the aspirations of a country, towards 2020. Policy measures target social, educational and economic prospects in instilling efforts and strategies to legitimise diversity in Australia through the promotion of arts and creative industries (Artscape, 2011). “The arts and creative industries are fundamental to Australia’s identity as a society and nation”, and importantly to the success of the country “as a national economy” (Australian Government, 2011, p. 4).

Key bodies in Australia stress that there is a need to review the education system to identify how the arts are valued and how they cater for future young Australians. This has been acknowledged as an important policy measure by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2008); the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2009); the National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008), and the National Curriculum reform. Similarly, Asia literacy has been signified as a priority and as a significant measure for Australia to deal with so as to sustain its position and economic growth on the global scale. Under such circumstances, there are no alternatives other than to improve advocacy, support and empowerment in recognising social and cultural factors, cultural diversity, equal access and opportunities to education, jobs, and economic merits to allow Australia to successfully achieve these ends. In line with these initiatives, situating
how ‘culture’ is significant to societal balance and how the arts contribute to socio-economic, cultural traits and social identities within education is significant for future development in Australia.

Productive countries invest more in nurturing cultures, the arts, (Artscape, 2011) and education. From an educational perspective, however, current research scarcely focuses on researching the social and cultural perspectives related to arts and representation and how Visual Art Education can invest in promoting diversity and inclusion. In Australia, the visual arts have been examined so as to find ways to better acknowledge and promote cultural diversity. Two incentives such as: Why Asia? (AEV, 2009) and the new Arts standards for AusVELS (VCAA, 2013) have been introduced to promote intercultural learning in art, however this is only an initial step towards empowering students to better understand and appreciate the diversity of people, environments, cultures, belief systems, and the art forms of other cultures.

In line with this, it is important to look for other ways to give students better opportunities to acknowledge, understand and represent their own cultures, cultural identities, and cultural capital through art in more significant ways. One broad recommendations suggests increasing “knowledge about the specific characteristics and outcomes of learning in individual or multiple art forms” (AEP, 2004). However, most current research targets the development of advocacy, policy making, evaluation and leadership of the arts and visual arts. O’Toole & Beckett, (2010, p. xii) mention that ‘particular politics” in Australia create the conditions and the imperatives for formal research, concerning how art practice and artistic expression involves shared and negotiated approaches as an issue that demands constant rethinking. Whilst autonomy and discrete disciplines of art-making processes through research propose are upheld in such circumstances, recent policy reviews argue about the need for artistic and educational research collaborations rather than restricting the focus to separate disciplines of practice (Ewing, 2010). The visual and its representations and reflexive understanding are means to communicate better intercultural understanding (Fitzgerald, 1993).

My research focuses on representation of my cultures and identities through art, in order to assist artists, researchers, art teachers and students to understand better how to bring meaning and agency to such notions. This research can be extended to family and school communities that face issues of inequality, marginalisation and more specifically to migrants and refugees, where it can bring new ways to understand them if they use art to represent who they are and issues they face. Visual research methods can empower intercultural understanding, while the social significance of art and feminist art is underlined to be largely undervalued (Sullivan, 2005, p. xi). An exhibition of my artworks brought new frames for understanding such issues on a broader audience.
**Conclusion**

This chapter underscored my initial inquiry, the shift in my approach and underlined my approach as the researcher as the ‘subject’. It outlines my perspectives and experiences as artist/researcher/teacher which empower how I engage in this research. In contextualising this inquiry, I looked at art as representation and the significance of how this inquiry can contribute to understanding diversity through art practices, education and society in general. The next chapter reviews literature and discourses that frame my arguments.
Chapter 3 - (Re) viewing Literature

Introductory review

In this chapter, I discuss and summarise literature that frame the understanding of the complexities of culture and identity as semantic terms.

The following arguments are informed by discourses around colonialism, postcolonial history, diaspora, cultural capital and inheritances, race, ethnicity, and cultural hegemony in relation to postmodern conditions.

In the process of negotiating my identity I refer to identity crisis, migration transitions, geographies of space, place and time, gender and feminist perspectives. I review major socio-cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, Bauman, Bhabha, Said, Spivak, Ritzer and the feminist perspectives of Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti. I also consider post-structuralist and post humanist critics, feminist perspectives and affect theory to help articulate my experiences and gender roles, and my art as self-expression and representation. It is ambitious to pull together discourses from socio-cultural theorists from Stuart Hall to Rosi Braidotti, however, reading through them was invaluable in how I understand concepts around postcolonial theory, identity formation, migration and relocation as part of globalisation and feminist approach in regards to my art as performative.

Defining paradigms of culture and identity and how these influence identity processes within the global

I define my understanding of culture and identity after reviewing discourses from different perspectives. Such discourses locate where I stand in relation to different paradigms.

Culture and the living standards of people are determined by economic forces (Jenks, 2005). The particular set of interests formulates ‘culture’, where ‘dominant interests’ equate to power. Power, in turn, is rarely manifested as naked physical force, but it is mediated through the existing systems of stratification within society in relation to class, gender, race, ability, age and so on. In relation to culture, the Marxist view connects ideas with the predominant system of stratification’ (Jenks, 2005, p. 70), where concepts such as “hegemony” emerge from modern theory and ideologies related to the theory of culture. The concept of cultural hegemony as explained from a Bourdieus’s, (1986) perspective, links to culture as defined from a structuralist framework, and it is crucial to understand new and current notions on hegemony as attached to post colonialism, postmodernism and migration issues. In my study, I later investigate the influences
of the colonial and postcolonial on my home country and my ancestors and how these traits had an impact on their identities. The social world is comprised of rules and systems that structure and inform an individual’s behaviour, and in this I try to explore how such norms impact on identification and representation in society. Bourdieu opened new spaces for dialogue with the introduction of terms such as habitus, and social or cultural capital. While, his perspective is directed towards recognising ways culture is embodied and experienced by the individual, I use this same line of thought to define my cultures as lived and experienced and how I represent them.

Poststructuralist’s concepts on culture are wide and include perspectives, critiques and deconstruction of the term from different conceptual schools of thought. The realm of avant-gardism by Lyotard, Lacan, Baudillard, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari extend horizons of interpretation and subjectivities. Derrida’s textual view of culture takes another direction compared to Foucault’s deconstruction of post-structuralist socio-cultural theory. In Foucault’s description “culture(s) are defined not made up of lineage and heritage” but as “cultural signifiers [these] provide meaning in contexts beyond the text” and as such is a “symbolic system” which needs scrutiny (Jenks, 2005, p. 198). “As a play of signifiers” I explore how culture is “a construction of meaning through the exercise of power,” (Jenks, 2005, p. 198) and how it has an impact on identity when dealing with cultural shifts within space, place and time.

I refer to the linguistic turn in the 1970’s as supported by structural linguists de Saussure, (1974) and Levi- Strauss, (1968) as structural anthropologist and Barthes, (1973) semiological readings of popular culture gives a broader idea of how culture has been studied from overall cultural studies perspective (Gray & Mc Guigan, 1993). Critical perspectives from a cultural studies paradigm links culture to social and cultural processes. As such, it refers to power relations and hegemony that extends to other strands such as communication, media studies, and film that importantly frame its definitions in the contemporary. Raymond William’s, (1976) thinking refers to the experiences of everyday life and from a structuralist perspective he sees semiology extending the potentials to further study and analyse social practices. There are redefinitions of term ‘culture’ that renew its meaning as previously defined by William, (1976) which fits new keywords that emerge from those changes in society and global circumstances. New definitions are built up based on new social theories and structures and emerging concepts that are derived from the consequences, influences and impacts of postmodernism, globalisation, global economic pressures and new technologies.

perspective and how it extends to issues of global mobility and migration transitions. Culture links to social theories and structures as these undergo changes over time, and these influence, affect and modify identity processes and statuses. Circumstances of change inform identity crisis within population or societies. Such conditions are often associated with global financial insecurities, poverty, and lack of access to resources which builds on frustration. Omi & Winant, (2005), Bhabha, (2005) and West, (2005) associate the impact of history, post colonialism in relation to cultures.

Said, (1994) opened a different set of questions that frame ‘race and ethnicity’ and “the operations of power in the Eurocentric construction of the ‘Orient’ across many sites of knowledge production”(Gray & Mc Guigan, 1993, p. 2). He defined “culture as not just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather [as]… appropriations, common experiences and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures”(Said, 1994, p. 262). I adopt Said’s line of thought later in this paper when I discuss cultural capital as inherited, and the experiences of appropriations with cultural inheritances that define my identities.

Hall, (1996b) introduces a sociological dimension to understanding culture from a textual construction of meaning, reading and decoding of text. From a Foucauldian perspective, Hall, (1996b) brings a new approach to analyse the consequences of articulating cultures of the ‘other’ or within the conceptualisation of a culture of ‘difference’. In making reference to binary divisions of the colonisers and the colonised, he coins it as remaining profound, and highlights such issues as making the post-colonial time also a time of ‘difference’, which is marked by staggered transitions. Hall, (1996b) calls for a re-reading of the very binary form in which the colonial encounter has for so long been represented, and what the post-colonial discourses have tried to bring forward. His argument prompts us to re-read ‘colonisation’ as part of an essentially transnational and transcultural ‘global’ process and how “it produces decentred diasporic or global rewriting of nation-centred imperial grand narratives”(Hall, 1996b, p. 247). I refer to influences and implications of being part of a diaspora and social and cultural belongings, as well as networking and transculturalism as new norms in global cities.

From another perspective, Bhabha (1994) extends an understanding of the cultures and representation for those at the margins, people who face contingencies associated with migration, dislocation, loss of identity, a sense of belonging, relocation and recognition. His work also brings into focus the avenues and possibilities for change and transformation to assist migration, and provide a scaffolding in re-articulating roles and relationships. Such notions questions views of culture as ‘tradition’, formality and social rules as immutable ( Lynam, 2004, p. 79). Bhabha, (1994, p. 171) challenges the notion of social positions, a reconstitution of “the discourse of cultural difference” that address not only
“cultural contents and symbols” but attempts “a radical revision of social temporality”, with “rearticulation of the sign in which cultural identities may be inscribed.” He posits questions about “how deconstruction of the ‘sign’ and the emphasis on indeterminism in cultural and political judgement transform our sense of ‘subject’ of culture and the historical agent of change?” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 174). His line of thought and arguments informs how I extend my understanding of culture and identity, and inform my experiences of defining migration transitions and relocation, and the notions of space, place and time.

On the other hand, there are numerous ways how culture has been conceptualised and defined in relation to social structures and the social system. “Culture needs to be interpreted within and against the framework of social relations which makes it possible and frames its availability” (Beilharz, 2007, p. 109). Beilharz, (2007) explains how Bauman, (1999) mediates a practical level of culture with a theoretical one. Whereas, Bauman (1999) gives a composite idea of culture:

Culture is as much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much about continuation; about novelty as much as about tradition; about routine as much as about pattern-breaking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monotony of reproduction; about the unexpected as much as about the predictable (pp.1-10).

This definition helps me to better understand ‘the core ambivalence of the concept of culture’ as exemplified by Bauman, (1999) and other surrounding discourses that I address through my study. As explained by Beilharz, (2007, p. 117), Bauman defines culture as a “structuring activity, where it represents the tension or struggle between freedom and dependence.” Bauman argues that culture relies on ‘habitus’ (Beilharz, 2007), and we use culture to refer to creativity and social reproduction. The era of the ‘post’ informs altered structure of social relations and production as global economy, and technological advancements which change such notions. Bauman, (1999) draws attention to such structural drifts in relation to the social relations and such transformations within the postmodern that “attends to the necessary allegiance of ‘techno-science’ with national and transnational consumer capitalism” (Jenks, 2005, p. 203) - coined as globalisation. “The practical, realist, materiality of everyday life is reduced through representation and thus aestheticized” (Jenks, 2005, p. 203). I try to explore such avenues in my study.

Recent discussions on culture refer to the “globalising and information age” (McCarthy, Crichlow, Dimitriadis, & Dolby, 2005, p. xix) and migration and its influence upon race and identity production. New processes in defining culture refer to terms such as ‘deterritorialization’, ‘hybridity’, ‘liminality’, ‘diasporization’, ‘mediatization’ (Inglis, 2004, p. 146) and transnational spaces and cultures. These concepts put into the picture issues such as global mobility, migration,
acculturation and growing tendencies towards global cultures. Culture can be studied from a global perspective and the theoretical and analytical frameworks shift the focus in studying culture from lived experiences rather than from a textual interpretation. In understanding culture, I underscore a drift from poststructuralist perspectives to other perspectives that address notions of “the subject and the individual” in relation to “what is perceived as exhausted postmodernism” where the initial “critique and deconstruction of identity seemed simply misplaced” (Schwab, 2011, p. 40). While, philosophers like Habermas, Jameson, Callinicos and Rorty are among those who contested the poststructuralist perspectives, I now look at some discourses that deal with a Neo-Marxist approach.

Jameson, (1998) sees a Neo-Marxist’s approach, as the most influential critique of postmodernism in the 1980’s, addressing issues of marginality and social inequalities and oppressive powers that questioned existing order. In his view, the present has lost connection with history, where postmodernity transforms historical past into a series of ‘pastiche’ – emptied-out stylisations that are commodified and consumed through capitalism. In that sense postmodernism has lost a sense of any distinction between the real and culture.

Jameson further argues that a pedagogical political culture seems to endow the individual subject by giving him importance; “a heightened sense of its place in the global system” (Jameson, 1991, p. 54). This also means the new perspectives positions the subject to face the truth of postmodernism, where changes challenge him to find new forms of representation, and asks for a repositioning of the individual and communities so as to act and struggle within what he defines as “neutralised spatial concepts” as well as “social confusion” (Jameson, 1991, p. 54). “The political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping on a social as well as a spatial scale” (Jameson, 1991, p. 54). I now elaborate on such notions in order to inform post-humanist critics and feminist perspectives about culture.

Jameson’s ideas informed feminist critics such as Butler, (1990) in demystifying irreducible truth around identity. Spivak, (1990b) seeks a redirection of deconstruction towards new issues, in order to move towards “a critique of imperialism” (Schwab, 2011, p. 40). For scholars such as Spivak, Miller, and Said and others, deconstruction became an effective tool to defend the cause of minority groups and their issues. An institutionalised “engaged” version of deconstruction (Clayton, 1993, p. 53) addressed hegemonic controls, inequalities and domination in order to respond to identity politics determined by issues such as ethnicity and gender differences (Schwab, 2011). New perspectives aimed to redefine limits and to develop a more receptive version of poststructuralism that coexists with minority politics, and which reinforces the hybrid character of identity. Harvey, (1989) and Brooker, (1996) together with the major contribution
of Habermas, (1984) take into account concerns about inequalities, minority rights and social justice in America. Such concepts inform a move beyond postmodernism to revalue Lyotardian’s contested micro-narratives effectively altering the conception of diversity and differences at the turn of this century and reflecting on identity as related to context, space and time (Schwab, 2011).

The discourses involved are concerned with understanding culture drift to define processes of identity and it’s positioning within the postmodern. In relation to my research, I investigate culture and identities, but from a more self-reflexive perspective. I extend this review and look at notions such as identity, identity construction, the concept of hegemony, race, ethnicity, post colonialism, diaspora, globalisation, and migration, and its contingencies within the nexus of space, place and time. I also refer to the spatial and cultural turn and other feminist epistemologies that inform notions of self and gender.

**Why identity matters?**

“The world is made up of numerous identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically” (Said, 1991, p. 17). We live in a world where identity matters. “It matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life” (Gilroy, 1997, p. 301).

From a postmodern view of looking at culture there are many issues that direct us to refocus on the definition of identity and the identification processes. Definitions about identity take us to different dimensions and meaning within the contemporary as stipulated by the statements of Edward Said and Paul Gilroy. Identity importantly situates an individual as an authentic ‘self’, but it also builds up a sense of agency as one resides in society. These aspects relate to my own journey of understanding a sense of belonging and how I search and negotiate for my identity as I transit through different sites and experiences. First, I address to the basic definitions of identity to then elaborate how it entangles to other complex issues.

“It is as difficult to define the word ‘identity’ as it is to define ‘culture’ (Austin, 2005, p. 1). “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think” (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Yet, Austin, (2005, p. 1) defines “identity as a contemporary buzzword” which “[assumes] multiple meaning” and “unlike culture [it] undergoes development and evolution.” Definitions of identity are considered to have ‘performative’ stances (Butler, 1990) or “active processes for identification” (Weedon, 2004, p. 7) which can depend on the way we dress, on gender, the language we use, and the way norms are adopted that become “part of lived-subjectivity.” Helms, (1993, p.3) describes ‘identity’ as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perceptions that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group.”
Weeks, (1990, p.88) gives another perspective of identity by defining it as being:

...about belongings, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to our individuality...At the centre however, are the values we share or wish to share with others.(p.88)

Looking through a poststructuralist lens and an emerging cultural paradigm in the postmodern, my interest is geared towards questions of authenticity, belonging and identification that become complex and problematic against diverse experiences, encounters and situations. The postmodern and the pressures of globalisation work to take distance from oneself and to acknowledge the ‘ontic’ as well as the ‘other’ “as authentic and partly construed and discursive” (Schwab, 2011, p. 49). Soules, (2002, p. para.11) suggests that “like the fish in water, we are so immersed in our (mediated) environment [that], we forget it’s even there.” However, although the world is increasingly seen as one place as a consequence of globalisation (Robertson, 1992), this does neither “imply that there is, or will be, a unified world society or culture”(Featherstone, 1995, p. 114), nor does it not mean that cultural identity can be exclusive.

These definitions about identity give a generic view of the notion; however further deconstruction of the term is needed. I share the views of Krishnamurti, (1996) to define my self-expression as an effort to express myself and how I view myself to interact in my environment, that defines my identities and how I describe my experiences further in my discussion.

While, a poststructuralist twist and Neo-Marxist approach surround my arguments, in the next sections, I stress the need to perceive the social, cultural and identity as mutable, contingent and in a constant process of negotiation. Cultural hegemony, gender, race, and religion are historically present and create tensions as one moves to explore notions of identity, globalisation and global mobility. Such elements reference dilemmas with shifts in geographies spaces and temporal coordinates. I look at how such shifts address my lived and encountered experiences and transitions. From such lenses I understand my identity as complex and how I am identified in society, and how it influences my existence. These important questions frame how I understand identity processes and construction.

Identity construction – what it means in the postmodern?

To understand what is meant by ‘identity’ within the postmodern, it is important to understand and refer to the concept of how identity is constructed. Identity formation is a dynamic and lifelong development process. It is a dialogue between an individual and his or her social setting (Erikson, 1959; Somer, 1994) which is defined as the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1991), a set of dispositions that make
individuals act and react in certain ways. Identity is also formed in a ‘relational setting’ (Somer, 1994, p. 626) similar to a social network. In modern societies, identity formation becomes complex due to the pressures and entanglements of global and technological forces.

A psychological overview of identity and the ‘self’ helps to understand how identity is constructed, enacted and changed. Gergen’s, (1994,1996) postmodernist perspectives indicate significant transformations in identity structures. The shift and focus on relational ‘self’ is directed by socialising technologies that increasingly mediate relationship with others. Social networking indeed makes face to face interaction rare, thus dragging many people into virtual spaces through the web. The impact of such influences on identity and self is apparent, mostly among the generation Y and Z who have not known how to live without the internet. Currently the situation has worsened as freedom for surfing the internet and eschewing of an exorable amount of data, visual images and interaction fuels superficiality. The postmodern ‘self’ comes to exist only in relation to external images and the “inner self” is thus populated by others. If Gergen’s (1996) thought that this situation was not so prevalent in the mid 1990’s, now it seems that it is not too far from reaching a point of saturation. The effects of social saturation is manifested in stages that start with “strategic manipulator”, moves toward “pastiche personality” and finally develops into “relational self” in the postmodern context (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 26).

On the other hand, ‘strategic manipulators’ experience a sense of alienation from their own beliefs, opinions and conscious intentions; their interaction with people then take superficial stances through technology, and often becomes intrusive and exponential. This particularly reminds us of our habitual ways of using texting, emails and social networking sites that challenges the whole concept of face to face interaction. Moving on to the “pastiche personality”, it is a stage where identity is influenced by fashion and rewards, often in “a form of narcissism” in search of “self-gratification” (Gergen, 1991, p. 154) and it is motivated by our quest for professional achievement and material gains, and increasing social relationships, which can also be defined as agency power. As Gergen, (1991, p. 155) mentions “ the boundary between the real and the presented self – between substance and style – is erased”, whereas for “the relation self” identity construction “is played out in relation to others” (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 28). The social has a sustaining and supportive role in relation to identity, where an individual has identity only because it is “permitted by the social rituals” (Gergen, 1991, pp. 156-157). It relates to how society accepts and defines such a category of people as important and “essential to the broader games of society” (Gergen, 1991, pp. 156-157). How we interact, and respond to our environment equally plays a key role in how we define our identity and I explore these elements in negotiating my identities.
Postmodern personalities referred to in Gergen’s (1991) analysis make sense, although there are weaknesses in how he refers to ‘inner resources’ informing the agency upon identity (Côté & Levine, 2002). Gergen (1991) claims that media technologies increasingly embed people’s lives and have consequences on the self and the formation of social and personal identities. According to Schwartz & Dunham, (2000) there is a search for a complete ‘self’ and commitment to the act of setting up a particular set of goals, values, and beliefs to which to adhere. Research has shown that academic performance and achievements are related to identity statuses, identity formation and identity styles (Xu, 2009). Similarly, self-perception as related to self-esteem and self-efficacy is linked to academic competency and this is crucial to an individual’s wellbeing (Ellsworth & Lagacé-Séguin, 2009). I refer to such processes when describing my own experience of negotiating identities in Chapter seven.

Identity is a currently debated notion by social theorists, and it is increasingly becoming an important concept. Events post September 11 contribute to further discrimination based on religion, race and ethnicity on a global scale. Globalisation, global mobility, communication, and economic crisis appear to be contributing to social upheavals in many countries. Such turbulence suggests a cultural and spatial turn, a change and reversal in ideologies and choices, and demands for more democratic processes. Such factors have led to an increased urgency for many individuals around the world to locate a sense of self, identity and a sense of belonging. In the process many people are unaware and mostly unprepared to face changes and make choices. Such situations increasingly define identity formation processes as problematic issues, and this refers specially to migrants and refugees. Some films such as Mira Nair’s ‘The Namesake’ and ‘The reluctant fundamentalist’ deal with issues and dilemmas in relation to migration and changing views in regard to identity and ethnicity, religion and belonging.

I try to locate such experiences when defining my own identities as I transit through migration and relocation processes. In doing so, I identify the crisis in renegotiating identity within new social structures. The issue of migrants and refugees is salient and it involves a lot of people going through identity crisis and a rethinking of identity renegotiation and agency. My investigation about identity is geared to understand its relation to history, culture and inheritances including the impact of race, ethnicity and diaspora, life experiences, migration transitions and relocation experiences. There are subjectivities in defining my own identities in relation to such notions and I highlight them in the next sections.
Race and ethnicity - How it plays through how I understand identity construction?

Race and ethnicity are social constructs that frame cultures and belongings. “Race is a vexing term with a myriad of connotations and historical, cultural resonances” (Braziel, 2008, p. 132). I take of historical, cultural and evolutionary up these concepts in order to underscore how race and ethnicity are part ideological constructs that alter processes of identification. I align such constructs to my own situation. “Race is a relatively impermeable part of our identities” (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 5) and examining the terms and conditions of race and ethnicity is important, as it is linked to attributes such as “colour, descent, ancestry, nationality, ethnicity, language”, which “form the basics of social constructions” (Arber, 2008, p. 10). The idea of not giving in “to the rigidity and interdictions of self-imposed limitations that come with race, moment, or milieu, instead you move through them to an animated and expanded sense...”(Said, 1994, p. 279). Social constructions inform the meaning of race and identity as “social representations” (Arber, 2008, p. 10) and how it is being reconstituted in a globalised context which makes sense in understanding the mutations that happen in defining race, ethnicity, ancestry, identity and nationality.

Race is theorised as “a historically contingent character” rather than assigned to only a biological form of belonging (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 6). However, challenging the theoretical concept and coherence of “race” is a new venture, where now its meaning has been utterly transformed. The conservative definitions of race have shifted and it is even regarded as an illusionary concept which needs requestioning as an “ideological construct,” used to “manipulate, divide and deceive?” (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 3). Yet, the focus is more on giving attention to the “continuing significance and changing meaning of race” and Omi & Winant, (1993, p. 3) argue about the transcendence of the term “race” with a replacement of the category of race to others such as ethnicity, nationality or class. However, Omi & Winant, (1993, p. 4) also argue about these definitions and provide alternative perspectives where race is neither an “ideological construct” nor does it “reflect an objective condition.” In previewing these perspectives, they discuss how Field’s, (1990) from a Marxist perspective defines race as an ideological need to frame a category of people related to slavery in the United States. Omi & Winant, (1993) see such a definition as a rather narrow perspective linked to one social context. They discuss the evolutionary processes of race-thinking from its origins by how it responds to changing socio-cultural circumstances. They invoke two ways of criticising ‘race as ideology’ as an approach (Omi & Winant, 1993). I will now more fully develop their critique.

From the outset, they are critical of definitions of race that fail to recognise that social constructs change over time, as major elements in social organisation and identity formation. Importantly, their critique focuses on how it fails to
accommodate the “level of experience of everyday life,” (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 5) and thus race can hardly be dissociated as part of our identities. They view society as racialised, and without a racial identity one is apt to have no identity and where “raceless is akin to genderless,” (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 5). Similarly, even to assign an objective point of view to the concept of race is also problematic as this approach cannot “grasp the process-oriented and relational character of racial identity and racial meaning” (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6). Furthermore, “it denies the historicity and social comprehensiveness of the race concept” itself (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6). Also, it takes no account of “racial formation”, that recognises people as individual or groups in society who can “manage incoherent and conflictual racial meanings and identities in everyday life,” (Omi & Winant, 1993, p. 6).

From a critical theory perspective, these ideas underline that the concept of race needs to be reviewed from “racial concept theory”, in which it “recognises the importance of historical context, the contingency of framing racial categories and the social construction of racially defined experiences,” (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 7). “It is better to explore history rather than to repress or deny it ” (Said, 1994, p. xxx), and I believe that historicity and ancestry play an important role in how I define my identities in this study. Current debates about postcolonial subjectivity, diaspora and identity, ethnicity, migration and global mobility repositions notions of race, a sense of belonging and identity, and I suggest these notions need to be researched further.

I support the implications of Omi & Winant’s, (2005, p. 8) reference to the conquest of post colonialism and migration as a new kind of “racial globalisation”, and the addition of new definitions and terms such as transnationalism, transnational pressures, identities and spaces (Rizvi, 2011). Nevertheless, in contemporary global context, the contingency towards “diasporic solidarity and race consciousness,” is taking new dimensions, established through a resistance to “racial stigma” (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 8). After the September 11, the concept of racial profiling is blatantly apparent at a global level, thus signalling a regress towards ‘Orientalism’ (Said, 1978) and it informs conspicuously an “increasing racialisation” in the West as defined by Omi & Winant, (2005, p. 9).

Postcolonial perspectives and diaspora are issues that inform inheritances of culture and identity and indicate redirections towards dissolution of boundaries drawn by colonial and neo-colonial Western hegemony. Edward Said, (1978) describes this in ‘Orientalism’. These notions, I suggest, provide an ideological conflagration on concepts of hegemony, power, “representation and reality” (Marrouchi, 2004). There is a rise of new social structures and classes within transnationalism, which do not mark an end to social class and hegemony; it however foregrounds other cultural elements as imposed. There are not conflicts of compatibilities between different social groups, but it is more about who
benefits and enjoys most of the current conditions of modernity, not by defining cultural values and norms but in terms of economic and political power relations. If there is a search for recognition of cultural groups, such as migrants in a minority in a host country, it is from a Gramscian view in establishing hegemony, that I attempt to understand the so-called cultural turn, from postcolonialism and diaspora as basic notions, and how these are linked to social structures, identity processes and representation, in a globalising trend.

Post colonialism, diaspora and identity

In today’s global context, the status of postcoloniality and migratory diasporas cut across many countries, where multicultural society is an empirical reality (Gunew, 2004). Before elaborating on the meaning and significance of these concepts in the contemporary, I overview and summarise my understanding about postcolonialism and diaspora.

The term “postcolonial” is taken as the period after independence, and the cessation of formal colonialism. Postcolonial studies have gained a lot of attention and endorsement within current literature. Postcolonial discourses or critique resonate with new processes that suggest the concerns and ambiguities of a new world situation caused by globalisation, transformation of the global economy and global capitalism. Such processes impact on the social and cultural aspects of life and disorganise concepts around identity and hegemony; whilst uncovering resistance and subversiveness in cultural relationships. The discourse about postcoloniality is oriented towards “radical rethinking and reformulation of form of knowledge and social identities authored and authorised by colonialism and western domination” (Prakash, 1992, p. 8).

Discourses framing postcolonial studies support and address the politics of cultural identity and recognition and ‘redistribution’ as supported by Nancy Fraser, (1995). There is much emphasis on the “cultural complexity of identity formation”, while “post colonialism is suggestive and reflexive of a world no longer structured along binary axes, be they First World /Third World; North/South, East/West or socialist /capitalist” (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 166). My argument stretches to an understanding of the implications of postcolonialism on identity and how to address increased global mobility and cross-border migration which brings fragmentation and “heterogeneous mixes of belonging,” whereby the notion of class as a source of identity is being challenged and “decentred” (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 166). Such theoretical frameworks help me to assess how my sense of belonging and identity is fragmented and hybrid.

Much postcolonial discourse echoes postmodernism, and I seek to understand the shift in ‘cultural conditions’ related to changes, shifts and consequences in “contemporary state, situation, condition or epoch” (Shohat, 1992, p. 101). It suggests a decolonised mindset, by breaking binaries of the coloniser/colonised
and entrenched legacies of colonial thinking to reveal new societies based on complex heterogeneity and contingency. I focus on how the postcolonial opens opportunities for subalterns to reconstruct their identities by giving them new avenues to build up a sense of belonging, a place in history, and to situate their own hybrid position of practice and negotiation (Bhabha, 1988). The concept of hybridity is recurrent in postcolonial discourses which hyphenates what Gayatri Spivak, (1990a) termed as "reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value-coding" (Prakash, 1992, p. 8). “Hybridity commonly refers to creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation” and “hybridisation takes many forms from linguistic, cultural, political to racial forms” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998, p. 118).

It is important to understand postcolonial discourse and the merits of development. It is equally important to consider the concept of ‘hybridity’ as a term celebrated through heterogenous mixes of cultures; and how it underlines a superiority of in-betweeness of two cultures as emerging and bringing forward the ability to negotiate differences. I trace such perspectives in the cultural context of my home country. The term hybridity in the works of Homi Bhabha is used to stress an interdependence in the relationship between the coloniser and colonised; defined as the “mutual construction of their subjectivities” (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Bhabha, (1988) argues that postcolonial people initiating cultural changes have themselves hybrid identities. I consider how traditional beliefs and cultural traits prevail in my home country Mauritius and how these are perpetuated and survive in spite of the influences of modernity and structural changes of globalisation. It is crucial for me to situate how I negotiate my culture and identity within a postcolonial and diasporic context, whilst currently being a transnational ‘subject’. I focus and summarise discourses that address how identities are hybridized next to colonial, postcolonial and diasporic conditions, global mobility and migration.

“Colonialism as a moment in history of imperialism” (Gunew, 2004, p. 37) is defined as having unleashed global movements and migrations that have reconfigured many nations as a worldwide phenomenon. Postcolonial perspectives emphasise the historical dimensions of diverse negotiations including languages, cultures, and identities. Within such perspectives the colonial past and the postcolonial present are seen to merge. This merger process is often demonstrated in acts of nostalgia, memories and in the ambivalences of in-between identities of many migrants in contemporary Europe, Australia, or United States and other parts of the world. I make reference to this notion in relation to Mauritius, my home country, which maintains postcolonial vestiges.

On the other hand, I refer to diaspora as an important notion in my study as it frames what I inherited from cultural ancestry. ‘Diaspora’ is defined as “a dislocation from the nation state or geographical location of origin and a
relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries” (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 1). ‘Diaspora’ is a term that is currently used to “describe practically any population which is considered ‘deterritorialised’ or ‘transnational’. These people were born or have their roots in a land other than that in which they currently live. “Social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 1). Recent meanings refer to ‘diaspora’ as social form, ‘diaspora’ as type of consciousness, and ‘diaspora’ as mode of cultural production and these draw attention to several issues that I discuss in the next sections.

Theorised and debated as contested terms, “diaspora, the diasporic and diasporization” (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 4) have been given diverse meanings among scholars engaging in dialogues about ‘migrant subject’ (Ganguly, 1992) and ‘migrant subjectivities’ (Davies, 1994). Diaspora can be theorised as a representation of people and communities displaced from their homelands through colonisation or migration or exile to another country, often on voluntary or involuntary bases. As a “human form of movement across geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural and national boundaries, this phenomenon remains a lived, negotiated and experienced form of transnational migration” (Braziel, 2008, p. 27). Diaspora is defined as “specific kinds of social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography” that extend to conscious maintenance of “collective identity” importantly sustained by “an ‘ethnic myth’ of common origin and historical experience” and a tie to a place (Vertovec, 1997, p. 4). The advent of technology enables diasporic subjects to institutionalise networks of communication, where they are no longer in isolation, and this “transcends territorial states” and “creates new communities in places of settlement” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 4). This allows them to maintain a variety of explicit and implicit ties with their homelands and it also develops solidarity with co-ethnic members within nodes and with other ethnicities. Alternatively, there can be the inability or unwillingness to be accepted by the ‘host society’, which fosters feelings of alienation, or exclusion or superiority or acknowledgement of difference and diversity, (Vertovec, 1997, pp. 4-5).

On these terms, diaspora emerges as a binary term that has found currency within post-colonial studies and also postcolonial diaspora theories, as an expression within a much “revisionist discourse” (Giri, 2005, p. 216). Among the various types of diasporic subjects, I locate and identify myself among people; including Hall, (1990) who moved from a formerly colonised and post-colonial home-country to a free country. Among the several characteristics Safran, (1991, pp. 83-84) has used to define the term diaspora he refers to diasporic subjects as dispersed communities that “retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements”, while they tightly
believe that, “they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it.”

Diasporic subjects have scarcely been given a voice with which they can represent lived experiences that relate to their struggles and ambivalences through migration. If diaspora experience is defined as marked by “hybridity and heterogeneity” (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 5), it celebrates what Hall, (1990) defines as “recognition of diversity, a conception of identity which lives in and through” not because of difference, but by “hybridity.” This hybridity, opens up new dialogues that scholars refer to as diasporic subjectivities; a liminal dialogic space where identity is negotiated (Clifford, 1992); (Gilroy, 1991); (Hall, 1990) (Mercer, 1988); (Radhakrishnan, 1995). I further develop these concepts in Chapter seven.

On other terms, diasporic subjects “experience double identifications” (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 5) where hybrid forms of identity, also named as hybrid transnational identities splits from native identity of the homeland. This defines a ‘transnational imaginary’ that has de-centred attachments, being simultaneously ‘here’ and ‘there’, home away from home’ (Rizvi, 2011). Within these constructions of identity, I underline that diaspora does not transcend differences of nationality, race, class, gender, or sexuality, but these concepts empower the cultural construction of identity as described by Evans & Mannur, (2003, p. 5). Critical discourses of race, ethnicity, nation, identity, and diaspora are being theorised as having an important meaning, and within more recent discourses it overlaps “semantic fields” such as migration, exile, asylum seekers, and globalisation pressures (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 6). To date there is a dearth of debate addressing such issues.

Examined within an interdisciplinary frame; global mobility, migration, and diaspora, I suggest that all these issue inform identity formation linked to race, ethnicity, gender, and culture. These frames are important tools to understand migrant subjectivity as related to their lived experiences. Braziel, (2008, p. 129) defines economic migrants as having to face challenges of “economic recession”, competition for jobs, “high levels of unemployment”, where they feel negatively racialised. Migrants are pejoratively labelled as “unwanted foreigners – étranger, or Ausländer” (Braziel, 2008, p. 129) even if they are a second generation of migrant parents, and this is the case in many countries such as France, United Kingdom, United States and Australia. Changing definitions of race that are “culturally variable, historically specific, nationally determined and internationally inflected”, and racism acts out depending on different contexts and situations, that are inherently about social, political, material relations of power and also about “social hierarchy, control, possession and dispossession” (Braziel, 2008, pp. 132-135). Diasporic communities across the world face inflections of “race” and “racialised parameters” (Braziel, 2008, p. 135), which can discriminate them from
the crowd. Under such conditions, race informs an identity category for diasporic subjects, where they share a common cultural heritage and a common history, marked by racial discrimination in the host country, and I explore such parameters through my own experiences.

Over the last decade, diaspora as a term has evolved from a mere association to global movements, to permeate to new definitions and ideas such as nationalism, ‘transnational’ migration, and ‘transculturalism’ which give new dimensions to such dynamics. However, Evans & Mannur, (2003, p. 8) demark a clear distinction between transnationalism and diaspora, where the latter refers to movement of people from place to another, while the former has larger connotations towards flow of people, globalisation and global capitalism and even movements through cybernetics. “Diasporas, like nations are fractured, polyvocal sites of belonging, participation, disenfranchisement, identification or dis-identification” (Braziel, 2008, p. 158) and it is categorised as having political resistance to globalisation. A global economy as it is defined requires people to relocate for work, or to flee as refugees of wars and political repression and such flows are difficult to suppress. Instead, there is need to understand how to accommodate such changes and diversity.

As diasporic cultures grow in many global cities, the question of giving agency to how people’s memories of homeland is marked by ambivalence and contradiction is under review (Evans & Mannur, 2003, p. 9). Such populations are “growing in prevalence, number, and self-awareness” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 1) and there is need to give more agency to their needs and how they rebuild their identities. As new generation born migrants parents grow in their diasporic beliefs, some salient questions arise: how do the youth acknowledge their parents heritage? Do they accept or reject aspects of their parent’s home country culture? What kind of cultures do they refer to? And finally, what kind of alliances do they seek and establish? While these questions essentially introduce a new topic of research, I highlight them here given they raise issues that indirectly connect to my arguments about diaspora, migration, and transcultural identities.

The principles of colonialism and how its links to postcolonial diaspora theory are concepts that overlaps and is linked to my research. Theorists who discuss diaspora including Hall, (1990) and Appadurai, (1996) refer to the impact of postcolonial diasporas in the West and its consequences from different standpoints. It is important to underline how postcolonial immigrants come onto the stage as having been racially marginalised through “violence”, and these issues fuelled meaning around terms such as “multiculturalism, diversity and difference in aesthetic spheres” as crucial and needing attention (Giri, 2005, p. 216). Discourses about the politics of postcolonial culture and diasporic underpinnings include key words such as “counterpoint, counter-discourse, subalternity, transculturation, border theory and hybridity” (Giri, 2005, p. 218). However,
discourses that address these terms are still lacking. In his work Homi Bhabha, (1994) refers to postcolonial, diasporic and minority cultures as counter-discourses to those discourses of colonising modernity. By recognising the overlapping of complex cultural and political boundaries and criticisms through concepts of “hybridity, ambivalence and interstitially,” Bhabha, (1994, pp. 112-128) enunciates how cultures of diaspora are different from non-liminal cultures and positions. Diasporic cultures are explained to possess “the power to contest and destabilise” hegemonic structures that exert authority, by “‘othering” – translating and hybridising” discourses that enunciate how power and authority is maintained in society (Giri, 2005, p. 218). However, I take particular interest in reviewing such issues as I describe my experience of being part of a diaspora.

Moving from the theoretical perspective of postcolonial and diaspora theory, I examine how these concepts are reflected in contemporary research, and how I address them through my study. Discourses over these concepts are addressed through academic inquiries and these lead thinking about the complexities of migrants in real life situations and the criticism of modernity (Cooper, 2005). Concepts such as “identity,” “globalisation” and “modernity” are current buzzwords occupying large spaces in scholarly discourse, which I argue also have a link to postcolonial diaspora theory, migration and displacement. For example, Cooper, (2005, p. 7) considers such changes as essential:

“Subjectivity and particularity in people’s collective vision of themselves, the apparently increasing importance of cross-border interaction in today’s world and the apparent power – for the good and the evil – of a view of historical change as moving in a forward direction.” (p.7)

Cooper, (2005) calls attention to research that should focus more on analytic works in distinguishing such phenomena. Similarly, the way identity has been subjectively analysed in terms of affinities such as gender, race, class or ethnicity, needs to shift by looking at it from a more universalistic perspective. It is important to understand how “people conceive commonality, belonging and affinity” and such notions need a new lens of reviewing as “ precise and differentiated set of concepts” (Cooper, 2005, p. 9). So far, there has been an effort to explore “interrelations of the homeland and diasporic forms of cultural production” through films, documentaries, music, street art – (graffiti, murals, street theatre) to visual arts known as arts of resistance (Braziel, 2008, p. 159). These manifestations are a kind of activism and cultural production, which I agree express resistance to abuses of power and inequalities. In making reference to Diasporic writers - like Arundhati Roy, Edwidge Danticat, and Jessica Hagedorn, among others – they have extensively written about marginalisation, violence and inequalities against diaspora communities. However, despite their well-intended motives, their discourses might be re-establishing hegemonic structures and beliefs. There is a need to stretch out to more universalistic perspectives (Cooper,
2005) on this subject, where manifestations in terms of writing or representation surpasses depiction of activism and resistance which might be missing the mark. I have developed my approach in using art and the visual to fit with an interdisciplinary approach which offers broader perspectives and opens up the possibilities of a richer understanding about diasporas and lived experiences. I shall elaborate later in another section on how diaspora artists use ‘art as resistance’ and representation, working as activists at a time of transnational struggles and global injustices.

The notion of diaspora as a concept is interdisciplinary and it reflects complexities and is infinitely extended (Brubaker, 2005) and relates to subjectivities in defining identity. If it needs to be demystified in relation to my research, I look at it from the dynamics of my personal perspectives, as I theorise and represent these notions through my narratives and paintings. I attempt to understand stances around hybridity, ambivalence and multiplicity of perspectives. The next section refers to a cultural identity and the tilts and myths on belonging and hegemony structures within the postmodern. Later, I elaborate on migration and globalisation which overviews the status of migrants; how I locate myself as a new migrant in Australia, and how I am negotiating my identities.

**Cultural identity – Tilts and myths about belonging**

Cultural identity as contended by Homi Bhabha always emerges within a contradictory and ambivalent space, which he calls as the “Third Space of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994), where all “cultural statements and systems” are constructed in that space (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 118). On the other hand, Hall, (1990, p. 222) suggests that “instead of thinking about identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent”, identity should be conceptualised as a ‘production’ which is ongoing and “never complete, always in process and constituted within and not outside, representation.” In relation to this, Hall, (1990, p. 222) describes this concept as problematising “the very authority and authenticity to which the term ‘cultural identity’ lays claim.” To support this argument it is important to understand how Hall, (1993, p. 222) suggests two different ways of thinking about cultural identity; the first view is about; “one shared culture, a sort of collective self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’... , cultural identity relates to shared historical perspectives and shared cultural codes.” This provides the frames of reference and meaning that helps identification to a place, ethnicity or a group, which can be recalled through re-telling of the past through hidden stories or emerging practices of representation. The second and different view of identity has points of similarity with the first, however as described by Hall, (1993, p. 224), it focuses on “significant difference”, which constitutes not only of “what we really are,” but “what we become.” Hall, (1993, p. 224) suggests that “cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories” and these are the points of
identification ... within the discourses of history and culture.” Our identity is connected to our lived experiences and memories.

In this view, Hall, (2007) elaborates on such double perspectives, and this is connected to my study. How postcolonial legacies and current global mobility, the influx of migration and asylum seekers are engendering societal changes which purport to understand what it is like to come from that “other place,” (Hall, 2007, p. para.14) and how it feels to live in closed world with the pressures of globalisation. The emphasis on understanding identity and culture in transnational context is eloquent in how Fazal Rizvi, (2011) relates it as part of global mobility that connects distant places, leads shifts in the imaginaries of what is possible, changes the sense of belonging and citizenship. He further suggests that changes in cultural practices create transnational spaces for opportunities of wellbeing, which directly or indirectly transforms our lives. Such thinking stresses the need to focus and to find new ways to begin to translate between cultures (Hall, 2007). This can only happen when the dominant culture starts to acknowledge difference, interconnectivity, and to view cultural diversity as a norm rather than an exception (Rizvi, 2011).

I focus on and highlight experiences and challenges of migration that define a sense of belonging construed through “new environmental cues” (Weaver, 1993, p. 140) and cultural realities. Thinking of “identity as “production”, which is never complete, always in process”, generative in a way “and always constituted within, not outside representation,” (Hall, 1990, p. 222). We need to broaden our views in order to understand how migration, global mobility and transnationalism pose new challenges for current and future generations. There is a need to think about identity and a sense of belonging with the realms of education and research which will help to reconcile such notions, (Rizvi, 2011). The complexities around culture and identity lead to several concepts and notions as precursors to identity construction, cultural practices and social representation. Among the other concepts and notions, race and ethnicity, postcolonial and diasporic influences, hegemonic structure, globalisation, migration and transnationalism surround the arguments I bring forward through this research.

**Hegemony – the lexicon of cultural inquiry**

The debates on contemporary social theory suggest vulnerability and insecurity and the necessity to pursue life often under conditions of unpredictable effects of globalisation. Mikhail Bhaktin’s description of ‘cosmic fear’ images such vulnerability and uncertainty within human condition as a fear of human power and man-held power (Bauman, 2004, pp. 48-49). Driven by political power and market forces, technology, the concept of ‘welfare state’ is dismantling. Next to the effects of free market, “the state washes its hands of the vulnerability and uncertainty.” (Bauman, 2004, p. 51) which extends to job security and social
welfare and benefits. The sense of belonging and security becomes a private affair, a matter for individuals to deal and cope with by the resources in their private possessions, and Ulrich Beck, (1992, p. 137) puts forward that “individuals are now expected to seek biographical solutions to systemic contradictions.” In relation to my research, I particularly refer to the concept of reflexive modernity and the social structural changes and the framing that happens when I transit through different sites.

Ulrich Beck, (1992, p. 2) concept of “reflexive modernization” posits “structural changes” that extend to “changes in social structures and social agents”, that progressively force individuals to be free of structure. The ‘industrial society’, and the ‘risk society’ are social formations both structured through social classes and through Beck’s, (1992) perspective culturally imposed norms pigeonholes people to identify themselves to social institutions and ideologies, and other rational frames of modernity. Instead, for individualism to foster, the decline of class structure is imperative to allow individuals to make their own reflexive choices (Beck, 1992). The whole concept of hegemony and class structure, and structural order and power nevertheless needs to be contested within the new millennium, while the flows of cultural and economic capital and the emergence of transnational identities occur. When taking up Beck’s, (1992) concepts of ‘industrial society’ and ‘risk society’ related aspects become important such as - flexibility, mobility, plural and fluid cultural identities. This enables me to situate how culture, a sense of belonging, and identity construction can be dynamic and generative. I understand the processes of cultural reproduction, ‘habitus’ and identity politics, where identity is claimed to shift from social class and nation to race, ethnicity, gender and religion and more. I make reference to migration transitions and how the concept of race, ethnicity and religious belonging has an importance in a host society in which class identities and statuses are in play.

I look at hegemony which defines “power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 116). This also suggests that within society, hegemony resides as a disguised and subtle domination. It is not exerted by force but exists as inclusive power on economic and educational grounds and through the media it is accepted and taken for granted as a common acceptance and allegiance (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Hegemony is a most-used concept within “the lexicon of cultural inquiry” (Inglis, 2004, p. 45). From a Gramscian’s definition, hegemony defines successful saturation of an entire society’s consciousness which acts in favour of bourgeoisie and power (Inglis, 2004). The premise of hegemony lies within the inequalities of social structures, where differentiations exit in terms of income, power, education and prestige, and all these are produced, reproduced and transformed in interaction with the cultural code of a society. In such instances, “the interaction is where cultures meets the social structures and exerts its influence on it and this is itself
influenced by it” (Munch & Smelser, 1992, p. 244). The effects of cultural codes and of the existing social structures of inequalities on each other are set in motion and these are mediated by processes of social interaction. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter seven.

I make reference to imperial power through colonialism, as how my ancestors, indentured labourers, were suppressed by a hegemonic notion that was couched in terms of authority, control and influences of language and Eurocentric cultures, and the values they had to face and adapt to. Viswanathan, (1989) speaks of operations of hegemonic control and Viswanathan, (1989) refers to the British control over the system of education and an authority through literature in India. I try to understand how the same structures were imposed in Mauritius given it was colonised under both the French and British governments.

Cultural reproduction is primarily defined as transmitting inherent cultural values and norms from one generation to the other. However, this process has also been referred to as a means through which cultural experiences perpetuate across time (Bilton, 1996). Cultural reproduction often results in social reproduction (Bilton, 1996). From a structuralist perspective, Lévi-Strauss, (1964), uses a “geological metaphor” to compare “the formation of the cultural phenomena” to the strata of rocks, where “the understanding of such a phenomena is to be conducted through the excavation of these strata and a subsequent exposure of their patterns of interrelation” (Jenks, 2005, p. 125). In brief, it accentuates the need for culture to be understood three-dimensionally, structurally, metaphorically and in the same way as we understand languages, where the vocabulary is expressed through symbols and conventions that exist in society, which in turn reproduces culture (Jenks, 2005). I look through the lens of cultural reproduction as described by Pierre Bourdieu to inform my understanding on habitus and cultural hegemony (see Appendices 1).

The concepts related to hegemony and habitus are built around the imperial power of colonialism as my ancestors lived through them. I also refer to the post-colonial influences that impacted on my education and my lived experience in Mauritius. I then move forward to consider hegemonic discourses in relation to migrant experiences and social class interactions; the concept of racial and ethnic identity, and how these are challenged through consequences of globalisation and the emergence of new terms such as ‘transcultural identities’. Bourdieu’s work on theories of social relations is different and from an analytical perspective it transcends definitions of culture from embodied and enduring to culture as constructed. Such definitions structure and shape the way I experience and define my cultures and identities. In the next section, I overview globalisation and migration as concepts that impact the understanding of social, cultural and economic positioning, and how identity processes in the postmodern is informed with subjectivities and uncertainties.
Globalisation has become ‘a big idea’ (Held, 2010) and a broad term, often misused, yet for scholars it infuses a powerful set of images and definitions. Globalisation has been aligned to “liberalism”, “free movement of capital, free trade”, breaking of barriers in communication through the internet, interconnectedness, “homogenisation of cultures versus diversification” and an “expansion of integration” (Cooper, 2005, p. 96). Bauman, (2007, p. 6) defines globalisation as the “piercing and dismantling of boundaries” and it promises “to bring different worlds together” (Papastergiadis, 2005, p. 130). Yet Bauman, (1998, p. 2) describes globalisation’s capacity “to divide as much as it unites.” The pressures arising from globalisation reach out to the interrelated processes of economic and political issues, technological progress, trade, information flow, but it extends and impacts further on the social and cultural conditions, including freedom of human mobility. Global mobility affects thousands of people who are dislocated and relocated in new places. Human nature is such that people seek for the better, as they are challenged, oppressed by poverty, unrest and insecurities in their home countries. The decision to migrate is often linked to hopes of securing a better life and future for children.

Among the many negatives about globalisation, the disparities between poor and rich widens as distribution of capital becomes increasingly selective and unequal. More countries than ever are deep in National debts, poverty, famine, and civil wars and there are upheavals and protests for democracy, equal rights and access to resources. Mobility and “globalisation processes rebound in the redistribution of privileges and deprivations of wealth and poverty, of resources and impotence, of power and powerlessness of freedom and constraint” (Bauman, 1998, p. 70). More people are currently on the move and relocating towards welfare states as skilled or illegal economic migrants and refugees as they flee either economic crisis or war conflicts. They hope to catch up with the gap of inequities they face in their home countries and they expect to have as better lives and opportunities in welfare states.

Mobility of people, acceptance of the ‘other’ seems to be critically viewed, and post September 11 events have provoked discrimination based on religion, race, colour and ethnicity on a global scale. People have become more aggressive towards protection of borders, the family, community, workplace and their rights. Such a situation shows “ambivalence of disenchantment” (Papastergiadis, 2005, p. 129) to accept migrants and refugees.
The current global economic crisis is compelling many triple A economies to strictly tighten borders and enforce security measures against illegal economic migration or refugees. There seems to be no room or resources to accommodate migrants and refugees anymore in countries who themselves, have escalating debts, unemployment and inflation, frustration, and frequent public protests. Skilled migration in countries such as Canada and Australia, are due to low density in population, ageing workforce and increased needs for skilled labour to sustain needs and economic growth. Under these circumstances migration seems to be valid. By contrast, asylum seekers are those people often genuinely in need of refuge, as their lives are in peril in their home countries torn by war, famine. Illegal or economic migrants have other contingencies such as economic unrest, unemployment issues which motivates them to seek more secure and better lives and they attempt to cross borders often at great personal risk.

Currently thousands of illegal migrants or refugees are on the move. These people are often illegally assisted by smugglers with the promise of better opportunities in welfare states. They set off to the unknown, compromise their future and dare to risk their lives by embarking on rickety boats. Those who do survive the long voyages often end up in detention centres for years before their visa status is processed. If granted a visa they need to integrate and strive socially, culturally and financially. Current debates on illegal migrants in Europe and the boat people and refugee’s detention centres in Australia, is focusing attention on identity issues of the thousands of people who are undergoing dislocation, facing entanglement, dissociations and disjuncture within social and cultural norms. However, debates scarcely address the impact such experiences have on the men, woman and children who are undergoing such procedures. Part of my research throws light on my own experiences of migration and relocation and it suggests ways to expose, relate, narrate and represent them through my narratives and artworks.

Globalisation, migration and changing social structures

Globalisation can be seen as a process that stretches over five centuries and it proceeds “in waves taking different forms and adopting changing ideologies of legitimisation” (Castles, 2011, p. 24). The term “globalisation defines a set of processes which are reshaping the organisation of human activity, stretching to political, economic, social and communicative networks across regions and continents” (Held, 2010, p. ix). The growing awareness of changes in globalisation is captured through current discourses and it deals with the extensive focus on economic and political consequences. Yet, the focus has far more impact on social and cultural conditions in relation to migration. There is a lack of consideration on how globalisation and migration impact on human experience, activity and interaction within social structures, although globalisation is “thought of as the widening, intensifying and speeding up and growing impact of worldwide
interconnectedness” (Held, 2010, p. 29). The changes happening globally with migration, dislocation and relocation transitions have implications on human experiences and identity.

Through my research, I refer to forms of trans-bordered interactions that raise many questions about accountability and agency, where changes happen in the environment and identity, as ‘spaces’ are created and reinvented. Such experiences and changes raise awareness of terms such as acceptance, integration, cultural diversity and hybridity, identity crisis, transnational identities, multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism. There is an urgent need to pay more attention to such terms “if we are to grasp the proper limits to human diversity” (Held, 2010, p. xi), where such limits underscore conditions for human interaction to happen, and ideals for changes to be entrenched and recognised gearing towards “autonomy, dialogue and tolerance” (Held, 2010, p. 81). The legitimacy of such conditions depends on how social, cultural, moral, political and economic orders are redefined and repositioned next to global pressures.

**Migration – Contingencies of dislocation and relocation**

“Migration is both a result of global change and a powerful force for further change in migrant-sending and receiving societies” (Castles, 2000, p. 124). Relocation has “changed hundreds of millions of people’s sense of the world” (Amrith, 2011, p. 2), as I experienced it myself. Migration is currently a pressing and contested worldwide issue, where policies, opinions, priorities and options about migration constantly shift and there is escalating denial to freedom of movement, segregation of identities, and unequal distribution of wealth worldwide.

There is a need to give much prominence to the migration issue, as it is playing a key part in contemporary social transformations, and through my research I construct my arguments around such notions. Global economic forces depend largely on human resources from migration. Migration is an issue currently debated in many developed countries hosting migrants either for their skills or as refugees. The focus of such debates is mostly geared to economic, political, social and security concerns, which often overlooks experiences of migrant subjects undergoing and struggling through transitions of dislocation, and an adaptation process in negotiating between grounded identity, new identity structures and spatial concepts. Migration as a global phenomenon is difficult to suppress, yet there is room to understand and address concepts and metaphors within migration experiences and the journey in negotiating within spatial concepts, which reflects hybrid perspectives. Such processes need to be given worth in an increasingly migratory and globalised world, if acceptance, assimilation, tolerance of migrants often tagged, as the ‘other’ is to happen, and for better
communication and understanding of diversity within global cities and societies hosting them. I thus look closely at migration and its consequences, and the implications for identity and a sense of belonging.

International migrants reside outside their country of birth and this phenomenon concerns millions of people across the globe. Why are people moving in massive numbers? We have had displacements of people with colonisation, yet migration today is linked to the “twin faces of late capitalism or global capitalism” (Braziel, 2008, p. 1). People from African sub-Saharanian, Middle East and Far East countries risk their lives to move from their countries in war or in extreme economic crisis, in search of better horizons, such as parts of Europe, Australasia or the United States. In France and United States policies to accommodate refugees and illegal migrants are currently under revision, with thousands being deported every day. Many young people in Spain and France are seeking new opportunities in booming countries like Brazil, India and China. The new mechanism that is shaping up new markings of territory, the movement of capital, people, and culture, is linked to globalisation and its interconnectedness to these issues (Cooper, 2005).

In considering the impact of migration, dislocation and relocation, it is imperative to focus on what happens to people who are dislocated as it is an issue that needs focus and consideration through further research. Migrants foresee and expect a life better, often unaware of risks and options they need to face. They opt to migrate because of precarious and unstable economic and social conditions in their home countries. In many countries like in India there is a ‘culture of emigration’ where people flock into big cities such as Mumbai and Shanghai in search of jobs. In former postcolonial states international migration is common and it is an essential part of globalisation. Migratory flows and relocation of people, diasporic communities result from the effects of globalisation as “productive of its disjunctures and cultural cacophony” which is manifested through “lived experiences, human complications and ideological contradictions” (Braziel, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Migrant subjects are considered as uprooted from their families, friends and nation-state, dispersed from their homelands either to seek jobs, or as refugees, asylum seekers, who are also named “illegal aliens” (Braziel, 2008, p. 1) or pejoratively named as “boatpeople” in Australia. People seeking asylum in Australia mostly arrive through perilous conditions on overloaded rickety boats after paying enormous sums of money to people smugglers to cross dangerous seas, where they often capsize, leaving many victims. As this practice is currently becoming more frequent, this situation is alarming and it is generating major concerns for authorities to control and sustain such tribulations. Refugees are placed in detention centres, whilst their cases are processed. Detentions lengths vary for months to years, in overcrowded centres under difficult conditions and in
isolation on remote islands such as Christmas Island. Such situations lead some detainees to rebel physically, to go on hunger-strikes or become depressed. Some have committed suicide.

In some ways mobility of people raises the question of inclusion and exclusion and the way these people perceive and negotiate their identities. There seems to be a paradox in viewing human and civil rights. Certain groups of individuals are considered to possess those characteristics that fit the global market, such as their labour skills, capital and cultural backgrounds and are seen therefore as having a better chance of becoming inclusive citizens. Then there are other asylum seekers who are considered not fit and therefore they are excluded and marginalised based on the same rights that everyone needs to access. On the other hand, “globalisation produces both transnational elites and an underclass trapped in new forms of dependency” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 80). Yet, as outlined by O’Rourke (Right-wing American commentator), there are no other hardworking group of people other than boatpeople, who risk their lives to new destinations and are motivated to build up a new life (Onselen, 2010). In this view, host countries should be less apprehensive of boatpeople, and give them the chance to make their lives in Australia, where they can contribute socio-economically.

While, my study does not focus on the inclusion and exclusion issues, I address some salient points in regards to representation of experiences and how to give ‘voice’ to similar issues. There are many forms of exclusion that are overlaid by differentiation attached to group membership, ethnicity, religion, racial minorities, indigenous communities on which there are discriminations, disadvantages, causing marginalisation, impoverishment and social conflicts. Cultural homogenisation is practically impossible, because of the increasing ethno-cultural diversity with migration, and people having multiple identities, transcultural competencies and even multiple citizenships. Major consequences of migration and economic pressures are now visible, through many societies, where people feel marginalised, frustrated, and isolated as they struggle against social dislocation, long-term unemployment, insecurities, and loneliness, all of which portray the heavy downside of globalisation within working class people. Migrant communities face greater likelihood of being in ghettos around global cities, and they face the risks of being exploited and marginalised. Migrants also have fewer opportunities to bargain for better job conditions or their rights. The flow of people and relocation within societies considered as bordered by ethnic purity or cultural superiority is already a myth within global cities. These societies are undergoing structural adjustments to accept and interact with new faces, race, colour, and cultures. Such issues are related to new complex dynamics about globalisation that brings more fears than assurances, but it cannot overlook the point that migration is a dynamic force that is impacting on the construction of modernity.
Globalisation of migration can be associated with an intensification of migratory movements and its patterns and volume, with feminisation of migration, whilst establishing multiple loyalties of diasporas. Debates about globalisation and migration focus more on the differentiations in the economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of migrants, but it fails to acknowledge how complexly migrants participate in raising the economy and the construction of welfare states. Often considered as proletarians, early migrants who were peasants in their native countries were forced to join wage-earner jobs in factories or work as taxi drivers which entrapped them within specific communities, and restricted them within borderline standards of living. Not much has changed in Western economies, only that they shifted from industrial production to jobs in services sectors including management and technological research, where there are high qualified jobs and low skilled fairly renumerated jobs taken mainly by migrants. This is a reality that exists within major global cities around the globe and so far, there is “no new sociological theory on migration that has been proposed to accommodate the transformations of globalisation” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 92). I underline such experiences through my own migration, dislocation and relocation processes, as these issues inform in many ways identity processes and the subjectivities and uncertainties around it. I now give a brief overview of migration and diversity in Australia.

**Migration versus Diversity: The Australian experience**

In Australia, a European modernity embraced through an English ethnicity was constructed by the descendants of the settler colonisers who prevailed despite of the presence of indigenous people and post-war migrants from the West (Gunew, 2004). Hence, even Europeans from non-English-speaking backgrounds were recognised afar from the European modernity and civilisation, which epitomises the traditional and conservative stances and the cultural productions and colonial histories of the colonisers, mainly from Britain, Ireland, and Scotland. Discourses from feminist perspectives of Garner, (1995), Braidotti, (1997), and Faust, (1997) refer to issues of abuse, inequalities and inferior attitudes against migrants. Migrants through such perspectives are considered as less civilised and educated and this suggests the twin mechanism of colonialism and multiculturalism as analysed by Hall, (1996a) where one structures the other. There is a complex dynamic between post colonialism and multiculturalism which differs from settler colonies as they have diverse colonial histories and specificities. It is important to understand the principles involved in the structuring of both the coloniser and the colonised (Hall, 1996a). Gunew, (2004) refers to multicultural nations as haunted by their colonial histories.

As a new nation, “Australia has special problems in defining its culture and identity” (Castles, 2000, p. 133). In Australia as a nation state, it is becoming more problematic to maintain a homogenised culture, where a common language and
culture is shared due to an increasing flux of migration and cultural diversity. As a growing ethno-cultural diversity intensifies the basic “dilemma of liberal-democratic principles”, that stipulates that all individuals are equal and should access equal rights, is under great challenge (Castles, 2000, p. 134). Culturally diverse population have specific needs, interests and values and these are dealt through policy issues on social justice matters, while such measures often miss the mark in underlining the concept of diversity. Policies sometimes are short term measures and objectives that facilitate integration of migrant settlement, but there needs to be more long term goals that directs towards a notion of citizenship, which supports inclusion and decreases a differential exclusion of migrants who seclude to certain suburbs and areas. The politics adopted towards migrants is often towards assimilation; although this sometimes forces them to give up their native languages, historical, cultural and social inheritances to some extent become anonymous in a host society. I reiterate these ideas as I recall my own experiences.

In this competition-oriented globalised world the maintaining of ethno-cultural pluralism seems to be a challenge, especially for migrants. Many countries such as Australia adopt explicit policies which deal with equal access to education for migrants but there is often a “laissez-faire approach”, where difference is tolerated but it is not seen as the role of the state to assist and maintain ethnic cultures as in the United States (Castles, 2000, p. 139). Meadmore, (1999 a, p. 56) inquires about how “social class system” is distinctively present in the Australian society. “Australians do identify themselves and their families in one class or another (Mc Gregor, 1997; 1992). The markers of upper class are accumulated material and cultural wealth, while the ranks of middle class are promoted through; better access and opportunities towards tertiary education and their influential ideas, values and beliefs (McGregor, 1992). However, working class is distinguished from the middle class by “their cultural, educational and material differences” (Meadmore, 1999a, p. 57). If the gap between lifestyles of the rich and the poor is more apparent and increasing (Meadmore, 1999a, p. 56), an understanding of “what social class means in Australia,” more precisely in relation to migration, job opportunities, education and lifestyle is relevant to my research, as I refer to my own experiences through migration transitions in Australia. Cultural pluralism is a major issue, and if combined and addressed by well-designed policies it can bring equity, maintain social stability and peace. It is only through acknowledging ethnicity and cultural differences that migrants can regard recognition of their citizenship. Recognition of collective cultural rights of diasporic communities plays a crucial role in multiculturalism.
The ‘migrant subject’ – dilemmas within transitions and new social structures

Current phases of global migration indicate estrangements and predicaments generated through it (Papastergiadis, 2000), where the need to set up more elaborated frameworks that differentiate and address shifting patterns for migration experiences is emerging. “Migration is a central force in the constitution of modernity” (Papastergiadis, 2000, pp. 10-11), yet there is not enough focus given to the migrant’s experiences and how their culture and identity changes, and undergoes transitions and negotiations in “the metaphors of the journey.” The word culture recurs repeatedly in discourses regarding the “effects of globalisation, diversity... increasing multicultural societies,” and the nature of cultural identity in regards to ethnic minorities” (Shaules, 2007, pp. 24-25). In this view, migration in regards to issues of gender, a grounded identity, ethnicity, race, nationality in the context of globalisation turnouts to be fragmented, and it needs to be questioned. Later in my inquiry, I address issues of identity crisis and how I appropriate a sense of ‘self’ through dilemmas of transitions within new social structures.

“Culture has thus been generally defined by the way groups occupied a given territory and the forms by which they communicate their everyday social relationships” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 103). The way migrant subjects define themselves often depends upon the settlement or community in which they live. Defined as nodes, transnational communities are places and spaces that offer a networking for migrants to build up a living, new relationships but also challenges them to face ethnic and racial discrimination (Samers, 2010). Social ties and the concept of ‘belonging’ is a subjective interpretation which is evidenced depending on such societal structures and norms one faces, and has to adapt to, and accept. Migrants settling within multi-ethnic cities can have more exposure to their own people (nodes), yet within transitions of two cultures; the inherited and the adopted, negotiation of space and an integration process is central in achieving a sense of belonging. This establishes healthy connections within host society and also within their own migrant communities. I make reference and debate on my own experience about social interaction in Chapter seven.

“Marx has provided a major element in contemporary thinking about society and culture” (Jenks, 2005, p. 64). For Marx, the social structure is organised in terms of the “means and relations of production” (Jenks, 2005, p. 28). Within the migrant experience, such issues are not overlooked, but reinforced and inherent, which defines how migrants transit and forge new ways of being. The concept of ideology (Jenks, 2005) takes many forms in defining culture which is ever-changing and more persistent and ambivalent through global migration. Concepts such as ‘hegemony’ emerge from modern theory and ideologies related to the theory of culture. Radcliffe-Brown defines social structure “where he saw it as a network of social relations including persistent social groups, social categories, classes and
social roles,” (Jenks, 2005, p. 39). Within migration such issues are eloquent but yet rarely unveiled like “the hidden part of the cultural iceberg” (Shaules, 2007, p. 41), often unseen and silenced through debates. In the next sections, I refer to such dilemmas and in Chapter seven, I relate my self-reflexive perspectives as encountered through my migration experience and I describe transitions from home to a new place and the rupture of inherited culture and a grounded identities.

**Nexuses of space, place, time - identity and representation**

I now move on from the theoretical discourses on culture, identity, postcoloniality, diaspora, globalisation and migration, and review discourses around temporality, the implications of geographies, space and place as crucial issues that underscore hybridity and ambivalence about identity. I look at the social and cultural phenomenon between time, space, and place and the cultural inheritances, a sense of belonging, migration, dislocation, and relocation and how these traits impact on identity and representation.

‘Space exists in time’ (Corrigan, 2009) and space is a social construction relevant in understanding human stories and cultural phenomenon (Warf & Arias, 2009). There is a need to highlight the uncomfortable fit between the nexuses of space, place, and time and identity processes within particular contexts. There is a reworking of spatiality, in which space as importantly as time plays a significant role in defining identities (Warf & Arias, 2009). The notion of space, place and time (Babacan, 2005, p. 114) as intrinsic to identity construction as well as to identity crisis. Globalising conditions and cyberspaces, has its influences on ‘identity and subjectivity’ (Warf & Arias, 2009), and I relate them to my experiences in the discussion.

The description of ‘space’ as theorised by Henry Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, and other Marxist and contemporary literary theorists such as Frederic Jameson and Edward Soja conceptualise it within postmodern theory. Henry Lefebvre’s significant investigation on social construction and conventions of space (Shields, 1999) define the spatial as crossing many disciplines. He “maintained that space must be understood not as a concrete material object”, but as “an ideological, lived and subjective one” (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 3). The works of David Harvey, (1989, 1990a, 2006) contribute a major rethinking about spatiality and social theory. Such social theory repositions our understanding of space and spatiality as produced within social life (Warf & Arias, 2009) and focuses on shifts that happens with migration and how it influences cultural identity and capital.

“Space is an important element in the discussion of knowledge, technologies and practices” (Buenda & Ares, 2006, p. 38) and it cannot be objectified or filled, but rather produced through human processes that includes the way we define or acknowledge and reaffirm our interaction within our surroundings. Edward Soja,
(1989, 1996, 2000) supports the triangulation of time, space and social structure as relying and related to each other. Social structures and the way individuals interact in society produce and change history and geographies. “Space and place constructions are integrally connected to our sense of being - history, geography, monuments, cities and communities” (Babacan, 2005, p. 114). Places are defined by surroundings whose form, function and meaning are contained within the boundaries of physical continuity (Mc Dowell, 1999). Spaces are more abstract and are produced through “spatial practices” (Buenda & Ares, 2006, p. 38) that have “properties of securing anchor ? to stabilise identity” (Babacan, 2005, p. 114) and a sense of belonging and consent for social interaction (Castells, 1996). Castells, (1996) suggests that people live in places and “postmodern power is manifested in the linkages among places, their interconnectedness” (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 3) and through globalisation that increases international flows of communication, capital, trade, people culture and capital. Cyberspace and the revolution through the internet erases geographies of knowledge and repositions notions of spatiality (Warf & Arias, 2009), and produce complex and fragmented spaces. Spaces are imbued with ideological and political content; and are produced through interrelated processes of representation and with “the flows and movements identified in the realm of everyday routines” and the contingencies of the historic, social relations and as experiences and practices of everyday life (Arber, 2012; Rizvi, 2009, p. 275).

The definitions of space by Mc Dowell, (1999) describes it in three ways: stating it as a place, a surrounding and a particular setting; and as units that compartmentalise our conception and ideas about places and “as scale and size of unit” (as the self, the house, community, region or country) (Babacan, 2005, p. 114). Socio-spatial practices define places and these practices result in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries constituted and maintained by social relations of power and exclusion (Massey, 1997; Mc Dowell, 1999). If place is a complex phenomenon, the corollary through globalising forces significantly challenges the meaning of place, forcing it towards reconstructing rather than destroying localities. I agree that this is what informs the significant shifts in the conceptualisation of the notion of space and locality (Mc Dowell, 1999). I believe that the definition of place in that sense is contested, more fluid and uncertain which is implied through the production of a geographical scale, where “scale is the criteria for difference not so much between places as between different kinds of places” (Smith, 1993, p. 99). “This geographical scale defines the boundaries and bounds of identities around which control is exerted and contested” (Smith, 1993, p. 101) and where the underlying transformation brought about through globalisation, migration and the internet importantly influences processes of identification and subjectivity (Featherstone, 1990). People in different locations are hooked through social networking, which repositions the
notion of the ‘self’ to “consist of multiple, shifting, even contradictory “selves”” (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 6).

My argument extends towards what Doreen Massey, (1997) describes as the intersection of the global and local which she termed as ‘a global sense of place’. In relation to migrants and global cities, that social relations operate at spatial scales, and places lose their authenticity and rootedness in traditions and instead can be defined by socio-spatial relations that intersect and give new distinctive character to places based on new flows and movements. I discuss this further in Chapter seven. Henry Lefebvre’s definition of social space and discourses on globalisation importantly informs postmodern theories. In exploring Lefebvre’s discourses, my intention is not only to understand his views as a Marxist in defining ‘space’, but I try to use it to show how it addresses his experience with avant-garde artists seeking revolution through art. His comprehensive study of “spatial dialectics of identities, activity and images associated with a given place” is what I try to explore in my discussion where I examine “the struggles over the meaning of space and how relations across territories [are] given cultural meaning” (Shields, 1999, pp. 145-146). Such struggles are also represented through my artworks. Lefebvre “investigates the social attitudes towards space”, while not neglecting “the physical dimensions and spatial categories such as boundaries and regions in everyday life” (Shields, 1999, p. 5).

In relation to my research, these discourses situate and reposition the ‘self’. In my discussions they articulate the relation of my identities, culture and ethnicity as the basis of identity construction (Du Jay, Evans, & Redman, 2000) and how changes and transitions though migration relate to the ‘self as dynamic and in interaction’ (Mead, 1934). I term such renegotiation within identity structures as ‘appropriation’. I focus on the importance of history and cultural inheritances that cannot be separated from its spatial context. Also, my home country and its geographical location is not subordinate to history and social, economic and cultural structures I lived in, but meaningfully replicates how it produces ‘spaces’ within the temporal and my personal experiences. Following this line of thought my narratives and artworks unveil how space is socially constructed through time and is hybrid to social and geographic changes. In the next section, I refer to the ‘spatial turn’ as described by major theorists as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, and I overview a reflective and critical triangulation of the spatial, geographical and temporal within postmodernism. I link a number of these elements to my own experience of negotiating my identities.
The ‘spatial turn’ – identity within space, place and time

The radical rethinking of the relationship between space and time and the theory of the ‘spatial turn’ was initiated by Lefebvre and Michel Foucault and Edward Soja, (2009). Lefebvre offered two ways to conceive the concept of space. One as “perceived space or spatial practices” that related to a “material conditioning and mappable forms, things in space”, the other as “conceived space” defined by the “ideational imagery, representations, thoughts about space” (Soja, 2009, p. 19). I acknowledge Edward Soja’s, (2009, p. 22) initiative in making visible the “power of thinking spatially” that I adopt in my inquiry in using a “socio-spatial dialect” to underscore how “geographies shape and explain social processes and social action” (Soja, 2011) was viewed by some as a mystical Marxist, who called for a new thinking of the dimensions of ‘space’, where so far ‘space’ had been superficially used and with globalisation it needed to be directed to a more democratic existential spatiality that honours social action, identity and representation more inclusively. In my inquiry, I attempt to bring forward such issues through my own story and artworks and my approach is a powerful method to communicate, expose and to bring democratic and inclusive understanding to notions of identity and its relevance to spatiality, social structures and interaction.

Recent approaches in defining identity refer to modernist assumptions and theoretical implications of a so called ‘spatial turn’. I believe the relational links between modernity, post modernity, globalisation, territory as scrutinised by human geographers, unveil new dimensions of space and place as crucial factors in the production of social life (Gregory & Urry, 1985). Within this paradigm, “territorial space is commensurate with national space and space and place are static containers in which cultural traditions evolve” (Rembold & Carrier, 2011, p. 363). This approach informs the ‘spatial turn’ whereby geographical scale is considered as a major factor in analysing national identities (Herb & Kaplan, 1999). Kaplan, (1999) discussion on the concept of national identity is fourfold. He positions national identity firstly as a concept bounded to territory, secondly as a bundling of cultural attributes and political objectives, and thirdly as one which is distinctive from the state and fourthly as “situated within a hierarchy of geographically based identities that coexist and sometimes compete with it” (Kaplan, 1999, p. 363). This is closely related to my understanding that identities are geographically bounded and classified according to scale and critically inform human ordering and organising of human identities (Kaplan, 1999). I discuss this issue later in this chapter.

Other events that contribute towards the ‘spatial turn’ are the effects of global mobility, migration and the changing world; and more specifically impacts on political and spatial structures after major events such as the September 11 in 2001, or the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Such events build up new dimensions of defining spatiality, social reproduction, politics, and power as underscored by
Lefebvre, (1991). Events such as September 11 have intensified such changes towards transforming human experiences and perception (Harvey, 1990b), whereby people are more strict and more hostile in acknowledging and defending territory and space and culture. It is more than a decade now since terrorist attacks in New York happened. What Lynne Cheney referred to as the “multicultural argument” in 2001 has certainly provoked ongoing and salient debates over issues of multiculturalism, diversity, national identity, as well as critiques on education curriculum that foster such notions. The incidents of September 11, “the train bombings in London and Madrid, the attacks in Mumbai” (Lauter, 2009, p. 23) ominously and decisively change global history and brings apprehensiveness and hostility in accepting other cultures. It also brings vigorous rethinking of “perceptions of diversity and assimilation within a national framework, and at the same time to re-evaluate the position of the United States in the world” (Rubin & Verheul, 2009, p. 7).

The changes to multiculturalism are approached from a transatlantic perspective now and I agree these are addressed through political and academic discourses specially focussed on the presence of radical Islamism in Western societies (Rubin & Verheul, 2009). There is a growing discomfort within secular democracies towards a rise of religious extremism, and policies towards banning the wearing of the veil by women in France are being contested. Such developments bring new concerns about concepts of space, territory, and the issues of culture, religious beliefs and practices, national identity and security, which consequently shifts the dynamics of multiculturalism and brings forward cultural diversity as a contentious issue. It also focuses on how “social boundaries figure in the separation and integration of ethnic and racial minorities” (Rubin & Verheul, 2009, p. 11) in countries as France and Germany. Native groups maintain their privileges and “relative social superiority” (Alba, 2009, p. 36), which makes social stratification in terms of habitus and hegemony, marginality and unequal rights more discernible in contemporary life. Asymmetries of social status and power in immigrant societies is manifested in how immigrants live their everyday lives and this constructs ‘immigrant-native boundaries’ (Alba, 2009) in such societies which are hinged upon access to social-structural, cultural, legal and other institutional domains of the host societies. Such boundaries I argue are rather invisible, but these have an impact on assimilation, and also on the terms under which it is meant to happen.

Within all these changes through globalisation, my inquiry locates how the notion and existence of ‘a sense of place’ is being questioned. As a migrant, I underscore the responsibility of belonging and place, as I undergo instability in deep rooted beliefs, customs and practices perpetuated for generations in my family that once created a sense of place and distinguished me from others. The notion of place therefore is defined through socio-spatial practices allowing an
overlapping and intersection of places with multiple boundaries which is primarily maintained through social relations of power and exclusion (Massey, 1997; Smith, 1993). If “places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries” (Mc Dowell, 1999, p. 4), it is important to understand and situate how other migrants renegotiate a sense of home, neighbourhood or locality that is bounded by scale and defined by the rules and power relations. Under such circumstances, it is crucial to question who define the rules and exert power relations which consequently determine who is in, or out.

Doreen Massey, (1997) argues that localities that are produced by the intersection of global and local processes and social relations operate at spatial scales. However, Marcus, (1994) refers to places that lose their authenticity and rootedness in traditions as they are challenged by socio-spatial relations, and in the case of migrant’s intersection of social relations, new interactions determine and give ‘place’ a distinctive character. In Chapter seven, I refer to the ‘authenticity’ and the meaning of space and place as a new migrant in Melbourne, where I stress flows and movements of social interactions rather than stability and rootedness in defining my cultural belonging or identity. In chapter seven, I refer to Henri Lefebvre’s complex conceptualisation of space, the discourses of Edward Soja, (2009), Doreen Massey, (1997), Elizabeth Grosz, (2001), Arjun Appadurai, (2005), Herb & Kaplan, (1999), Kaplan, (1999) and James, (2009) in order to extend my discussion on how I view space, place and time as having implications and impediments on identity construction and renegotiations.

**Defining gendered identity through feminist epistemologies’**

Identity and gender roles has been scrutinised by feminists perspectives for the past thirty years. Feminist scholars have discussed the meaning of “social beliefs, human nature, family duties, sexual ethics, credibility” and have addressed the subject of “cultural traditions and dogma about gendered identity”, and relation and equity (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007, p. 1). In this research my interests extend to addressing other perspectives such as Diaspora, inheritances, migration transition and globalisation and how within my own experiences and perspectives it impacts my identity as a woman, mother, and as an artist researcher teacher. Influenced by feminist writers, I situate the ‘self’ within feminist discourses and the feminist art wave.

I explore feminist discourses and feminist art that gives ‘voice’, while I identify myself within such experiences and how it challenges me to live and survive with what is termed as transnational, transcultural and gendered identities. Globalisation has several implications on how women construct their identities and there is need to bring forward and investigate how women of different cultures deal actively with the pressures, disruptions and challenges they face. Women undergoing experiences of displacement are more vulnerable to impacts
caused by economic, social and cultural circumstances as they connect to other places, spaces and times. There are many ongoing negotiations for women to undertake as they attempt to overcome the barriers of Western culturally dominated norms which include language, popular culture and technology. Renegotiations challenge spatial scales in which women have to cope with different sites at home, workplace or public spaces.

Feminist scholars have attended to the meaning of “social beliefs, human nature, family duties, sexual ethics, credibility”, while addressing subjects of “cultural traditions and dogma about gendered [identities],” and relations of equity (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007, p. 1). Such theories have developed and sustained arguments for the emancipation and empowerment of women (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007; Francis, 1999). Feminism is associated to as either an “unspoken language” of “actions glossed over capitalist empowerment”, which is still considered as “a historical place or space that informs and forges new spaces for greater analysis in postmodern studies, identity representation, power and access” (Villaverde, 2007, p. 2). A typology of feminist politics and an epistemology as outlined by Allison Jaggar, (1983) refers to liberal feminism, traditional Marxism, radical feminism and socialist feminism that make distinctions between the ideologies and political standpoints in relation to liberation of women. Villaverde, (2007) summarises liberal feminism as a search for gender equality to participate, and to have access and gains to resources, which is based on existing systems of radical feminism that targets essentialist perspectives on gender and oppression.

Other consistent definitions of approaches to feminism assume equality for women despite gender differences and the hierarchical concepts implied through traditional Western social and political thoughts (Beasley, 1999, p. 16). Post feminism is underlined as a shift and backlash against feminism, but not necessary opposing it and it is situated within contemporary neo-liberal capitalist societies, characterised by consumer culture, individualism, yet with decreased interest in politics and activism (Gill, 2007). Considered as central to second-wave feminism, post feminism endorses ‘body politics’ that reject gender differences through their practices (Gill, 2007). Post-feminist cultural texts extend to emancipatory discourses that create potentials to interrelate the political and critical. There are efforts to challenge the dominance of Western feminism with rising dilemmas women face within other parts of the world. Looking through the lens of current feminist theories, transnational feminism, the challenges of globalization and nomadic subjectivity, women’s concern for empowerment and agency is apparent (Braidotti, 2006; Davis & Evans, 2011; Nagar & Swarr, 2010; Roy, 2011) and I refer to such notions later.

Feminist scholars such as Braidotti, (2011) and Gill, (2007) view female characteristics as irrational, and at the mercy of their emotions and it is in that sense they can be inferior to men in terms of adapting Western society. I attempt
to link and dismantle such attributes as I describe them through my own experiences and artworks in defining my gendered identities, which represent how I make connections within new spaces, places and time.

Feminist theorists, critics and activists address issues related to social empowerment and reconstruction for women. While such discourses consider gender differences and gendered identities, such discourses have been criticised for being from a Western centred feminist perspective. Current feminist theorists argue about postmodern conditions, nomadic subjectivity, challenges of transnational spaces, and cultural shifts and how women struggle to negotiate their identity and to have a ‘voice’ (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007; Braidotti, 2006). While, feminist artists use subjective experiences that shape representation and performativity in empowering women to have a ‘voice’, I gauge my engagement in art in the same wave through ‘breaking silences’ in the last series of my artworks. These works represent self-narratives as subjectivities of life experiences, contingencies, and cultural shifts through migration transitions and my reflection on such notions from gendered perspectives. I look through affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) and the concept of giving ‘voice’ as described by Lauren Berlant, (2011) that frame how I interrogate, represent, and reflect upon situating the ‘self’ and how I negotiate my gendered identities.

Feminist critics since early 1970’s (Code, 2007) and liberal movements have forged a source for social empowerment and reconstruction for women. Such discourses highlight identity politics that frame domination, marginalisation, oppression, violence, abuse and inequalities against women in many societies, which predominantly are in tension with dominant conceptions of social justice and other conditions of control within neoliberal societies. Debates about the status and representation of women and women’s issues have been criticised as being centred on a Western feminist perspective (Butler, 2001; Mc Mahon & Olubas, 2006). An intersectional viewpoint of feminist frameworks (Lahiri, 2004; Tehranian, Lum, Peace, & Research, 2006) is relevant here as it relates to nationality, ethnicity, cultures and issues of women as different across other continents. While, global mobility and transnational spaces accentuate shifts and differences of geographies, norms, social and cultural conditions, there is need to extend ‘voices’ to “other women” (Butler, 2001; Lahiri, 2004; Mc Mahon & Olubas, 2006). Transnational feminism reinforces such differences and endorses particular praxis for women’s embodiment, enactment and agency (Nagar & Swarr, 2010; Pratt, 1991; Roy, 2011). Braidotti, (2006; 2011) that highlights gender differences and nomadic subjectivity within postmodernist conditions and mentions women’s struggle for ethics, dignity and decency within ruthless power relations to envision the ‘self’ in a neo-liberal context. I refer to how feminist art, artists and pedagogy use the power of the visual to shape representation and performativity of subjective experiences women face, while artistic expression empowers them to have a ‘voice’.
I situate my art in the same wave as ‘performative’ and shaping representation and subjectivity through the ‘Breaking silences’ series. As self-narratives these works trace my life experiences, contingencies, and cultural shifts through migration transitions through which I situate the ‘self’ and negotiate my gendered identities. I refer to affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) to situate how affect (emotions) shape representation and recognition of the ‘self’, while it extends potentials for giving a ‘voice’ and empowerment to issues addressed. My approach extends to new ways of merging representations through self-narratives, the visual, affect and the concept of giving ‘voices’ (Berlant, 2011) in unveiling issues of oppression, patriarchal control, struggles and renegotiations of identity through shifting geographies, spaces and places.

Identity next to cultural transitions and gender roles

“The social constriction of gender and embodiment depends both on social relations and symbolic representations of difference in ways that distinguish the masculine from the feminine, the revered from the abhorred, the desirable from the undesirable” (Mc Dowell, 1999, p. 71). ‘Hybridity’ (Bhabha, 1994) is the term that has been used to refer to new kinds of identities that arise from migration and Diasporic inheritances (Heilmann & Beetham, 2004) and transnationalism. Women have been considered as bearers of cultural traditions and beliefs, but how far are they expected to be positively upfront in celebrating and maintaining same.

I refer to Gilman’s, (1966) feminist perspective that makes significant contribution to our understanding of the emancipation of women that depends on a “radical restructuring of both the physical space of the home and women’s economic place in it” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 68). She underscores the concept of lived spatiality as altered and matched next to effects of economic and environmental conditions and she argues that women need productive and meaningful lives beside their homemaker roles. On more contemporary pragmatic terms (Grosz, 2001) as an architectural feminist posits “rethinking of material life as becoming rather than static being which might bring positive changes in the lived experience of spatiality” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 74). I refer to Grosz’s philosophy of the “process of a thing’s becoming not its static location in space-time, is its concrete reality” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 74). I refer to how women are being freed from limited roles of caregivers, homemakers, and structural transformation which previously was thought to forge their identity to how Cornel West, (1989) defines “a culture of creative democracy” (Sullivan, 2007, p. 75). Following this line of thought the consideration of race, class, ethnicity, colour and other issues such as women sexuality are important aspects of lived experiences and these are crucially inclusive in constructing women identities within the contemporary. Women have been accepted as equal to men, however women have been absent in the canon
In this study I highlight the cultural transitions and shifts through my own experiences of negotiating my gendered identities. This approach has not been undertaken before.

**Feminism and the Politics of location with globalisation**

Feminism and the politics of location has been studied from different perspectives through “postmodern geographies” (Rabanne, 1999), and diaspora spaces (Brah, 1996). Kathy Davis, (2007, p. 7) endorses spatial geographies as important for framing the position from which women speak and shape their identities. Doreen Massey, (1994) describes the mutual influence of geographies and the construction of gender and gender relations. Identity politics is differentiated by race, ethnicity, religion, traditions, rituals, and different ideologies such as taboos and norms and other historical characteristics, while “social practices, state institutions, symbolic representations, and cultural artefacts” (Mc Dowell, 2008, p. 12) in some societies mark discriminations and assume women to be inferior. While some social archetypes are different and are difficult to abolish, women within such positions and contexts remain victims of oppression, abuse, violence, and inequalities. Such subordination is established and maintained through encrusted patriarchy, familial values, and religious beliefs that restrain autonomy and agency for some women. Differences of social and cultural context are determining factors for gender power relations and financial and professional positioning for women nested upon patriarchy and domination1. Cultural barriers represent struggles for women to negotiate with “operations of power and the persistence of vulnerability” (Butler, 2004, p. 47) and it is imperative to recognise different positions of women as marginalised and to empower them.

Globalisation announces a premature dismantling of frontiers and the significance of geographic distances, and identities based on place are thus transformed from the real to the virtual and human mobility generates hybrid identities (Anderson, 1997; Mc Dowell, 2008). Braidotti, (2011) refers to the conjunctures of thirty years of post-structuralist, postcolonial and feminist debates, which she characterises as indecisive in regards to emerging and rhizomatic notions of transnationalism, and the nomadic subject. In underlining a social and cultural critique that defines nomadic subjectivity, she underscores the need for in-depth scrutiny and differentiations in defining terms such as mobility, social transformation and fast changes in a globalised world. The neo-liberal context empowers a new type of society that offers new political reforms that invites us to take risks and to adapt to rapid changes (Thorsen & Lie, 2006). Global mobility is bringing changes within societies, while increasing multiculturalism and sharing of spaces, while increasing

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1 See (Tonsing, 2010),(A. Gill, 2004),(Panchanadeswaran et al., 2010),(Das Gupta & Rudra, 2009).
paradoxes of “power dissymmetries”, racism, “scattered hegemonies” and technophobia (Braidotti, 2011, p. 8). Such transformations inform sociocultural mutations directed towards multiethnic and multimedia societies, which bring interrogations for representing ourselves as subjects within new structures of subjectivity, the social relations and social imaginary that support us. Social dynamics of remembrance, commemoration (Gilroy, 1994) and memories become crucial in identity formation in the context of migration, where ‘territory’ is decentred (Frontier, 2000) and expands to multiple sites and creates interrogation with dualities to reconcile between different sites and cultures.

Lauren Berlant, (2011) focuses on affective components that address issues of social belongings that articulate the legal and normative frames of the contemporary, and the institutional practices of zoning, and other subjectivities of temporality, social bonds, and abstract boundaries through what we imagine and practice in making sense of the world. In acknowledging the different types of mobility and power differentials in different categories of humans, there are different figurations that map embedded and embodied social positions. Feminist theories make efforts to circulate discourses within the processes of globalisation and to take different meanings more specifically within transnational spaces (Davis, 2007; O’Neill et al., 2002). The growing transnational orientation within feminist discourses reflects on differences for equality, empowerment and agency for women as migrants, refugees, and descendants. Transnational spaces bring divergent conversations and issues women face are framed by specific social structures and cultures (Nagar & Swarr, 2010).

Essentialist interventions and feminist activism focus upon issues of struggle and transformation for women, yet the contingencies women face as being culturally different, and as victims of oppression, violence and dislocation with increasing global mobility and how they negotiate their identities and autonomy, is scarcely addressed. I take upon the notion of accounting one’s own location in terms of space and time and how Rosi Braidotti reinstates a need to fill in the gap in finding alternative ways of figurations and representations. In this view, I look through feminist art and artists and how they use subjective experiences towards representation and how I situate my engagement in art through the same wave which I describe in Chapter four. I view feminist art as performative and a means of empowerment and I negotiate other means of representation using the affect theory and the concept of giving ‘voice.’ In Chapter six, I discuss how the works through the ‘Breaking Silences’ series refer to a feminist approach. I elaborate on this series in Chapter seven.
Conclusion

Throughout this review it was important to situate ‘culture’ as the hub on which other larger concepts such as race, ethnicity, gender, identity, cultural hegemony, cultural identity, cultural and linguistic capital as language, rituals, traditions could be linked to. Next to these old ‘catch-all’ concepts culture is central to any discussion about the consequences and the overwhelming demands of globalisation. There are positives and pitfalls couched within new processes of culture and these have an impact on identity and agency. I introduced and explained the significance of new terms such as transnational identities and spaces (Rizvi, 2011), acculturation and cultural hybridity, or cultural homogeneity (Ritzer, 2008), global interconnectivity through media and the web. My arguments consisted of building up an understanding and critique of recent literature that address such issues as defining culture, identity formation and identity crisis, race, ethnicity, history, postcolonial and diasporic influences, globalisation, migration and relocation experiences. This review suggested the interconnectedness of issues; it also set up the basis on which my personal experiences are narrated through texts and my artworks in chapter six. Through this review, I found how cultural and historical context, the transitions through migration and relocation, the impact of new environment influences and structures impact on identity. Yet to have a ‘voice’, a structure for representation and the recognition beyond the cultural and social struggles over identity and culture, leads me to devise a research method that frames my ‘démarche’. This is developed in chapter four.
Chapter 4 - (Re) positioning – My Research Approach

Introduction

In this chapter, I define art based research, visual methods, a/r/tography that underlines my research approach. I describe my strategy in using mixed methods, which includes the use of narratives and visual representations (as my own artworks). I refer to an ethnographic writing genre in narrating my journey through different sites and the use of the visual to represent my identities and cultures. I use ethno-mimesis as a means to claim and represent social and cultural phenomena in negotiating and understanding the self. I define my engagement in art making as a generative process and I stress upon the potentials of the visual in representing the symbolic and semiotic orders, meanings and sign systems and metaphors in my artworks. I refer to feminist art as a performative in representing my gendered identities through my experiences and art. Visual mapping gives value to my artworks. The use reflexive iteration and phenomenological analysis in decoding and encoding semiotics and metaphors in my artworks.

Contextualising my research approach

My approach reconciles the use of narratives and my artworks. Arts-based research methods attend to “notions of artist-researcher-teacher praxis” (Pearse, 2004, p. 186), and it was the initial method that justified the use of narrative texts, merging of art making as process, art as representation and interpretation. It extended my reflection on how to emphasise my experiences and perspectives as artist/researcher/teacher. It was important that I could communicate “the truth of [my] experiences” (Leavy, 2010, p. 240), “my truth” or “my reality,” through my own journey as represented through text and the visual. To honour such a strategy, I used an “iterative process” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) of art making, analysis and interpretation, which challenges for dichotomous and rhizomatic thinking. In the next sections, I look through arts-based approach (Bresler, 2008; Eisner, 1997; Finley, 2005, 2008; Leavy, 2009) and ‘a/r/tography’ (Leavy, 2010; Pinar, 2004a, 2004b; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) that combines visual methods and reflexive analysis in framing my approach.

Reviewing Arts-Based Research

Arts-Based Research (ABR) and the works of ABR pioneers (Bresler, 2008; Eisner, 1997; Finley, 2005, 2008; Leavy, 2009) and other works on visual research methods (Emmison & Smith, 2000, 2006; Pink, 2001, 2006; Rose, 2001a, 2001b) elaborate on research paradigms adopted by many researchers. Arts-based
research is a way to merge the scholar-self with the artist-self (Leavy, 2009, p. 2) where creating artworks allows a “holistic and integrated perspective” for researchers as artists to express themselves and share their experiences with viewers. Such an approach within qualitative research paradigms brings new spaces for reflexivity and communication between the researcher, the audience, and the artworks. A “self- reflexive standpoint” allowed me to act as the “animator” (Bresler, 2008, pp. 267-268) and the “main instrument” in my inquiry. I use auto-biographies as narratives, and engage in art as process that refer to my experiences as an artist/researcher/teacher. This approach involved “problem-setting, problem solving, the conceptual and the physical, the analytical and the holistic [as] interconnected and interdependent” (Bresler, 2008, p. 268).

This engagement needed both a dynamic and holistic undertaking that “[involved] reflection, description... and the ability to identify and explain intuition and creativity in the research process” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10). This framework matched my investigation, where the focus was to “[classify] emerging and interrelating concepts and ... finding patterns” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) that produces meanings and interpretation of my narratives and artworks. “The interface between interpretation and analysis” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) framed my personal artistic development, my teaching and research experiences. The “meaning-making process” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) had to be explicit (Hunter, Lusardi, Zucker, Jacelon, & Chandler, 2002) in how I used metaphors.

**Visual methods**

“Ethnographic research is likewise intertwined with visual images and metaphors...where the experience of art production and processes involved in analysing them become part of the ethnographic knowledge itself” (Pink, 2001, p. 17). Within such a paradigm, “images inspire conversations, conversation may invoke images and conversation visualises and draws...into the narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them” (Pink, 2001, p. 17). “The world is increasingly inundated with visual representations” (Stanczak, 2007, p. 20) and images are part of the daily life and these assist us in making meaning as we interact with advertising, and other new advents of technology such as iPhones, iPads and the Internet. The visual not only “surrounds and confronts us” through our interaction with technology and media, but through popular culture, cultural, ritual and traditional activities (Barnard, 2001; Foster, 1998). In that sense, image-based research is a potential means to supplement “other forms of social knowledge that strengthens, challenge, and contradict the way we understand the social world of ourselves and others” (Stanczak, 2007, p. 20). Pink, (2001) state the need to develop new methodologies from where new analytical tool and data sources bring new ways to think in and of social worlds. Stanczak (2007) exposes a different standpoint that questions how visual representations can be used to construct knowledge and meaning within the academia and society at large.
Through my research, I adopt the concept of the visual that gives voice to my arguments.

The visual is a much more complex social construct (Emmison & Smith, 2000) and the conceptual framework behind them is informative as it carries expression, meanings, messages, subject to analysis. Nead, (1988, p. 4) explains how “‘art’ can also be understood as a discourse and as a specialised form of knowledge.” Images form a core part of what surrounds us through our everyday living, histories, memories, dreams, and interaction and of our understanding of the self and the other. This concept of ‘visuality’ is entangled with our “personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with the definitions of history, space and truth” (Pink, 2001, p. 17). Rose, (2001a, p. 136) defines “discourses [as] articulated through all sorts visual and verbal images and texts,... and through the practices that those languages permit.” The use of intertextuality is important to understand such diverse forms of discourses. These refer “to the way meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts,” (Rose, 2001a, p. 136). The use of artworks as visual representations, I used as production, expression, and my interpretation as an artist, where the viewer’s interpretation in understanding them through reflexive negotiation may differ. Visual narratives and representations are “contingent on how it is situated, interpreted and reflexively analysed to construct meanings and knowledge that are of ethnographic interest” (Pink, 2001, p. 19).

My inquiry needed a ‘creative method’ as “a means of exploring issues and areas of experience that might be difficult to access using words alone” (Buckingham, 2009, p. 637). I address issues with a particular focus on my own journey that allows the digging deep into the ‘ontic’ from the unconscious to subconscious and this creates my data as a series of artworks.

A/r/tography

A/r/tography is an approach defined as (Leavy, 2010; Pinar, 2004a, 2004b; Sinner et al., 2006; Springgay et al., 2008; Springgay et al., 2005) “a living practice of art, research, and teaching”, and as a “living métissage; a life-writing, life-creating experience”(Irwin, Stephenson, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2001, pp. 15-34). It is as a process channelled in giving “attention to memory, identity, reflection, mediation, storytelling, interpretation, and representation.” In the context of my study, it provided the platform “to share living practices” and experiences (Irwin, 2004, p. 34), enabling a fusion of teaching and learning that leads to sharing of dialogue and understanding. I share what Irwin, (2004, p. 33) defines as “the integration of text and image is an act of borderland pedagogy, a way of sharing a third space between knowing and ignorance,” (Irwin, 2004, p. 33).
In my approach I adopt a/r/t as a metaphor for artist/researcher/teacher (Pinar, 2004a) where my different roles merge from the personal to professional experiences. Irwin, (2004, p. 9) refers to “a/r/t as métissage” as a more powerful metaphor in merging the similar or different roles, yet bringing an insight to understand and appreciate the process and product within art making, art practice and teaching as aesthetic and professional experiences. I stress “the third space between theory and métissage” (Irwin, 2004, p. 30) defined as “the borderlands” which opens up “spaces” between the artist-researcher-teacher, as I focus on my experiences that bridge theory to practice and reflection. These definitions assign “a/r/t as métissage” (Irwin, 2004, p. 30) involving dialogical thinking, while relating and perceiving and adopting “the visual ” and the experiences within “ the borderlands” to unfold and merge. I use “a/r/t” as an acronym (Irwin, 2004) within my study to define my different roles as artist/researcher/teacher.

**Narratives - Visual Representations - Ethno-Mimesis**

Narratives are defined as a tool for intercultural communication, and in my study the use of historical facts and cultural narratives evidenced my mindset and experience as related to my ethnicity and cultural heritage, and my identity, not only through texts but through visual representations. The Barthesian theory of narratives as myths function as “symbolic, ironic or metaphorical” (Fulton, 2005, p. 6) and the visual acts as a signifying system in understanding meanings that imbue ideological and subjective stances. The use of my artworks is not merely an act of visual representation, but it goes further in addressing a way of seeing (Ihde, 1995) and such “ways of seeing [tend to transform] contemporary self-understanding” (Lury, 1998, p. 3).

Visual representations are what I define as the ‘medium’ which support the narratives of my experiences and journey. “The text is not made out of the medium in order to understand it” (Seaman, 2004, p. 18), however, in my approach the visual as a medium is in fusion with my texts. My narrative texts communicate differently in merging my ideas and themes as “they intermingle and become a non-logocentric mixed semiotic conveyance,” (Seaman, 2004, p. 18) through representation and analysis. On those terms, I use “reflexive approaches to the visual” (Pink, 2001, p. 4) where my artworks and narratives mediate with discourses and the use of metaphors to epitomize in a visual language. This combination is defined as an ethno-mimesis (Adorno, 1997; Benjamin, 1992) an inter-relation or inter-textuality between art and ethnography. My concept of ethno-mimesis is defined through my engagement in art making and the use of narratives of life experiences presented through my artworks and few photographic resources.
Ethno-mimesis (O'Neill et al., 2002) can be used as a critical theory in praxis that seeks to counter negative stereotypes of societal perspectives about migrants and their issues, and it sets a platform for self-representation of migrants lived experiences through the visual and narratives that relate the utter complexities of relocation. Currently, issues about diaspora, migration and asylum seekers nexus is at the forefront in discourses about inclusion, assimilation, and stories about identity and belonging are examined through ethnographic accounts and ethno-mimesis texts (O'Neill, 2007). I agree that the notion that identity and belonging can be understood and exposed through renewed methodologies around social research (O'Neill, 2007).

In my research, I adopt a reflexive analysis as an iterative process of interpreting my narratives and artworks that brought meaning to them. This approach involved “a rethinking of responsibility” in exploring how I “might ‘space’ [my] identity through history, texts, contexts” through visual representations next to my experiences (Pearce & Maclure, 2009, p. 250). I used McLuhan’s, (2006) ‘the medium is the message’ as a metaphor to suggest how narratives and visual representations as a ‘medium’ can translate meanings and give a ‘voice’ in sending ‘messages’. Art as production, representation, and interpretation convey meaning that can be dichotomously understood and interpreted through and within the diverse interfaces as reflexive analysis and interpretation. The concept of ‘intertextuality’ as described by Bakhtin is how interpretation is seen as an interaction between the speaker and listener, which he calls a ‘dialogue’ (Huisman, 2005). In my work, the use of ‘intertextuality’ comes into play in understanding my data and discourses that build up my arguments.

**Feminist art as performative and a means of empowerment**

Feminist theorists have captured cross-sectional discourses and strategies from different times and place to address struggles and issues women face, and feminist artists use their subjective experiences to act, address, expose and represent women’s concerns and dilemmas through visual interpretation, performance and activism (Reckitt & Phelan, 2001). Feminist artists use art as a ‘medium’ to suggest “a relationship between the demands of feminist politics and debates of feminist theory” (Reckitt & Phelan, 2001, p. 11). Feminist pedagogy also reinforces such approaches in using art as a means to bring empowerment and social change (Nordlund, Speirs, & Stewart, 2010).

Artistic expression and representation works as a universal language that can be used to share and communicate messages and meanings. Photography critic A.D Coleman suggests “that art can be used (abused?) to explain theories constructed outside of the art world” (Meagher, 2002, p. 20). Third-wave feminist artists address issues of victimisation, autonomy and responsibility with a focus on women from different cultures that expand women’s self-identity and subjective
perceptions attending their issues thus formulating their own agendas (Dekel, 2011; Freedman, 2002; Gamble, 2001). Ana Mendieta’s as an artist, uses identity categories that refer to violence, place and belonging, which highlight her artistic expression towards an inherent contradiction of being only essentialist (Blocker & Mendieta, 2004). Judy Chicago’s work ‘The Dinner Party’ exhibits resistance to patriarchal archetype and Barbara Kruger’s art informs criticisms of sexism and empowerment for the individual autonomy for women. Feminism has redefined the terms of late twentieth-century art, through critics, representation and exposure of cultural assumptions about gender, thus bringing it out from private to public sphere while stressing gender differences (Reckitt & Phelan, 2001, p. 13).

Feminist aesthetic theorists uncover “normative historical reasons” why women using their art and art-based approaches have been delegitimized and marginalised (Clover, 2011, p. 13; Perron, 1998). This describes how feminist art has been treated with disregard “so long it is almost inconceivable for some critics … to acknowledge them as discursive formations from which meaning can emerge” (Clover, 2011, p. 13; Perron, 1998). Feminist perspectives and a pedagogy of empowerment suggest a deepening of “understanding of relations configuring one’s life” (Walters & Manicom, 1996, p. 17) where visual art as critical autobiographical inquiries are considered as empowering (Clover, 2005). Kathryn Grushka, (2009) refers to how visual self-narratives pertain to the intimate and affective, and how it provides performative sites that inform and communicate identity. Visuality importantly informs ways of how vision is constructed (Rose, 2001b) and how it shapes representations of the ‘self’ and art relies on intersubjective interpretation of signified signs, symbols, emotions and metaphors.

I identify my engagement in art within such a wave, as I explore the subjectivities in negotiating my identity and how I view the ‘self’. I work with images as self-narratives which are representational of my gendered identities as embodied within what is produced and represented. A/r/tography is the method that merges my narratives and artworks and analysis as reflexive iteration. I refer to “the process of reflection [which] is not itself without affect” (Brennan, 2004; Gregg, 2006, p. 3) and it attends to different stances of emotions and feelings, as my artworks represent my inner concerns. My art becomes performative as an “exemplar of representation” that transcends cultural barriers in reconfiguring my experiences of challenges and changes and extends to my emotions and feelings that gives intrinsic value to my experiences (Lehrer, 2011, p. 63). A feminist approach empowers my artistic representation and reflection on my culture and gendered identities.
LETTING GO: HOW TO ENGAGE IN THE PROCESS

Is a paradox to interpret my own artworks?

Narratives are used to communicate and understand people and events (Conle, 2000) and language is considered as a common way through which people make meanings and connections. In contrast, art writing, descriptions of visual works of art is known through grand publications of Panofsky, Alois Riegl and the great works of Vasari and famous contemporary art critics such as Rosalind Krauss (Carrier, 2003) and Robert Hughes. In Hughes point of view, the art and design world is full of “'ebullience, idealism, confidence” and there is “plenty of territory to explore and above all by the sense that art in the most disinterested and noble way”, there might be ways to find the necessary metaphors through which the radical changing cultures could be explained to people (Gallagher, 2010, p. 1).

Art critics on the other hand, are known to frame our thinking about works in very rigid ways through their idiosyncratic interpretations. Writing about artworks can create a verbal artefact in describing them, when the narrative involves the artist’s perceptions and experiences, as the interplay of the visual and words fuse to give deeper meanings. Interpretation of an artwork can transform meanings with new significances – however “there is no way that art is, apart from how it is represented in art writing” (Carrier, 2003, p. 14). If language can impose its structures upon experience of art, one cannot escape its effects, while interpretations are allowed “to ‘subtract out’ the interpreter’s rhetoric” (Carrier, 2003, p. 14). I look more closely at this concept later in this chapter.

Observing an artwork and approaching it through writing creates and directs to other meanings. The significances and metaphoric dimensions are often not interpreted and unseen. Although narratives need time to be read, the visual is obvious and on these terms, can then writing do art justice? I see my artworks as representing my journey through different sites and contexts. These not necessarily classify them, but give coherence to my journey (Carrier, 2003). The visual creates “events to which [I give] meaning”, (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 57) while it constructs my perceptions and perspectives, unpacking meaning and significance. In giving an “invitational quality “ to my “narrative accounts” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, pp. 7-8), I bridge connections with an audience. My approach gives agency and authenticity to my interpretation which are set upon “temporal, social and cultural horizons”(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4).

“Visual imagery [do] not only represent a window onto the world, but it is rather a created perspective,” (Leavy, 2009, p. 215). Interpretation is constructed in how the viewer’s treat pictures as “an expression of the artist’s desire” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 28). Artistic expression and representation as a universal language can be used to share and communicate messages and meanings. This approach is at the heart of intercultural understanding (Fitzgerald, 1993) and it can bring more tolerance.
and comprehension of values, cultures and identities of others, and this is relevant for the diverse context in Australia. My artistic inquiry can cause that which is sometimes left out, to be known and seen (Heidegger, 1977a) as transitions, negotiations and challenges within identity structures. This purports to an idea of the “secret that we speak of, but are unable to say... the sharing of what is not shared” (Derrida, 2001, p. 58) and how “absence and differences rather than presence and consensus” (Pearce & MacLure, 2009, p. 250) can be worked through in unfolding such notions. In addressing this issue, my attempt is to bring more tolerance and comprehension of cultures and identities from self-reflexive perspectives that can incite others to better understand and accept diversity.

**Art making as a generative process**

There has been significant attention given to artworks rather than the art as a process, which leaves a gap towards an inclusive understanding of both (Bolt, 2004). Contemporary research significantly gives agency towards the artist as the subject of research. How art making as process happens within an art studio, and how the artist engages in art making, analysing and understanding their own representation has a particular logic (Bryson, 1983). How then to define this as research? Understanding the relationship between the artist, the canvas, “the complex practical knowledge, the materials of practice and the novel situation” as a generative process is in itself an area of study (Bolt, 2004, p. 6). “Art-based inquiry is about describing, exploring, and discovering which is generatively focussed in underlying processes,” and my inquiry is guided through such a generative process (Leavy, 2009, p. 12).

I define the ‘generative process’ to call upon the use of creativity, flexibility, and intuition (Saldana, 1999), which can be regarded as a “chasm” (Saarnivaara, 2003, p. 582) - a gap or an “artificial dualism” (Leavy, 2009, p. 11) that separates the conceptual world of theories and the experiential world of [the] artist (Saarnivaara, 2003, p. 582). I go further in stating that my approach endorses the existential reality of who I am as an artist/teacher/researcher and how I negotiate my art expression through what I produce on the canvas. It is quite challenging to “[investigate] experiential reality via craft – the process” without “exerting any conscious conceptual influence” which draws upon the process and experiences and results in new creation (Leavy, 2009, p. 11), (Saarnivaara, 2003, p. 582). An “iterative process” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) guides my aspirations, perspectives and experiences, and my engagement through art making and reflexive analysis.

As I made my sketches, painted them on the canvas, I made decisions and changes. I write about these processes in chapter five. I use five series of paintings to communicate meanings and give significance to embodied, generative and transitive experiences. I acknowledge that art can translate historical, cultural, and linguistic capital, values and beliefs that override formality and aesthetics of art
making, expression and representation to unveil deeper reflexive significance and meanings; and believe art making is an intuitive way to investigate, represent, and analyse such concepts.

**What is represented through my approach?**

In using a series of my paintings I underline a journey within different sites and contexts. A sequential presentation of these paintings as visual maps set up a dialogue that sends messages, meanings, and metaphors involved in them. *‘Talk back series 1-3’* refer to my ancestors and roots that bring forward semiotics, codes, messages and meanings. I use some old family photographs and recent pictures taken in India to make reference to places where my ancestors came. These photographs extend my discussion on the notion on hybridity and ambivalence in understanding identities and cultures.

*‘Down memory lane series 1-9’* refers to ‘nostalgia’ and childhood memories as cultural history and background, nostalgia and memories made explicit through the places I depict. The other series *‘Down Under Xperience, ‘Metaphorical Dialogues’, and ‘Breaking Silences’* express perspectives initiated through observation, transitions, and challenges from migration and relocation. This framework investigates and analyses how artistic expression and my interpretation is informed and influenced by socio-cultural processes. This approach supports diverse implications that highlight ambivalence and hybridity as related to identities and cultures.

My visual narratives have both figurative and abstract representations. This situates how images carry significance and meaning and it validates art as part of that symbolic language developed through shared cultural understandings to interpret the lived environment (Grenfell, 1993). In mounting an exhibition of my artworks I extend avenues for interpretation and understanding to a wider audience, that bring other ways of bridging meaning and understanding (Fiske, 1994).

The series of artwork have an interpretative content which is not separated from the texts, while my analysis complements them. The response from the audience was crucial to complete my own interpretation and discussion, which underscores the complexity of visual language and interpretation and the purpose of reflexivity.

**Art as (re)presentation – How the interpretation of my artworks sets a dialogue**

“Art is a representational practice and its products are representations” (Bolt, 2004, p. 11). The formal analysis of an artwork using Bahaus principles identify the principles and elements of art to evaluate if the painting works formally, while a semiotic analysis reads codes working in an image (Bolt, 2004). Through analysis, the classic choices and “the syntagmatic combination of visual elements” in an
artwork are deciphered to enable the interpretation of social meaning (Bolt, 2004, pp. 5-6). I focus on both on understanding the formal and semiotic elements of my artworks.

“Artworks generate different interpretations, and to interpret an artwork is to generate meaning” (Barrett, 2000, p. vi). Yet, there have been many disagreements and critical views about the analysis of artworks. Robert Rosembllum, a critic in New York says that he writes about works of art simply because he loves them and this is how criticism should be (Drier, 1990). How then can writing about and analysing one’s own artwork been seen? I borrow the words of Rosalind Krauss, who says that “one gets involved with this particular, rather esoteric form of expression because one has some kind of powerful experience with it” (Malcolm, 1986). This is why I think, reflect, learn and write about my artworks.

Such statements offset the misconceptions about criticism or analysis of art as a negative enterprise. Yet, the question of representation posits dilemmas and there is a central question of debate among philosophers, artists and art critics. The impasse around representation is more about “the structure that enables representationalism to dominate our contemporary way of thinking” (Bolt, 2004, p. 12). Bolt, (2004, pp. 12-13) defines ‘representationalism’ “as a system of thought that fixes the world as an object and resource for human subjects,” and prescribes all that is known, and it orders the world and predetermines what can be thought.” Both Deleuze and Derrida agree “that movement is the key to overcoming fixity of representationalism,” (Bolt, 2004, p. 14). Such arguments help me to unravel the knot of understanding a work of art and I focus on this concept towards interpreting my own artworks.

**ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

*Unlocking and Negotiating meanings within narratives and visual representations*

My engagement in art as a generative process involves a “narrative interchange” (Conle, 2000, p. 53). The art making, the dialectical and the analysis give meaning and significance. I act through ‘resonance’ (Conle, 1996), to take my inquiry along historical, cultural and diasporic and lived life experiences, and then extending it to “metaphorical connections” (Conle, 2000, p. 53). I engage in a generative and rhizomatic thinking through the analysis and discussion. My artworks create spaces to identify metaphors for reflection on culturally heterogeneous settings. These artworks highlight encounters of difference, ambivalence and hybridity of cultures and identity structures as a “decontextualised gateway” (Tierney, 1998, p. 68).
In unlocking meanings these works transcend boundaries of texts, the “powers of culture” and the parameters and ways I define the ‘self’ and the artist. I engage an audience to access “alternative constructions of reality” (Tierney, 1998, pp. 61-65) in understanding and interacting with my demarche and my artworks.

**Discourse analysis – Artworks and images that construct meaning**

“We do not undertake analyses of works because we want to copy them or because we suspect them. We investigate the methods by which another has created this work, in order to set ourselves in motion” Paul Klee as cited in Rabinow & Rose, (1994, p. viii)

The notion of discourse as presented by Foucault and how Paul Klee defines his method as “rendering visible” (Rabinow & Rose, 1994) is developed in this study. Discourse is framed by a group of statements (Rose, 2001b) that structure the way we think and how we act based on that thinking. Stuart Hall, (2001, p. 72) extends the definition of discourse based on studies of Michel Foucault as a group of statements to “a system of representation”, a way of representing and producing knowledge and constructing a topic through language. Discourse analysis is concerned with “meaning-making” which includes “a theory of language”, how it is communicated to provide a perspective and knowledge construction (Wetherell, 2001, p. 1).

I refer to Nead, (1988) who suggests that ‘art’ can be also understood as a discourse. In my research the analysis and interpretation of my artworks is articulated through intertextuality in finding discursive meaning through them. In referring to a visual discourse, Mulvey, (1989), and Rose, (2001b), define visuality as a sort of discourse. I adopt this approach in making signs, codes, symbols and metaphors visible in specific ways that connects meaning to my artworks in a powerful way. In using the Foucauldian terms I use a constructivist approach.

Within this paradigm, I focus on how my artworks can bring up critical reflection that “open up statements to challenge”, interrogate meanings and even “disturb easy claims to objectivity” (Tonkiss, 1998, p. 259). From a semiological and phenomenological analysis, I search for codes and metaphors. I refer to Mitchell, (2005) when he articulates ‘What do pictures really want’, as reflexivity linked to the Foucauldian discourse analysis. A reflexive strategy brings coherence in examining the textual and visual and in making inter-textual connections. In reference to Foucault’s work, the discursive formation in my inquiry takes a constructivist approach to representation (Hall, 2001). Such discourses extend from language to expand the scope of representation in constructing “subject-positions” that gives meaning and agency (Hall, 2001, p. 80), more than words alone can do.
Visual Semiotics

We live in a world dominated by signs, symbols, and visual imagery. These are communicated verbally and non-verbally through words, texts, and sound, and visual media. Signs and codes are organised in different ways they convey messages and meanings and technology plays a significant role in our daily encounters with media through television, smart phones, and computers and the internet and social media interaction. There are different ways meaning is read and interpreted from them. From a philosophical approach of reading and interpreting patterns of symbolism and how it is communicated evolves semiotics. This section overviews a basic understanding of semiotics and visual language and grammar that I use to read, interpret and make meaning of my paintings.

The study of semiotics originated through literary and linguistic contexts, and it has expanded in a number of directions. “Saussure saw linguistics as forming one part of semiotics”, and “Barthes turned this idea upside down and suggested that semiotics, the science of signs, was in fact one part of linguistics”(Crow, 2010, p. 54). “Semiotics takes in any system of signs, whatever the content or limits of the system” (Crow, 2010, p. 54). Visual images and media, sounds, gestures and objects all are all inclusive and part of systems that have semiotic meanings. The construction of words and their representations for Barthes goes deeper. He saw semiotics as ‘… the part covering the great signifying unities of discourse’ (Barthes & Lavers, 1977; Crow, 2010, p. 54). The reader has a significant role in the process of reading meaning according to Barthes and this process involves applying linguistic concepts to other visual media to carry meaning. There are structural meanings in the components of signs which are centred on two different levels of signification: denotation and connotation. A denotative level signification is direct and it refers to what we see in physical reality in an image or object that is signified. If a painting is used the order of signification and representation can be read as what the painting directly represents in terms of theme or idea. Whereas at a connotative level, there are conventions depending on the culture in which the reader has learnt to read signs. Conventions thus vary from one culture to the other and social context, where rules to read images are different, hence it acts as an agreement about how we should respond to a sign. Conventions pepper the images we read today as the images are altered with special effects of sounds, visual or slow motion (Crow, 2010). On the other hand, signs with little conventions need to be significantly iconic and its needs motivation to communicate meaning to a wider audience.

Semiotics acknowledge the existence of a “plane of expression” in visual representation (Saint-Martin, 1990, p. xiii). For an understanding of visual language there needs to be a rigorous approach to study verbal language. The linguistic status of visual representations remains complex, whereas visual semiotics is a new discipline which defines a general context of contemporary theories of language of the particular image or object to be studied (Saint-Martin, 1990). This system involves a
continuous process of observation. The visual and verbal planes of expression are different and both need a syntactic orientation that takes into account all existing regions in visual representations and any specific interrelations, although this does not necessarily contribute to interpretation of meaning (Saint-Martin, 1990). Interpretation of the contents of a painting is tied to the theme or a verbalised iconic form, which is identifiable and this overlooks “the decisive analysis of Eco’s use of iconic sign as a basic element of visual language” (Saint-Martin, 1990, p. xiii). Visual semiotics uses the instrumentality of verbal language and the graphic models. It also refers to a “metalanguage”, a language that talks about another language, as it develops notions, hypotheses and vocabularies that it uses (Saint-Martin, 1990, p. xiii).

Through my research, I look through the visual language within my artworks. I look at broadening an understanding of how to read my paintings and the narratives (texts) as discourses. I underscore a strong semiotic interdependence between my paintings and the narratives (texts) that accompany them. There are parallels between linguistic text and visual image as two media and these are not disjunct in my series of paintings as they have been composed and arranged through a visual mapping to signify and communicate meaning. My paintings convey direct meanings more than texts and narratives can, as they relate to ‘affective links’ through emotions that are meaningful while the texts that accompany address more to intellect with an incite for critical and judgemental perceptions. My paintings, if not accompanied with the narratives and my textual analysis in a way lose their essence and the messages and meanings can be lost and ambiguous. A combination of my narratives and paintings has higher communicative power that neither the textual nor the visual can communicate on its own. I discuss the reading of semiotics in my artworks in the conclusion chapter.

**Understanding signs, codes and symbols within my artworks**

In my analysis, I did not engage in compositional interpretation and content analysis. I used an iterative analysis that combines what Irit Rogoff, (1998) terms as ‘the good eye’, as a way for looking at a painting “that is not methodologically explicit” (Rose, 2001b, p. 33) with a specific way and consistent way of describing them. It is important to decipher meanings in my artworks, and semiology as a method provides an analytical vocabulary for describing concepts in ways meaning is inherently understood (Rose, 2001a). Semiology draws upon social theorists such as Judith Williamson, (1978) who cites Barthes, Benjamin, Berger, Foucault and others who advocate ideas as ideology and subjectivity. In using semiology, I concentrate on how my artworks create meaning. I identify the building blocks as signs within my artworks, to explore through specific elements that bring meaning and significance (Bal & Bryson, 1991). Both Bal & Bryson, (1991) and Hodge & Kress, (1988) acknowledge Saussure’s static point of view on how signs work. Iversen, (1986, p. 85) defines Saussure’s model as telling how “systems of arbitrary
signs operate,” while Charles Sanders Pierce provides a framework to understand the relationship between the signifier and the signified by reading through the iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. My approach extends to deciphering denotative signs in my artworks that form an ensemble of denotative meanings to produce a ‘diegesis’ (Barthes, 1977). Additionally, I seek for connotative signs that carry meanings and metonyms that have ‘synecdochal’ significance (Rose, 2001b). This method identifies signs as associated and structured through codes and elements in my representations. The ‘synecdochal’ is presented in ‘Talk back series’ for instance, where I depict concepts I represent. I extend my analysis in understanding the metaphors in my artworks.

I briefly outline my intention to use some photographic sources within ‘Talk back series’ as these contribute to my analysis and interpretation. The messages and meanings articulated through these photographs bridge and explain the concept of ‘time lag’ that I try to describe in my analysis of picturing identity reality, whereas Barthes, (1982) refer to photographs that carry referents in themselves that produce different response. I used these photographs as they convey signifieds and meanings that are culturally significant.

**METAPHORS - A notion of dialogue binding my narratives and visual representations**

Metaphors are often associated with poetic language and imagination. However, whether we are conscious about it or not, metaphors are all-encompassing within our everyday life, not just in language but through our thoughts and actions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). How we think and act is essentially metaphorical in nature. If metaphors sharpen our thinking by making it more vivid and interesting, they play a role in structuring our perceptions and understanding of a multitude of issues and concepts. Through my research, the use of reflexivity has complex meanings which are not limited to analysis of texts, but it extends to my artistic representations. Metaphors thus re-create experiences, never signifying a closed, literal meaning but enabling the viewer and the reader to experience it (Eisner, 1991). This highlights experiences and perceptions as mediated by the visual, the textual, and inter-textual. The emphasis is not only about believing what the eyes can see, but to reflect on the metaphors that direct transitional moves on my journey, as represented through my narratives and artistic expression.

**REFLEXIVITY - Reflecting and responding towards subjectivity**

**Phenomenological analysis**

Pink, (2001) refers to “reflexivity” where the researcher becomes part of the emerging text. Sullivan, (2010, p. xv) describes how reflexivity impacts on how visual information is interpreted.” For Pink, (2001, p. 19) reflexivity can be a conceptual asset in revealing information, which “recognises the centrality of the
subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge.” In defining reflexivity Pink, (2001, p. 19) goes further in suggesting that it involves “beyond the researcher’s concern with questions of ‘bias’ or how ethnographers observe the ‘reality’ of society where they actually ‘distort’[it] through their participation in it.” Walsh, (1998, p. 220) states that reflexive ethnography should involve a keen awareness of the interpenetration of reality and representation,” and for Leavy, (2009, p. 216) “visual art may serve as a vehicle for transmitting ideology, while it can effectively be used to challenge, dislodge and transform out-dated beliefs and stereotypes.”

Through my investigation I also consider how cultural norms, values and issues of identities and cultures change over time as they are contested and negotiated. My argument is aligned with Leavy, (2009, p. 216) in asserting that these issues “shape the production of visual art” as much as they reflect the production of cultures and identity when represented through my artistic expression. In regard to how an understanding of how artistic production and representation intersects with interpretation and construction of identity, I suggest it is supported through metaphors. This process mirrors my reflexive awareness of visual dimensions of culture and identity and its relation to new discourses in the field, which I take up later in my discussion.

Reflexivity - Inspiring Hybridity and ambivalence

While underlying the concept of reflexivity and artistic representations, it is important to mention that “‘art’ is a social and historical construct’ and thus many aspects of artistic appreciation are specific to particular cultural and historical contexts” (Melcher & Bacci, 2008, p. 347). Artistic production and representation is a negotiated outcome between the artist and the viewer, where both signify their intentions and perceptions. However, these can be manifested on relatively different grounds and perspectives. In my study, I focus on developing an understanding that represents how artistic expression, representation and interpretation relate to social and cultural identities.

My understanding extends to building up a relationship between me as the artist, my artworks and the viewer’s interpretation within an audience. My artworks represent connections to cultures that differ and how artistic representation can transcend barriers to communicate messages and meanings. This approach can justify a “cross-cultural appeal” on behalf of the artist and the viewer that allows for a “transcultural appreciation of art” (Melcher & Bacci, 2008, pp. 347-357). I try to uncover these through the exhibition of my artwork.

Following an “interpretivist approach” (Sullivan, 2010) I focus on art making, art works and art interpretation that builds critique and use of reflexive approaches. “Visual arts practice is characterised by its distinctive research capacity” (Sullivan,
2010, p. 104) and I use critical analysis of my artworks to put emphasis on the value of art and how cultures and identities can be represented through them.

The phenomenological observer from a philosophical hermeneutics perspective defines understanding as interpretation. The “interpretative and hermeneutical aspects” in research are now an important element (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 195), where it involves interpretation that communicates understanding. As explained by Gadamer, (1970) understanding is not an isolated activity but a basic structure of our experience. Within such an approach the interpreter’s “understanding is participative, conversational and dialogic” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 195), that is “bound up with language and achieved through a logic of questions and answers.” I make sense how my artworks relate to the “temporal” and “processive” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 195). This determined how artworks have meanings from an interpretivist approach, where meaning is negotiated in the act of interpretation.

The interpretations that emerge from a “critical hermeneutics process can bring new levels of understanding and appreciation to produce thick descriptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 195). Critical observation of images in relation to its context needs bridging between the observer and images, and the social-cultural context. Such interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) call upon the interplay with larger social forces to everyday lives events and experiences. A critical hermeneutics brings the concrete, the parts, the particular (the individual) into focus, but in my inquiry it situates my experiences contextually. It allows for understanding art expression and interpretation as linked to larger social forces as a whole and also to the abstract – from the generic to deeper levels of understanding (Berger, 1995). An understanding of social and cultural reproduction, cultural hegemony, transitions through migration and cultural identity provides an interpretative lens to better understand my views, perceptions and perspectives that shape meaning through my inquiry.

**Reflexive iteration - The meaning-making process**


**What my artworks depict?**

This question explicitly clarifies the lenses through which I define my engagement with the theoretical, subjective, ontological, and epistemological, and it builds an understanding of how I view my visual representations as representing my cultures and identities. The following questions need to be answered:
• What constitutes culture?

• How it is literally defined and viewed within postmodern discourses?

• How to define my gendered identities within a globalised world?

• How identity connects and relates to narratives and how is it translated or transferred as visual narratives through my artistic expression and representations?

• What defines and surrounds my artistic expressions /representation and the forms of narratives and metaphors used?

**What my artworks are representing?**

This question connected and identified subjective lenses based on my research questions and my approach in using narratives and metaphors.

• How my artworks represent narratives of my ethnicity, cultural inheritances, childhood memories, lived life experiences, and current perspectives of migration that define my identity?

• How do I engage with my art to represent culturally different context and experiences?

• Are there changes in how I engaged through my art and interpretation?

These questions link to my research question and sub questions that sharpen the focus for my analysis. These questions narrow my reflection to how to understand and represent my identities and cultures from a sociocultural perspective, and through the representational and interpretative stances.

**Conclusion**

This chapter describes how I use an art-based approach, visual methods and a reflective approach towards analysis. It defines how I devise my strategy in engaging through art making as a generative process and how I focus on using my artworks to represent messages and meanings. I define the visual as a powerful ‘medium’ in translating narratives and messages, signs, symbolic and semiotic meanings. I define A/r/tography as a framework that celebrates the rapport and development of art making, representation and analysis. I refer to reflexive iteration through my analysis.
Chapter 5 - (Re) searching - Constructing my data

Introduction

This chapter outlines the process of starting my paintings. I start with ‘Embarking on my PhD journey’ as the first artwork I worked before doing the other series of paintings. It also overviews my experience and process of making my sketches and paintings and how I kept a log and analytical memos. It defines techné and how I define my art as a generative process. I present my artworks with annotations in this chapter with an intention to show them before decoding the visual semiotics in Chapter six and engage in a rethinking and reflection in Chapter seven.

Embarking on my PhD journey

This work extends to dimensions of exposing the ‘self’ not only through the narratives it contains, but through the aesthetics as principles and elements of art in reference to lines, shapes, colours, tone variations, light and shades, forms and structures, that gives agency to inner perceptions and feelings. This work opens my thesis, but I also refer to it in my discussion of the deconstruction of meaning and the messages it carries in regards to my gendered identities and the ‘self’.

Title: ‘Embarking on PhD journey’, 2010
60 cm x 45 cm / 23.5 in x 17.5 in
Acrylic on canvas
In this work, the centre features growth and development of ideas, themes, concepts and paradigms as overlapping, swirling and represented through lines, shapes, forms and colours. Some forms are anamorphic and mystical and these represent enthusiasm, aspirations, and metaphors. The red parts create vibrancy, while tones in blue pose for reflection. The strokes in the background represent facets and encounters of experiences, and the dark lines underscore fears and apprehensions, although this journey has been enjoyable and enriching. My migration experiences are part of this PhD journey, while I take different roles and standpoints as a woman and an artist/researcher/teacher. It is challenging to negotiate identities and cultures within new spaces, places, and this work suggests the need to expose and provoke others to understand such notions and experiences through reflexive stances.

**THE LOG AND ANALYTICAL MEMOS – FRAMING OF EXPERIENCE**

The log or memos I kept in the whole process of making the artworks and my narrative texts, defines my personal experience, decision making and ambiguities. It is not easy to embark on art making and I had to set aside and overcome my doubts and learn to work and uncover a way of making my sketches and final artworks. For me it was important to engage in the process and to shape those artworks (Bayles & Orland, 2010).

**Techné – How I define art as generating expression and representation**

*Techné* is a word used by the Greeks to define not only the skills of the craftsman but is also applied to fine arts and artists (Bolt, 2004, p. 63). There is always a misconception between works done by craftsmen and artists. The craftsman is as talented as the artist, as he acquires technique to perfection sometimes in execution of his artworks, which earn him a living. The artist too creates for a living; however I argue that the artist is less constricted to restrictions and mass production compared to the craftsman. The artist most of the time paints only when feels the mood to do so. Expression and the creative stance from my point of view is more a pulsation or a throbbing experience, full of dynamism that is unleashed when I am at work. It is through such a “dynamic and productive relation”, that “art emerges as revealing” (Bolt, 2004, p. 54) and through such a conception each of my artworks have been a complex encounter that was not predictable in advance, whereby even the mastery of technique means little.

The conception of my artworks as ‘framing of experience’ (Fleming, 2003) is what I define as my intention and the way I interact with them. My process requires decision-making from the sketching to making the paintings on the canvas. In keeping a log and analytical memos I mapped my process, changes and framing as the work developed because progressively the frames became indistinguishable from the canvas. This process accretes into technique which makes artworks thicker and adds content and expression to them. For example, I had to leave
some loose threads and unresolved issues and ideas for the other paintings when working on Metaphorical dialogues series. There has been a transformation in my art as process with expressivity and creativity made explicit. The analogy of framing is often suggestive as in some artworks such as ‘Border lives’ where what I express and represented in the final paintings changed from the initial sketches.

Some techniques like painting with a wooden skewer instead of a brush were improvised on the spot, as I found it to be more creatively effective in achieving textural effects. The colour scheme from the sketch to the canvas also changed, as sketches were done in coloured pencils and pens and I used acrylics as a medium on the canvas. There was a huge difference in both approaches as my imagination and creativity took over and the rest was a flow of expression and representation.

The finished work is a “test of correspondence between the imagination and execution” (Bayles & Orland, 2010, p. 17) and my experience has been close to this, and each artwork was a discovery of what I wanted to frame from the inner ‘self’. These were executed through both the conscious and subconscious processes. Art making has been generative where each theme or idea was translated as expression with lines, colours, textures towards representation of specific frames and notions.

**Bridging on my ideas and themes**

‘Talk back series’ 1-3 was an expression of themes, ideas and representations that I cared about as it had a lot of significance in defining who I am. During my field trip in Mauritius I had to undergo a long process in building up a family tree and tracing back to my roots. Through the birth certificate of my paternal grandfather, I was able to retrieve birth dates and then trace important data about my ancestors. The immigration numbers was available at the Indian Immigration Archives of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI). The Aapravasi Ghat (meaning landing place of immigrants) was an important landmark to visit as it has vestiges of history and it is the first landing place of indentured immigrant in Mauritius. The MGI Folk museum had artefacts displaying scenarios of living conditions and daily life of indentured immigrants in those days. Based on these resources I was to elaborate on my preliminary sketches for ‘Talk back series.’ I had much insight in adding details and creating the mood and expression to convey symbols and semiotic meanings and references. I captured different clues, made small notes, memos and photographs that assisted me in making the sketches.

For ‘Down memory lane series’ 1-9, I aimed at producing a series of nine small format canvases which overall reinstate the element of nostalgia, memories that marked my childhood and the clichés of daily life experiences and places that I live in and visit in Mauritius. Although nine canvases are not enough to depict such perspectives, I had to be selective in what I wanted to depict. It was sometimes
challenging as some places such the grand-parents’ house no longer existed, and I had to work only from memory.

Working on the sketches and final painting on ‘Rue Corderie’ was a different experience. On the field trip I went to that street to take pictures and to my amazement there were no major changes. The grocery shops I used to visit with my father when I was a child were still operating. Some foods items such as the Bombay ducks, salted fish, pulses, grains, red chillies, the basmati rice, and canned foods were still available and presented in the same fashion as they were thirty years ago, all stacked outside the front door with prices labelled. Things that had changed included the aloe bags used in old days to store the pulses, rice and grains, though some were replaced by plastic fibre bags. Taking photographs of these front groceries stores refreshed some childhood memories and from these references, I made detailed sketches.

‘Down Under Xperience series’ 1 and 2 offered the opening of new observations in a new environment, in Australia. In this case, my ideas and themes refer to places I visit in Australia. I always have my camera at hand when going out in the city or visiting parks and places in the suburbs. These photographic resources serve as reference about what I see, observe and feel which I translate through my artworks. In the process of making these artworks, the emotions and feelings translated are different. I was not depending on my memory but the expression came more spontaneously, as fresh ideas and sources that I encountered. Artists are often challenged to paint what they see and observe, and this series was an overview of my current surroundings.

‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series 1-3 define the transitions through migration and how I understand and live ‘liminality’, and what I perceive as emotions as a new migrant. The initial sketches were based on my firsthand experiences and later when working on a larger format there were considerable changes that happened in how I expressed colours, lines, textures through the composition.

‘Breaking silences’ 1-3 is the last series, where I completed three sketches and then painted them on the canvas. In these series too, there have been many changes undertaken within the process.

SERIES OF PAINTINGS AND SKETCHES

This section presents the five series of my artworks. As an ensemble, these series of artworks articulate my journey through different sites, as well as the encounters and experiences about my gendered identities and the ‘self’. I describe and analyse my artworks using a reflexive approach and I focus on decoding the visual semiotics, messages and meanings that give voice and agency in Chapter six.
TALK BACK SERIES 1-3

‘Talk back 1’

Title: ‘Talk Back 1’, 2011
100 cm x 75 cm / 39.5 in x 29.5 in
Acrylic on canvas
'Talk Back 1’ depicts snapshots of places and events experienced by my great-grandparents. The journey – From the Port of embarkation in Calcutta, indicated on the map of India and the crossing of the Indian Ocean, is also known as ‘kala pani’ the dark waters (Teelock, 2009) In those days, people were stacked on ships and established bonds with other the ‘jehaji bhai’, their brother ship mates. On their arrival at the Aapravasi Ghat in Caudan Port Louis, they had to go through a central door with a series of steps that lead to the depot where they were usually quarantined, before their postings on different sugar estates on the island. When setting foot on this new ground they had a fair idea about what was going to be their future, as they were meant to leave for India once their work contract expired. Yet, more than 200,000 indentured labourers were offered settlement thus allowing the growth of many descendants. Mauritius is currently quoted as a model for peace and harmony for inter cultural and religious diversity.

I represent my great grandmother with her traditional outfits with her ‘saree’ and jewelleries, the ‘bindi’ on the forehead in the final work, gives more insight and detail of the richness of the colours and adornments. I depict my grandfather as old given he toiled his entire life in the sugarcane fields facing sun, rain and bad weather that left his skin wrinkled. The ‘paghri’ headdress and his ‘kurta’ shirt in cotton fabric suggest how he preserved his traditional dress code up until he died. Similarly, I try to depict the St Felix sugar estate in this painting and the Camp where they married, lived and raised their son, Ramcurrun. The traditional huts made of thatch were the type of accommodation they lived in. They raised animals such as cows and oxen for pulling carts that transported sugarcane to the mills and goats. They grew fruit trees such as jack fruit and breadfruit, mangoes, litchis, bananas and crops such as tapioca, sweet potatoes, and peanuts, and vegetables. This self-grown food provided them with additional food besides the rations of basic commodities such as flour, rice, oil, pulses, sugar, salt and soap they were provided with by plantation owners. The banana tree is symbolic here, as it is part of the Hindu culture, where it is used for many purposes such as a plate to serve food on, and for offerings of ‘prashad’ sweets to gods in religious ceremonies and rituals. It is still iconic and found in most Hindu backyards where people still use them.

Besides cultural markers in this work, I bring forward the mood and feeling that emanates through facial expressions. The look in the eyes – a starry look in search of hopes and expectations or the weary eyes of an old man who toiled his whole life in the sugar estate. It must not have been easy for Nawoory as a girl of eight years old to accompanying her parents as indentured labourers to this new land. Yet, she managed to preserve and pass on traditional values and beliefs to the next generation. The sense of community and belonging was very strong among the indentured labourers on the estates, and later in the villages they built around the sugar estates.
'Talk Back 2' is a representation of the type of work undertaken by generations, from my grandfather to my great grandfathers as first indentured labourers on St Felix sugar estate in Savannah district, Mauritius. My grandfather was born at ‘Camp Bananes’ – a small ‘Camp sucrier’ located in Terracine nearby Souillac village.
My grandfather and great-grandfathers were not educated but they attended community based institutions (‘Baithkas’) to strengthen their religion and practices, thus maintaining ‘Bhojpuri’ (dialect of Hindi language) as the spoken language at home and among their peers. The job of a ‘Chartier’ was to transport harvested sugarcane to the mills. My father in his childhood used to accompany and help his father in early mornings to load the sugarcane on the carts before attending school. I depict the fields, the labourers at work and the sugar mill as a representation of the scene as it might have looked in the early 1950’s. Oxen carts were driven miles on difficult earth-beaten roads to the mills. Each trip of sugarcane transportation brought a yield of one rupee to a ‘Chartier’. The day for a ‘Chartier’ started at three o’clock in the morning, and my grandmother used to prepare packed breakfast ‘garde manger’ of boiled tapioca and chutney, or ‘pharatas’ (homemade wheat bread), pickles and raw onions and chillies.

‘Talk back 3’
'Talk Back- 3’ represents women and their families as they lived in those days - a typical lane on the camps or barracks where they were housed. Most women who came were married and they accompanied their husbands as indentured labourers. There were also children such as my great grandmother who came along with their parents on those boats. My great grandmother was eight years old when she arrived in Mauritius with her parents in 1858. Although women worked in the fields, they were not given the same status and rights as men labourers in terms of access to food rations and wages. Women mostly worked as domestics, laundresses, charcoal sellers, dressmakers and gardeners. Women and children had to fetch water from community tap, (‘la fontaine’) and they had to crush maize grains and spices in huge wooden mortar and pestle. Besides this type of work, they kept animals and maintained backyard vegetable gardens for their subsistence. They also foraged for their animals, as these were not let loose but kept in rudimentary sheds. The household tasks included cleaning of the huts and maintaining the floors and walls and making of new stoves out of a mix of clay and cow dung once a fortnight. The preparation of meals was a tedious task, especially between the Second World War as food was rationed and my grandparents and parents had to subsist on local staple food products such as maize grains and manioc that was processed in huge mortar and pestle vats for the making of traditional bread.
The life of a woman or a young girl was very hard. They often married at the tender age of nine years old like my grandmother, who had children when she was as young as fifteen years old. It is important to focus on their living conditions and medical facilities. Due to epidemics such as malaria, dengue fever and tuberculosis many of them died including infants. My grandmother lost two young children due to epidemics.

A compositional and narrative interpretation of these paintings acknowledges the power of the visual. The power of these paintings is indeed present, through what I describe and see in them as surface, but there are far more messages and meanings embedded in them that turn, shift and redirect to discursive flows. In Chapter six, I address those deeply embedded meanings through extensive reflection on the semiotics within the ‘Talk back’ series.

**DOWN MEMORY LANE SERIES 1-9**

The ‘Down memory lane’ series depict childhood memories, nostalgia of places and events that frame lived experiences in a multicultural context of my home country, Mauritius.

‘Down memory lane’ 1

![Sketch - ‘La caze grandmama ek grandpapa’ (Old house of grandparents)](image)
In doing the sketch, I recalled my childhood experiences - the visits to my grandparents’ ‘case’ (house). The small traditional house, located in the northern coastal suburb in ‘Triolet’ village, and a vestige of past postcolonial history, heritage and architecture. The charm and fantasy associated to that place, refreshed through my memories represents moments of joy and sharing with them. It reminds me of the tastes of amazing food and pickles that my grandmother’s made and the legendary stories and gossips going on in the village that she recounted warily and my brothers and I listened with enchantment, while we sat under the open veranda at night on the watch for shooting stars on hot summer nights.

I used to enjoy my own space of retreat while making my drawings on the veranda. I also enjoyed eating the ripe mangoes and helping my grandfather in the garden. The spirit and charm of that place resided in the variety of lush green plants, flowers, and the shady grounds under the bread fruit tree. The house no longer exists, but the frangipani, poinsettia and the orange kana flowers are features that I can recall and these helped me in shaping and representing same through this work. As a child I used to play with neighbour’s children and days spent there seemed to be longer as there were always many things to do from eating ripe
mangoes to helping my grandfather in the garden. The prayer time was before six o’clock in the evening and it was a sacred moment, when I used to accompany my grandmother to light the earthen lamp in a shrine dedicated to God ‘Hanuman’ and this is depicted on the right corner of this painting. This is common ritualistic practice in many Hindu households, and it is supposed to symbolise protection for the members of the family. It indirectly reinstates identification of ethnic or religious belongings as shrines are built in the front yard of Hindu families and there are two red flags next to it. Besides the daily prayer there is a grand ritual performed each year with offerings such as sweets ‘prashad’ and the renewal of the flags.

‘Down memory lane’- 2 - ‘Rue la Corderie - Port-Louis’

Sketch - ‘Rue la Corderie - Port-Louis’
'Rue la Corderie' is one of the busiest commercial streets in the capital city Port-Louis. From my childhood memories, I recall accompanying my parents on Saturday mornings, once every two months to buy groceries. The grocery stores displayed a variety of food items and ingredients from different cultures such as rice, grains, spices and pulses all packed in aloe bags and stacked under the shop verandas. The variety of colours, textures, the fragrant smell of the basmati rice, the aroma of tea leaves and grounded coffee, the spices such as cinnamon, cloves, saffron and cardamom were enchanting. The pungent smell of turmeric, dried red chillies and shrimps, salted fish and Bombay ducks used to tease my nose. As a kid I was always delighted to visit this place because of the vibrancy of its colours and flavours, and things I liked to observe and discover. I guess the quest for observing as an artist, started from those days. Within the hustle and bustle of these narrow shop corridors the shopkeepers would shout to market their products and attract customers. From such memories I feel connected to a patria and a cultural capital, while I share a sense of belonging to Mauritian culture.

The painted version of 'Rue la Corderie', was made after my field trip to Mauritius, where I was able to make more sketches on spot. My first sketch was only a vague interpretation from memories. I revisited many traits that were the same but
through my visit I acknowledged that some things had changed. Walking down this street, it was clear that the moment I describe accompanying my dad was not there, yet it brought back vivid memories. I could still find the spirit of the place, the same flavours that make that place special. The smell of chillies, turmeric, cumin and the pungent Bombay duck, and salted fish, rice, grains and pulses were still the same as it used to be thirty years before. The canned foods such as salmon, sardines, tuna, ghee, tea, coffee were still displayed and available in those stores. I was intrigued to see that edible oil was still sold by litre or quarter litre, which a man was, took out from a barrel with a manual pump. I included all these detailed features in this version, as they informed many cultural signs and meanings about the Mauritian culture and way of living. Changes have happened in things like the aloe bags called ‘gooni’ in which the grains, rice and pulses are stored are now made of synthetic fibres, but there were more important changes that reflect postmodern conditions in the way people access such places and the pattern of consumption which had shifted. People were now geared to supermarkets found in each corner of the Island now, and these stores are no longer accessed as specific provisioning sites as before. This really endangers the survival of such places and also puts at stake such a ‘patrimoine’.

‘Down memory lane’- 3 - ‘Pirogue at Coin de Mire’

\begin{center}
\textbf{Sketch - ‘Pirogue at Coin de Mire’}
\end{center}
The sea and coastal life are part of my memory souvenirs of Mauritius. Coastal picturesque scenes feature blue skies, crystal green waters of lagoons, distant islets, and small fishermen embarkations and other catamarans carrying cruising tourists. Fishermen earn a living and a meal from their catch while using artisanal fishing techniques of ‘casier’ (fishing boxes made of bamboo strips) and ‘pêche à la seine’ (fishing nets) which is still practiced. Small embarkations are called ‘pirogues’ are used to go at sea for catches of ‘cateau’, ‘capitaine’, ‘sachretiens’, and other varieties of seafood such as the ‘zourite’ (octopus), calamari, squid, and lobster. As there is overfishing in the lagoons, such sea products have become rare and costly with an expanding tourist industry. There are amazing spots that surround the coastal region and these remind me of the calmness and serenity while strolling on the shore. The ‘Coin de mire’ island is an iconic symbol that dominates the horizon on the north coastal beaches of the island.
'Down memory lane' - 4 - 'Montagne Rempart'

Sketch - 'Montagne Rempart'

'Down Memory Lane' - 4
Title: 'Montagne Rempart', 2011
41 cm x 41 cm/ 16 in x 16 in
Acrylic on canvas
The sketch is a view from my art room when working as an art teacher in ‘Bambous’ village. Mountain features in Mauritius dominate the landscape, and I reckon that from my room’s window at home, I could see ‘Corps de Grade’ and the distant features of ‘Montagne Rempart’. The vegetation, coconut trees, and the flamboyant also dominate the scene. There have certainly been major changes in the way Mauritian villages and streets looked like in the colonial period when my ancestors lived on Sugar estates. There are new features such as the style of habitation which has changed from huts to concrete houses. Now, almost every Mauritian family owns a plot of land and a house.

This painting depicts a familiar scene I used to see from my art room while working as an art teacher in Bambous village. Mountain ranges dominate the Mauritian inner landscape due to its volcanic origins, and my home town Quatre-Bornes is situated on the central plateau. From my room at home, I had an amazing view of the ‘Corps de Grade’ peak. The textural features of facades of ‘Montagne Rempart’ in this paintings show its volcanic origins, which is very impressive as the colours change with variances in light during the day. Land in the inner parts of the island is largely covered with sugarcane plantations and roads are bordered with coconut and ficus (la fourche), bordered by flamboyant, cassia and bougainvillaea. There are major changes with rapid growth in habitation and new infrastructures. Rural areas are losing the traditional ‘cachet’ as traditional ‘la case tol’ (iron sheet houses) are being replaced by concrete and alleys by asphalt roads. These changes suggest processes of development, postmodernity and globalisation in play thus defying the colonial era and dependence on sugarcane as a main industry. While, houses in concrete dominate the scene, postmodernity takes technology and the fast food culture to most parts in the Island.

What I depict in this work includes the sugarcane fields that still surround the small village, and not far away there is a sugarcane mill. Many people in ‘Bambous’ village still work on the nearby ‘Médine’ Sugar estate as labourers or as mill workers. There used to be camps in the 1950’s that accommodated people, but the ‘Camp sucrier’ has changed with people having their own homes. The impact of modernism is real, and free education provided since the independence in 1968 has brought new opportunities for seeking white collar jobs in the civil sector, and also trained people with skills to work in textile manufacturing sector and other service industries. The resilient Mauritius in 2011 is booming in many sectors such as tourism, financial services and real estate property markets (AXYS, 2011) that have changed the lifestyles of many Mauritian people. There are indeed many influences such as the media and social networking that brings changes, yet the mindset of the people is still much the same in some ways. The way they communicate, live and talk is so different to what I experience in Melbourne. The two women and the children I depict in this work show that people in a small village in ‘Bambous’ live
simply and are content with whatever they possess as they share their ‘joie de vivre’ with their neighbours.

‘Down Memory lane’ - 5 – ‘Maha Shivaratri at Ganga Talao’

Festivals in Mauritius are celebrated at National level without distinctions of race and ethnicity and this includes other festivals such as ‘Kavadee’, ‘Ganesh Chathurti’, ‘Divali’, ‘Holi’, ‘Eid’, Chinese Spring festival, Assumption, and Christmas. This work refers to ‘Maha Shivaratri’ (The Great Night of Shiva). The preparation of festivities and prayers start months ahead as Devotees take weeks to assemble ‘kanwars’ (bamboo structures decorated with mainly thin white and coloured paper, threads or wool, small mirror glasses, tinkling bells, and statues or pictures of Lord Shiva). The celebrations extend over a week and prior to that devotees show respect to Lord Shiva by fasting on vegetarian meals. The procession happens mainly in groups and it starts days ahead for some devotees who live in remote locations. They carry the ‘kanwars’ (sculptural structure made of bamboos and decorated with coloured paper, mirrors and God shrines and pictures) to the scared lake of ‘Ganga Talao’. They play music and chant prayers all the way. ‘Ganga Talao’ is a pilgrimage site
and its waters are considered as pure as the waters of Ganga River in India. The main task for pilgrims is to collect sacred water for offerings to Lord Shiva in their local community temples. This place depicts the borders of the ‘Ganga Talao’, where devotees flock in thousands each year to offer prayers. Souvenirs associated to my childhood memories include the preparation of the items for the ‘pooja’ (prayer) with my parents. I remember gathering the betel and banana leaves, flowers, the flour dough, coconut, bananas and fruits for offerings, the vermillion, essence sticks, the brass water pot and the prayer ‘thali’ (tray). The fragrance of the essence sticks and burning camphor, the chanting of prayers and ringing of bells, the vibrancy of colours of the saris and the pious atmosphere in the midst of early hours are etched in my memories.

‘Maha Shivaratri’ (The Great Night of Shiva) is usually celebrated in the month of February or early March. It is a festival in honour of Lord Shiva and it is one of the most nationally celebrated Hindu festivals in Mauritius and also in India. From the first years the Indian immigrants were on the Island they identified the ‘Grand Bassin’ lake, which is in the mountain area in the middle of forest in the southern ‘Savanne’ district. They considered it as sacred and pure as the waters of the Ganga River in India after a Hindu priest dreamt that the waters of the Grand Bassin were part of the Ganga River (Ramdoyal, 1994). From this time on, this place became a pilgrimage site to collect the sacred water and to offer it to Lord Shiva on great Night of Shiva. The Ganges being sacred and divine for Hindus, the waters of the Ganga from India was brought later and merged in the ‘Grand Bassin’ lake and since then this place is known as the pilgrimage site as the ‘Ganga Talao’.

There are so many souvenirs that are linked to my childhood and in the way my practice and beliefs in religious rituals and traditions are anchored. As far as I can remember, since I was a child I have been going to the ‘Ganga Talao’ with my parents, each year not always on foot pilgrimage, but in the later years by car. I recall how I was excited and active in helping my mother and grandmother in preparing for the prayers. Each family member had job; my dad like husked off the coconuts, my brothers collected the betel leaves from the backward, and I helped in gathering of all other things such as essence sticks, flour for the dough as offering, flowers, the vermillion (‘sindoor’), matches and the camphor cubes. The brass container (‘lotah’) for collecting and offering the sacred water and prayer tray (‘thali’) were also cleaned. The fruits such as bananas, apples, and other items for prayer offerings such as betel and banana leaves were washed with care and all this put in a prayer basket. My mother and grandmother made sweets (‘prashad’) and vegetarian food for the journey. We usually were dressed in white clothes, but my mother being a married woman would wear a colourful sari, mainly red or yellow. This entire preparation task was part of the pious ritual and a part of a special celebrative day for the whole family and Hindu community.
We usually went to the ‘Ganga Talao’ in the early hours of the morning, at about four o’clock. It used to be a magical moment for me as a child when arriving there. It was often raining, misty and foggy, but also the vibration, the ringing of the bells and blowing of the shank conch shell by the priests, chanting of prayers, all created a unique spiritual atmosphere. The family had to stay together because of the crowd and fog while taking the slippery stairs down to the lake, and we all participated in the prayer ritual (‘pooja’) which was performed near the lake water. We had to queue up and wait for other devotees to finish their prayers and then locate a spot, clean it and then perform the ritual that began by laying down the banana leaf on which all the offering would be placed. The coconut, bunch of bananas, apple, the betel leaf, and the flour dough was prepared on the spot, and decorated and blessed with vermillion then perfumed by lighting essence sticks and camphor cubes on a betel leaf with a flower, and left to float on the water. The sacred water was collected by my father, and as we watched him from the river bank he would usually wade into deep water to ensure it was clean. Everybody would then stand in the water up to their ankles. We would face the lake, eyes closed, touching the arms of my dad who offered the sacred water with flowers and sesame seeds in it. The pilgrimage was rather hard, as it is a journey of many kilometres on foot from home, but I undertook it many times with my father and brothers. ‘Maha Shivaratri’ is a special and pious moment and holds complex meanings and significance for Hindus. The preparation of festivities’ prayers start months ahead with pilgrims making the ‘kanwars’ (bamboo structures decorated with mainly thin white and coloured paper, threads or wool, small mirror glasses, tinkling bells, and statues or pictures of Lord Shiva). Most recently some ‘kanwars’ have taken new designs of small temples and also include other gods such as ‘Ganesha’ and ‘Lakshmi’. Each community or village prepare their own design and model as “minor artistic masterpieces” (Ramdoyal, 1994, p. 24) and a group of devotees, usually youngsters, help to carry the ‘kanwars’ on their shoulders during their pilgrimage from home to ‘Ganga Talao’ and back. Each year it is estimated that around 400,000 devotees offer prayers at this scared lake, where pilgrimage and prayers run over more than a week involving families and communities at national level. The lake is surrounded by the necessary infrastructures and many shrines are erected to accommodate the diverse requirements of the mass of people. Recently, a gigantic Lord ‘Shiva’ statue was placed on this site as an icon to the ‘Ganga Talao’.

As one of the most important festivals that marked my childhood, I perpetuated this tradition when I was married and every year went to the ‘Ganga Talao’ with my children and family for prayers.
'Kavadee' is a festival celebrated within the Tamil community in the honour of Lord ‘Muruga’ (son of Lord Shiva). Although rituals and practices of worship differ from ethnic groups in the community, we respect each other’s practices and help to prepare and celebrate together. ‘Kavadee’ is a colourful festival celebrated with much fervour and it requires fasting on vegetarian meals for 10 days, while maintaining prayers and purity of body and mind. Purification rituals are performed on the tenth day of fasting by bathing in the river and wearing crimson hued loin-cloths or dresses. Offerings include the ‘Kavadee’, which is a constructed structure made of bamboo, stretched in arches and decorated with banana tree bark, coconut shoots, flowers, silver needles, and peacock feathers. ‘Kavadees’ are purified and accompanied with pots of fresh milk. In devotion and self-sacrifice penitents have their bodies pierced (tongue, chest, back, and torso) with ‘vels’ (needles) and the devotees carry the ‘kavadees’ across their backs, while chanting prayers and accepting offerings through a procession to the ‘Kovil’ (temple).
'Kavadee’ is a symbol of triumph of good over evil, restoring of health and problems through devotion and prayers and bringing brotherhood peace and harmony. The ‘Kovil’ (temple) at ‘Corps de Garde’ peak has been a site for worship since I was a child. My parents assisted in the procession in my neighbourhood. From my room, I had a view of the ‘Kovil’, and it has always been a source of inspiration for me. Festival celebrations in Mauritius are part of cultures and traditions which importantly represent diversity and inheritances despite the changes and challenges of globalisation.

‘Down memory lane’- 7 – ‘Sega sur la plage Flic en Flac’

Picturesque Mauritian landscapes blend views of mountains, forests, blue skies and sandy beaches. I have always enjoyed visiting and discovering such places through ‘randonnées’ with school friends and outings with family members. The beats of the ‘ravanne’ drums and the ‘séga’ dance is popular and highly enjoyed during National festivities, such as the Independence Day and New Year celebrations. The Mauritian ‘séga’ music, songs and dance is unique and iconic, with typical ‘créole’
lyrics and beats. Some ‘séga’ genres are ‘chansons engager’ with lyrics that send specific messages and meanings. Over time, there has been a fusion of ‘séga’ that combines ‘Créole’ and Bhojpuri languages (dialect of Hindi), which makes up a new genre of songs. ‘Séga’ is appreciated by tourists as well as locals and it needs practice to follow the beats and moves, while handling the amazingly colourful and enchanting ‘jupe séga’ (skirts). The ‘joie de vivre’ of Mauritians is exemplified in how they enjoy a special weekend meal (‘biryani’ or ‘kalia’ with ‘dholl puris’) within family reunions at home or at the beaches under the ‘filao’ trees. ‘Flic en Flac’ is a popular beach where people go at weekends for a swim and have a good time with family and friends. There is a spirit of camaraderie and sharing that goes along without formalities among diverse communities. This is how I describe my experience of a Mauritian culture, which is part of ‘who I am’, while it highlights a sense of nostalgia and belonging to a patria. It reflects diversity and cultural markers which are part of my cultures and identities.

‘Down memory lane’ – 8 – ‘Bazaar Quatre-Bornes (Hometown)’
The ‘Bazaar’ is a centre point for the ‘Quatrebornians,’ as it is open almost every day for sales of products of different genres – from vegetables and fruits, food products such as pickles, fish and meat products, flowers, textiles, baskets, fashion accessories to basic household items. The street food stalls with special ‘dholl pouris’ (stuffed pulses rotis) and fried snacks (‘gâteaux piments’ and ‘gâteaux pomme de terre’ & ‘bajas’) are popular and much appreciated. Located in the Centre Ville, the bazaar attracts thousands of people and tourists. I have always made my purchase of fresh foods at the ‘Bazaar’ and when I was a child I used to accompany my father to the ‘Bazaar’ on Saturday mornings. This place reiterates souvenirs of going to the Town library just opposite the bazaar to borrow books and walking back home on foot with a paper bag of hot ‘gâteaux piments’. I still feel connected to my home town as I still have my house there with some of my personal belongings. I describe this place of my birth by drawing on fragments of memories of places, spaces and events shared. These reside as part of my identities and cultures, and although I am now far away geographically, these memories encompass emotional attachments, nostalgia and a sense of belonging, of being a ‘Quatrebornaise’.

‘Down memory lane’- 9 – ‘Carrefour La Louise’ (My hometown neighbourhood)
‘Carrefour La Louise’ is a vibrant and busy suburb in ‘Quatre-Bornes’ town. Four boundary stones were used to delimit intersections of roads crossings from different places since 1921. ‘Carrefour La Louise’ has historical connotations, and now it represents an important transition place for many passers-by. It has taxi stands, bus stops, small shops from jewellers, barbers, chemist shops, ‘quincalleries’ (building materials, tools and accessories shop), photo studios, restaurants, snack and liquor bars, mini bazaars, news agency and it is mainly popular for its street food corner (‘pain curry’ and ‘chana puris’ and ‘dholl puris’, and ‘comfits’). The vibrancy of the parasols in the colours of the National flag is famous for sheltering small trades. The special ‘dholl puri’ and ‘roti’ sellers are well appreciated by people on their way back home from work and by those having a chat with their peers while waiting for the evening newspapers. The ‘tabagie’ (cigarette selling spot) sell newspapers, magazines, mobile recharge coupons, and calling cards. The traditional French ‘baguettes’, ‘pains maison’ and ‘pain fourrés’ (stuffed breads with ‘cari poule’ (chicken curry), ‘vindaye poisson’ (pickled fish) and offal’s curry) are street food items available at this spot. Fresh salads, herbs, spices, and fruits are also sold there. It is not the cleanest place of the area, but it covers a variety of needs, flavours, and tastes that is part of the daily life of many people. I certainly feel connected to Carrefour La Louise as I had to go through it daily.

**INTERVAL – Breaking, bridging and negotiating**

I take an interval here before moving to the next three series ‘Down under Xperience’ series 1 and 2, ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series 1-3 and ‘Breaking silences’ series 1-3. I stop and reflect before turning to my experience of migrating to Australia where I describe how I negotiated and renegotiated my cultures and identities during a time of change and transition. My encounters and new experiences influenced how I situated myself, and what I observed and experienced influenced my ideas, which are reflected in my art.

**Migration transitions and experiences in Australia**

In this section, I describe what it is like to come from elsewhere, from ‘there’ an insular Island such as Mauritius to ‘here’, a Metropolitan city such as Melbourne. It is difficult to live at “intersections of histories and memories” (Chambers, 1994, p. 6) and to cope with the nostalgia and perpetuate cultural markers. I search for meanings, which is like the hidden part of the iceberg, if not unveiled remain submerged and stand unaccounted. Being part of a diaspora and the postcolonial history of my home country, the memories and life experience and cultural inheritances build a sense of belonging and nostalgia that pre-empted the hybrid status of my cultures and identities. I address such issues as a ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘otherness’, ‘recognition’, community and ‘identity crisis’ as parameters of ethnicity, cultural narratives and history. I define the migration transition to
happen within a liminal space, which is a space to negotiate between the old and new.

*The ‘Liminal Space’*

*Sketch - ‘Liminal Space’*
The ‘liminal space’ challenges acknowledgment of archetypes of culture that link to languages, societal norms and values, differences in class, nationality, education, race and gender. The ‘contact zone’ is defined as the ‘in-betweens’ of two cultures, where the inherited and current are designated as the two opposite boundaries of the ‘liminal space’. In my interpretation of the ‘liminal space,’ I define these two different spaces in two distinct colours. The parts in yellowish tones represent the inheritances and the bluish ones the new environment and markers. Both spaces define parameters of cultures and identities, however, the lines, patterns, and organised structures suggest social constructs that are distinct, different and unique in their own ways. The in-between ‘space’ is defined as the ‘liminal space,’ and is represented in a greenish colour, suggesting the fusion and blending of both opposite spaces and colours as a ‘melting space’. The two boundaries of cultures are represented as dented, with jagged edges, signposting chaotic structures, where there is friction, clashes, intersecting principles and views within a process of negotiation, mediation and adaptation. My representation of the ‘liminal space’ is not empty of challenges, fears, obstacles, struggles, reminiscent of barriers of language, power structures and other factors in adapting and negotiating within new social and cultural norms, whilst these are empowered by inherited and grounded perspectives and experiences. A ‘liminal space’ is what Homi Bhabha, (2004, p. 2) refers to as the “in- between spaces” or the ‘third space’ as a terrain,
where negotiations of identity structures and cultures take place. Looking through it from my migrancy experience, underlines parameters I discuss later in Chapter six.

‘DOWN UNDER XPERIENCE’ SERIES 1 and 2

These series are experiences related to my observation, vision and new perspectives after migrating to Australia. Living in Melbourne, and being involved in my PhD research for the past few years has hardly allowed me enough time to discover and visit Australia. These works represent what I have observed and experienced in my new environment. The works also unveil how I renegotiate a ‘space’ and frame new events and places as part of my experiences and everyday living.

‘DOWN UNDER XPERIENCE’ SERIES 1 – Discovering and observing

The sketches and photographs of places I have been visiting in Australia guide the depiction of this series. Some places such as Wilsons Promontory, The Twelve Apostles, and Nepean Point have inspired me as they have allowed me to escape from urban life. Colours in these paintings are not as vivid as paintings in Mauritius, and they mostly reflect anonymity, loneliness and melancholy. I depict very few people in these series as this is how I observed it is on the streets here, and people seem to be living solitary lives.

‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1 – ‘Wilson Promontory 1’

Sketch – ‘Wilson Promontory 1’
‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1
Title: Final work - Wilsons Promontory 1, 2012
31 cm x 41 cm / 12 in x 16 in
Acrylic on canvas
Wilson Promontory was one of the first places I visited in Australia. I always have my sketchbook and my camera with me when I go out of urban Melbourne. Going to Wilson Promontory was a different experience, and I was impressed when looking at the huge rocks stacked across the Tidal River. As I made an on-the-spot sketch, I was observing the stack of rocks and it made me reflect on the historical, symbolic and enigmatic features and connections of that place. These rocks have existed untouched for thousands of years and this contrasted with some surrounding landscaping works further ahead. As a first experience within the Australian wildlife, I came across snakes while walking down the path to the beach. My adventurous nature and fascination for wildlife, animals and birds always inspire me to capture moments and keep them as souvenirs. I have extended my boundaries of spaces, places, and experiences as there are shifts and changes that happen as I encounter what is new and my observations become part of what I represent.

Living in Melbourne and busy with my studies I hardly have the time to go to the beach and even if I visit places such as Elwood or Brighton beaches, I do not get the same feeling I had when going to beaches in Mauritius. The colour of the sea, the texture of the sand and the environment is totally different and I do miss beaches in Mauritius, as I tend to compare these locations. Going to Wilson Promontory was a different experience, as looking at the huge rocks stacked across the Tidal river were impressive. I was immersed in a different mood and feeling while making the spot sketch. There were many ideas and thoughts linked to the historical, symbolical and enigmatic connections of the location. These rocks exist there for thousands of years, yet they seem to be untouched.
'Down under Xperience’ series 1 – ‘Wilsons Promontory 2’

‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1
Title: Wilsons Promontory 2, 2012
31 cm x 41 cm / 12 in x 16 in, Acrylic on canvas

‘Wilsons Promontory 2’ reminds me of the colour of the sea, the waves and rocks of some beaches in Mauritius. I was attracted to the massive rocks, and the variances in colours, and the fissures on them. The crashing waves and receding streams of water were features that I wanted to capture. I was sitting there making the sketch, listening, observing and trying to capture every movement and detail. The colours of the sea from the horizon to the shore have tonal variations and glittering effects as the light changed. What it involved in this work surpasses the physicality of painting a landscape. I refer to the temporal that expresses my inner-most
emotions and feelings and whatever I encountered as experience through the moment. This work represents a metaphor of my experiences with distant islands which reminds me of Mauritius. The flow of waves, the boldness and vastness of this place is enigmatic and melancholic. It also reveals isolation where I picture a person lying on the rock to suggest the immensity and scale of the rocks. These two paintings are not mere representations of what I encountered, observed and painted as a new migrant, but are part of my reflections and experience in making art.


‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1
Title: ‘Twelve Apostles’, 2012
41 cm x 31 cm / 16 in x 12 in
Acrylic on canvas
During the drive to the Great Ocean Road, I observed the prevailing atmosphere to be dependent on the weather and changes in the light during the day, and each lookout seemed different. I am always in awe when looking at the Twelve Apostles, and the smashing waves. I tried to capture the grandeur and immensity of the place, accompanied by the mystical, magical feelings and emotions I perceived when standing there. This work was based on a photographic record, so as I could depict the details, features and light effects and the mood. I picture my friend standing next to the fence in admiration and splendour. The narrow sand beaches alongside the foot of the cliffs, invites the watcher to go for a walk, as I usually did back in Mauritius near ‘Gris Gris’ beach. I could experience the mix of joy and melancholy - a sense of fulfilment and emptiness when standing there. I refer to the ‘I’ as enunciated through my experiences in that place, in Althusserian terms (Butler, 2008, p. 612) - the ‘I’ only comes into being through being called, named, “interpellated” as transitive. This describes and addresses new parameters through which I negotiate and mobilise new markers for social and cultural recognition and an identity that is site specific. This place and others I visit are given some priority in how they animate my current experiences and perceptions.

‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1 - ‘Point Nepean’

‘Down Under Xperience’ series 1
Title: ‘Point Nepean’, 2012
41 cmx 31cm/ 16 in x 12 in
Acrylic on canvas
Point Nepean is the extreme point on the Mornington Peninsula and the entrance to Port Philip Bay. There are other fascinating spots in the National Park on the way to Fort Nepean. The sound of the crashing waves, views of the cliffs, the sea and bay, the historical vestiges of fortifications, artillery, and battlements of World War, and traces of early Aboriginal settlement all contribute to the character, atmosphere and energy of this location. The distant shore of Queenscliff bay is visible and there are ferries which make transits between Sorrento and Queenscliff.

In this painting, I represent my enthusiasm, emotions and feelings as conveyed through the features, the sea, waves, native plants and the social, cultural and historical significances attached to the place. I highlight my observation and represent features, colours that reflect my perceptions. While I was painting, it reminded me of Matthew Flinders' encounters in understanding history, the communication with Aborigines, the bush and the wilderness as described by Tim Flannery's, (2001) in ‘Terra Australis’. ‘The flow of experience’ as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, (2008) describes it is not just about set goals that give meaning. I perceived the same in doing this work through the attention, intentionality and directionality involved in creating meaning and harmony. This work represents a landscape and the essence of that location, while it also informs how I expanded my horizons within meaning systems and how I have embraced traits, new markers and how I value them. It is challenging to renegotiate through new markers, yet I describe these as leading to the complexity within the self, in turning inwards, and trespassing conformity to find new grounds for authority, value and autonomy and agency.

‘DOWN UNDER XPERIENCE’ SERIES 2 – Transiting through the journey

This series takes me to more intimate encounters of everyday life, where I depict the suburb and house where I live and other places such as Brighton Beach, Cardinia Reservoir, and Olinda Reserve which I occasionally visit. Such places have become important in my life and they build up my acquaintances to new markers for spaces and places.
Brighton Beach is the closest beach to my home in Melbourne. When I walk on the beach, the sand and the waves receding from the shores help me to recall memories of moments spent on the beaches in Mauritius. Les Salines near Port Louis harbour in Mauritius has similar features with a view of the city skyline and the port. Brighton Beach has different features that include the marina, the distant view of the city, and the West Gate Bridge. Places and spaces provide us with markers essential to how we frame our daily lives. Mobility can free us from ties with birthplace, yet I argue that we cannot be detached from some markers. For me, going to the sea shore is important, as it is a resource that allows identification and fulfilment. I occasionally go there for walks and sit on the beach to contemplate and reflect. I acknowledge that the switch within my migration transition does not happen at all levels, although I believe I have shed some professional, social and cultural practices from my home country. This work is my representation of ‘anonymity’, where people are busy and living a hectic life. My transition and adaptation to such a pace of life has initially been difficult. Besides ‘the culture shock’, I have needed to slowly adapt in order to find myself. As a new migrant, it takes time to get organised and find new parameters and social frames. Sometimes, there is no one there to tell you which path to follow and I am ultimately still discovering and strengthening my paths through the tangled skein of my experiences while making choices and decisions.
Cardinia Reservoir is another location I often visit. The silence and the vastness of the reservoir and the stillness of the water are inspirational. I have created a few sketches and taken photographs during each visit. The best time in the afternoon is when the kangaroos are out for grazing. It was the first place where I could observe kangaroos closely. While onlookers seek to go near them and take pictures, I have always been fascinated in sketching them while sitting afar on the ridge near the road. The vegetation and the trees are different within each season, which enhances the beauty and characteristics of this place. Many families spend time socialising around a barbecue there, for me it is a place where I can breath-in the fresh air. The encroachment of urban life, with its supporting ideologies often erodes the basic relationships within community (Buell, 2008), nature and our surroundings. I refer to ‘place attachment’ in regards to nature as represented through this painting, which also indicates one standpoint for readaptation to alternative locations, without suggesting any myth, although it relates to nostalgia and memories. Such locations usually provide reassurances about converting the abstract into the familiar, and keeping it fresh as I construct a sense of place in Australia.
Olinda Reserve is near the peak of Mount Dandenong. Over the past few years, I have become interested in discovering and going for walks and taking pictures of different parks and nature reserves. I acknowledge that these interests are partly driven by my desire to get away from urban life. My interest in nature takes me to places like Olinda, the Rhododendron gardens, Warrandyte Park, 1000 Steps walk, Healesville and the bird sanctuary, Puffing Billy and other scenic locations on the outskirts of Melbourne.

In this work, I represent how my life and world is shaped by subjectivities that frame self-identification onto new grounds. Walking along Parsons Walk in Olinda’s commercial centre is interesting as there are many different shops with local crafts, vintage and antique objects, art galleries and traditional cafes. The paths to Olinda Falls, the blooming flowers in the Rhododendron gardens are features that I slowly discovered and really appreciate. The narrow earthy path in this painting is bordered with the wattle tree and other trees are the entry point for a walk that I have enjoyed. Transiting through these places provides me with the ‘space’ for new
social and cultural agency, that are internalised and which influence my outlook and choices.

**‘Down Under Xperience’ series 2 – ‘Smiling Kookaburra’**

I made a sketch of the kookaburra and photographed it during visits to the Mount Dandenong Park. I was fascinated by this large bird of prey and its call that sounds like human laughter. I named the work the ‘Smiling Kookaburra’. Later, I discovered that some of them are called the ‘laughing Kookaburra’, based on its plumage and some other characteristics. The bird is majestically perched on a branch and the background suggests the Australian bushy vegetation with its textural and colour contrasts and variations. Within this work, I found myself trying to define and increase territories and spaces, that conjugate deterritorialised flows (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) by extending other lines of flight. As maps have different entryways, it defines the contact with the real by fostering connections and dealing with hurdles, with the need of reworking at both individual and social levels. The feeling of belonging is important in forging identity within new spaces.
Lasiandra Avenue is the place where I currently live. This place has provided me with the space not only to work on my paintings but to engage in reflection on my PhD research. My living space, I identify my living space as ‘a representational space’ as it embodies complex symbolism, attachment, social life and my art. The associated memories, images, events often overlay the physical space to underline symbolism within the lived reality of daily life. The garden, the roses, and my neighbour’s cat, all become features that surround my new markers. There is a quest for authenticity and experiences in connection to how I situate myself within this space. Within the postmodern, the consequences of modern capitalism, the discourses of individualism and reflexive modernity (Beck, 1995), questions of identity are complex. I refer to my own experiences as juggling between choices and constraints, through which I negotiate and develop my gendered identities. I witnessed and made responses to changes in moving from a patriarchal family to then build autonomy and independence within the patterns of everyday life. I recognise my identities as related to my lifestyle and other “issues of belonging,
expression, performance, identification and communication with others” (Hetherington, 2000, p. 62).

‘Down Under Xperience’ series 2 – ‘Mitcham Station’

Mitcham is where I usually go to shop and to get on the train when I have to go to the city. The facilities here include the Indian grocery store, and some streets named after cities and locations in India. Such things made this place look more homely and familiar when I arrived as a new migrant in that suburb. Yet there are so many different features when compared to the place I lived in Mauritius (Carrefour La Louise). Everything is different including the roads, buses, and people and I had to adjust to new markers. It is important to find a sense of location, and to slowly construct a sense of belonging that establishes norms and forms of identification. “Structures of feelings are located within everyday life” (Hetherington, 2000, p. 79), and routine practices, I believe are sources of creativity and resistance in developing preferences of how I identify myself and adapt to a new lifestyle.
‘DOWN UNDER IMAGINATION’ – FUSION OF EXPERIENCES

Sketch - ‘Down Under Imagination’
This work shows a blending of features and places from the Australian landscape, the billabong, gums trees, native plants, the Flinders Street train station in Melbourne, urban and rural spaces, and iconic features such as Lake Mountain and Kaiki Island in Adelaide. The railway tracks show sinuous routes and tracks leading to and from places, as per my observation, experience, and imagination. However, these are not separated out from my previous experiences and perspectives; they are equipped and traced upon my inheritances, memories and nostalgia, where
these features stand as new repertoires for memories, observation, imagination, visions and avenues. This work empowers how I envision myself through the past, and how I translate such perceptions in using warm tones and colours as a dialogic representation. The interlocking structures and the stairwell of beaten paths are overlaying, distorted and winding and these relate to negotiations of choices, dilemmas, struggles, difficulties, fears, emotions, and perceptions. Places and features represented in segments also include dot painting from Aboriginal art that converge towards an aperture for expectation, newness, and hope, while negotiating for and within new cultural markers.

In the centre of this work, the aperture suggests a breakthrough or a breakdown of temporality that starts off from the present and that takes the subject and the viewer through locations and intentionalities - in a space of praxis suggesting observation, interaction and also isolation. The present seems to engulf the subject in a materiality of perception, overwhelming but also hiding anxieties and suggestive of a loss of reality. The window is asymmetrically framed by few borders to suggest an opening towards spaces. The narrative fabric of locations, spaces and places function as experiential fragments of the new that directs my focus towards new territories and avenues to explore.

‘METAPHORICAL DIALOGUES’ SERIES 1-3

The ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series are about migration transitions. I use abstract works in this series as it reveals my mindset and the metaphors about my experiences of migration transitions and relocation in Australia. Some of my experiences of negotiation my identity within a new space, place and time and how it happens through the ‘liminal space’ informs the three series of work.

‘Metaphorical Dialogues’ series – ‘Survival, Influence, Convergence, and Newness’

Sketch –‘Survival, Influence, Convergence, and Newness’
The work entitled ‘Survival-convergence and influence and newness,’ makes reference to Bhabha, (1994, pp. 226-227), where he refers to how “Rushdie translates the migrant’s dream of survival” as “initiatory interstices; an empowering condition of hybridity; an emergence that turns ‘return’ into reinscription or redescription; an iteration that is not belated, but ironic and insurgent.” My depiction of ‘Survival, influence, convergence, and newness’ express such notions of transition, and developmental growth as a foetus within stages. The turmoil
through migration is represented through converging directional and crisscrossing lines, which suggest means and ways to adaptation and a new beginning. The arrows and the leaf are iconic and symbolically depict direction towards new hope and opportunities. ‘Survival’ also represents negotiating the concrete and the political context of this newness, amidst the facts of globalisation, migration and the predicaments involved.

‘Metaphorical Dialogues’ series – ‘Border Lives’

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*Sketch – ‘Border Lives’*
From ‘Border lives’, I borrow on how Bhabha, (2004, p. 1) describes the notion of relocation and migration. The feeling of struggle is marked by a “tenebrous sense of survival and living on the borderlines of the present”, affixed by the controversies and shifts regulated through postmodern concepts (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). “The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past...” (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 1-2), and this work depicts, inheritances, nostalgia, ruptures, difficulties, fears, inhibitions, new aspirations, perceptions and perspectives, as
suspended subsets in mapping an ‘identity crisis,’ an ‘anomie’ and beyond. It
enunciates the perception of a human subject entangled through modern
constructions of the world as a peripatetic being (Bauman, 1996), where “all the
coordinates of transition and destination in a life’s passage are now defined ... as
suspended along an infinite stage” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 12). This is how I
define myself, my identit(ies) as suspended within border lives, and such a
meaning is established through a dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981), to signify underlying
‘messages’ that gives new ‘voices’ for representation of personal experiences.

I refer to the Edward Munch’s painting ‘The Scream’ as “a canonical expression”
of the “thematics of alienation, anomie and solitude, social fragmentation and
isolation” (Jameson, 1991, p. 11). I tend to use his work to underscore a virtual
deconstruction of the very aesthetic of expression. The whole of expression
distances the subject, within a metaphysical expression of the inside and outside
situated within a space and time, whereby emotions are then externalised through
gestures- a cry that communicates and dramatises outwardly the most inner forms
of feelings. ‘Border Lives’ has many similarities to ‘The Scream’ in how it expresses
inner feelings about isolation, anomie and social fragmentation. As the work of
Edward Munch disconnects its own aesthetic of expression, while remaining
imprisoned in it, in Border Lives I attempted to use the dialectic of lines, loops,
spirals that determines solitary statuses as detached on the canvas.

‘Metaphorical Dialogue’ series – ‘Home is where we speak from’
The last work entitled “Home is where we speak from” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24) relates to the search for meanings, messages, in underlining and encompassing ambivalences in negotiating my identities and cultures. It shows expectations in negotiating within the ‘third space’, thereafter relating to a sense of achievement, recognition, which can dissipate the feeling of not being the migrant ‘other’.

“Within the postmodern world, our bodies are bereft of spatial and temporal coordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our collective and personal past” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24). It expresses the feeling of what a migrant subject can experience as new hopes, beginnings, survival, achievements and
failures, memories and nostalgia, become entrenched and retreat. This work also
describes a sense of “not belonging, a sense of unreality, isolation, a sense of
‘anomie’ and being fundamentally out of touch with the world [that] becomes
endemic” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24). It suggests a relationship to a new world as
fragmented, and disrupted in relation to how a migrant can often perceive it. The
struggles for identity is depicted as within a ‘crisis’ and at a “threshold between
interior and exterior and between self and other” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24). The
initiatives to establish sense of belonging and selfhood is persistent, yet if not
achieved it reveals only retreat and entrenchment and a lonely existence. These
experiences and feelings can often hint a suggestion of “an unconscious longing to
go home,” where one belongs (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24). Yet, it sends aloud a
‘message’ that “only when we achieve a sense of personal integrity can we
represent ourselves and be recognised—this is home—this is belonging” (Rutherford,

‘BREAKING SILENCES’ SERIES 1-3

‘Breaking Silences’ as a series of artworks develops my argument about
negotiating my identity as a women based on inheritances, cultural traditions, the
contingencies of life experiences and migration transitions. These notions develop
my arguments in showing how as a women, mother, an artist/researcher/teacher
there is need for courage, and a capacity for self-governance and resilience, which
fosters integrity, financial independence and possibilities for broadening a career,
and the acquisition of knowledge.

‘Breaking Silences’ series – ‘Eye Witness’

Sketch – ‘Eye Witness’
'Eye witness' is a ‘self-portrait’ that defines what I witness as fragmentation and difficulties and dilemmas. I describe what I witness as dominance through patriarchal concepts which are depicted as fissures across the ‘persona’. In unveiling such dominance, there are twin perspectives I wish to express, first the act to defy oppressiveness against the ‘self’ and second the veil on the face that has a significance in appropriating ‘spaces’ in negotiating new social identities and agency after migration. This work identifies dialectics of ‘openness’ and ‘closures’ that feminist perspectives identify as must and must-nots and thus relegating to other closures (Trinh, 1991).

I encountered such experiences in new social structures after migration, which in turn informed negotiation, hybridity, differences and ‘otherness’. This work also underscores the dualities between here and there, homeland and host land, cultural inheritances and dispersal. In revisiting such dualities, I question what was permitted at home and what emerges as sites of conflicted meanings, and how I
exposed unsaid issues and negotiated my identity as a migrant woman. Affect within this perspective, is what allows my emotions through the self-portrait to be “an open system” in performance within the virtuality and potentials of becoming (Pellegrini & Puar, 2009, p. 37). Affective states define mental states and this works invites others to see what I feel through a visual experience (Zamuner, 2011). I expose rigidity and softness behind what I call the ‘veil’ in sustaining daily life and moving toward a potentially strong position, while neglecting all ignorance and exclusion of failures in building afresh and taking them apart to play. In that sense, I consider the tension of everyday practices and challenges that irreducibly recall cultural differences, race, ethnicity and position within ‘émigré’ identity formation.

‘Breaking Silences’ series – ‘Do Nishaaniyan’

Sketch – ‘Do Nishaaniyan- The Blueprint’
‘Breaking silences’ series

Title - Final work: ‘Do Nishaaniyan’ - The Blueprint, 2011

61 cm x 61 cm / 24 in x 24 in
Acrylic on canvas – Mixed media

‘Do Nishaaniyan’ – The Blueprint’ is a self-portrait. In Urdu terms ‘Do Nishaaniyan’ literally mean two signs. A derivative of this term is ‘Nishani’ which is ‘a distinctive sign’ or a means of identification. Metaphorically I use the terms as referring to two sites, two locations and as two facets of life experiences endorsed by emotional attachment, souvenirs, nostalgia, experiences of struggles and new aspirations as depicted in a fragmented face. The two sites are asymmetrical, where one site relates to past experiences, nostalgia through an invisible eye, whereas the other site is visible and looking ahead through an émigré identity. There is order and chaos, grief, torment and anguish as well as rigidity and resilience in looking backward. The blue tonal colours have a symbolic connotation in defining my state of mind and being, during a particular period that relates to migration transitions. The spattered blue ink wash in the background around a floral pattern - the petals of a ‘chrysalis’ and the concentric circles replaces the other eye. These reveal hidden past experiences, nostalgia and dualities. The lines pave and extend to
several strands that weave a web of difficulties, issues, suffering and notions about legitimacy and feminine notions and entrapment. The term ‘blueprint’ in the metaphoric sense represents the colours and sketching of what I experience as silence, femininity as presence and absence, “as a lapse and blank in rejecting the importance of the act of enunciation” (Trinh, 1991, pp. 147-152) and confrontation. This work aspires to be an ascent to melancholy, but its undertones work to undermine patriarchal systems of values and how to confront and enunciate them, as well as my dilemmas. If bodies can map power and identities, I refer to the boundaries I feel responsible for through female embodiment. Such notions from my perspective entail having patience to sustain pain, compassion, love and mothering instincts and other metaphoric extensions. Yet, I underscore a visible site that breaks the linearity about how I interrogate my gendered identities, and how I envision my position in a future directed by new aspirations and hopes.

‘Breaking Silences’ series – ‘Vortex of Hope’

[Image: Sketch- ‘Vortex of Hope’]
In ‘Vortex of Hope’ I underscore a ‘voice’ that resonate my experiences in re-articulating ‘spaces’ or ‘places’ I ‘appropriate’ in new societal and environmental context in Australia. This is how I represent and enunciate a ‘resonance’ and a ‘move’ to transgress my past experiences and re-articulate them in an imaginary ‘space’ in the symbolic sense. The lines are turbulent, spiralling towards a vortex which has an opening to another ‘space’ suggesting hope, light and new opportunities. Coming out of the dark, grey and blues which parallel turbulences, there are strands with bright colours that signify hope and renewal. I refer to what Barbara Kruger describes as calling for ‘voices’ and ‘positions’ that might question each other, but in assuming such positions, I expose and open a fluid interchange of
meaning to this work. However, I also invite viewers to break the logic in the only way one knows in tracing meaning and patterns, while trying to make sense of their own interpretation of it, and in it. This work is an attempt to bring an awareness of my position in situating the ‘self’ within new structural ‘entourage’, aspirations and hopes.

**Exhibition of artworks at Deakin Phoenix Gallery**

I mounted an exhibition of these five series of my paintings at the Deakin Phoenix Gallery. This exhibition was opened on 18th September 2012 by Professor Fazal Rizvi, Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University and Associate Professor Mary Dixon, Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Education, Deakin University. I gave an address on that occasion, and the guests also provided feedback on my artworks and journey. The exhibition was open to the public until Friday 21st September.

I referred to the use of concept maps and visual mapping when mounting the exhibition, as I had displayed the works in a chronological journey that mapped my journey through different sites and experiences, and things observed and encountered. The purpose of this exhibition was to extend an interactive interface of my artworks to a broader audience. While engaging in my approach and methodology, I realised that I would have the sole command on my interpretation and representation, which is justifiable in regards to the objectives I want to address through this inquiry. Whilst these artworks have been a vehicle for artistic expression and representation of my identities and cultures, I have also been keen to share this with an audience that engaged, interacted and interpreted them from their perspectives.

The viewing of the artworks both supported how my artworks connect to me as an artist and how the audience made meaning in perceiving the processes I was engaged in, as well as the semiotics and messages and meanings involved. The viewer’s role has been to understand my artistic ‘démarche’ and how I represented my journey, perceptions and experiences through them. I will discuss and reflect on the response of the viewers in Chapter six.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presents and annotates the five series of paintings (31 paintings and other sketches) that I used with my narratives to describe my journey while transiting though cultural history, ancestry, inheritances and belongings, childhood memories, nostalgia, and life experiences from home country and migration transitions and my new encounters and observation. The ‘Breaking silences’ series epitomise how I understand and negotiate my gendered identities. These artworks are my data that support my arguments in the discussion and analysis in Chapter six and seven.
Chapter 6 (Re) interpreting

Decoding visual semiotics and meaning through my artworks and reiterating my approach as artist/researcher/teacher and art expression as performative

Introduction

This chapter decodes the visual semiotics through my artworks through the five series of paintings. I revisit my approach of using mixed research methods and I define how my art making and artworks are ‘performative’. I reinforce my how and why the personal matters in negotiating and understanding my identity. And I reiterate my roles as an artist /researcher / teacher my research. I refer to visual narratives and art as representation that sets a dialogue. I discuss how my art exhibition, a reflection and visual mapping approach opens new avenues to understand art expression as performative and how it can be a social vehicle that promotes “friendship networks and intimate publics” and forge “affective links” as described by Ash Amin, (2012, p. 29). I describe how my paintings can be used to develop pedagogies for intercultural understanding and forge “affective links” in Australia.

Decoding visual semiotics, messages and meanings in my artworks

My approach in making and analysing these 31 paintings narrate personal stories that have conventional narrative structures, orientation, complications and closures. I give some further descriptive accounts on them in the next section, yet I also provide an incisive analysis of visual semiotics and meanings in them and I reflect on my approach.

‘Talk Back’ series 1-3

‘Talk back series 1-3’ as visual representations carry with them more that historical or cultural representations. These works transcend my representation of a timeline in history and address several discourses around postcolonial diaspora theory, cultural identity, inheritances, identity crisis and globalisation. The hardships my ancestors experienced were narrated by my grandparents and these stories guided my depiction of how my ancestors lived and thrived. These artworks equally address signs and signifiers that bear cultural significance, heritage, beliefs, markers, and values that my ancestors brought with them and which perpetuated through generations. The meanings, messages, and the significant ideas depicted through them relate to how I identify, negotiate and represent inheritances of my cultures and identities.
As part of a diaspora, I acknowledge a sense of belonging and many traits that formulate my identity structures and cultural markers. I find myself as part of an Indian ‘diaspora’ through the inheritances from my ancestors. As a fifth generation descendant, I identify myself more as an Indo-Mauritian as I feel bonded to and part of an inherited Indian diaspora which I respect. My acquaintance with traditions, rituals, festivals and beliefs, food habits, dress code, Hindi and Bhojpuri as languages evidence such inheritances as connections and cultural markers that I practice, as these have perpetuated through my parents and my grandparents. A sense of belonging is, however, hybrid and ambivalent, as experiences inheritances mutate and change from one generation to the other, depending on the mindset, interest and experiences that new generations accept, respect and perpetuate. The practice of some lengthy tradition and rituals fade with the older generations, whilst some beliefs are considered futile by younger generations who accommodate them as per the requisites of modernity, and the need for practicality in doing things. To cite an example, it will be easier to outline that my belief systems differ from those of my mother’s or my grandmother’s. I refer to a first series of paintings ‘Talk Back series 1 to 3’ that translate the past, the visual semiotics and symbolic messages, and meanings, but it also refers to the present through changes and ambivalences that I discuss and analyse.

From the concept of ‘talking back’ (Weedon, 2004, p. 154), I took up dialogue that gives voice to issues. It goes like this:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible’ It is an act of speech, of ‘talking back’ that is no more a mere gesture of empty words that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice (hooks, 1989, p. 211).

In decoding the visual semiotics in the ‘Talk Back’ series, I extend meaning and representation of my ideas. Bhabha, (2005, p. 16) develops a structure based on what Fanon, (1986) refers to as the signifying “time-lag of cultural difference for the representation of subaltern and postcolonial agency.” In depicting my ancestors, the places where they lived and how they worked and carried out their daily tasks, I narrate, represent a similar signifying ‘time-lag’ of postcolonial influences, ancestry and diaspora with signs, semiotics, symbolic messages and meanings.

The ‘Talk Back series’ not only enunciates “[revaluing] the contents of a cultural tradition” or transposition of values cross-culturally”, but it suggests how cultural inheritances from postcolonial perspectives and diaspora “are brought before modernity [neither] to resolve its historic differences...nor to forego its traditions.” Instead it “[introduces] a locus of inscription and intervention, another hybrid ‘inappropriate’ enunciative site” (Bhabha, 2005, p. 17). The “time-lag” signify
postcolonial and Diasporic agency (Bhabha, 2005, p. 17). This series of artworks signify transitions from that period to my world. It suggests how cultural differences and social contradiction sustain “the disjunctive space of modernity.” Bhabha, (2005, pp. 16-17) takes upon what Spivak describes as “a ‘progressive’ myth of modernity,” which “enables the diasporic and the postcolonial to be represented.” I understand such postcolonial and Diasporic inheritances through that “lag”, where I compare myself to my ancestors and women of those days. These artworks represent changes in roles and perspectives, “differences of culture and power, constituted through social conditions of enunciation.” They state historically transformative moments, a “transvaluation” of a symbolic structure of cultural signs that gives meaning and relates to an indebtedness (Bhabha, 2005, p. 17). I had to extend and explain how the ‘time lag’ works at historically transformative moments and I use some photographic resources that exemplify my intentions.

**‘DOWN MEMORY LANE’ SERIES 1-9**

The ‘Down memory lane’ series’ - bridge an inheritance from postcolonial history, my childhood memories, life experiences that express nostalgia and a sense of belonging to patria and how these inform my identity. My childhood memories bring remembrance and nostalgia of events, places and experiences that are etched in my memory.

**Inheritances from a postcolonial history**

The influences and heritage of the French colonisation period is paramount in Mauritius, and part of the postcolonial history of Mauritius is known as - Isle de France. The vestiges of a postcolonial history reflect more on the language patterns Mauritians use; French language and ‘Créole’, the patois language, a derivative of French. In most administrative offices and schools, French language dominates. Although the English language is the official one, the statutes of the judicial system continue to be based on old French codes. I remember as an art teacher, I had to deliver my lessons and talk to my students mostly in French although my notes were in English. The influence of the French culture is present in the way people are accustomed to the ‘pain maison’ and the French ‘baguette’ for breakfast and lunch tiffins and other pastries as tarts and ‘feuilleté’ and gratin dishes. What is more striking is the multi-ethnicity within communities and how different religious groups live together in peace and harmony where diverse beliefs and festivals are celebrated, accepted and shared. These attributes add to the colours, flavours and ambiance of the Mauritian experience and in preserving and perpetuating a heritage.
Affective links through childhood memories

My childhood memories and lived life experiences is marked by family events, places, ceremonies and festivals. The streets of Port Louis such as ‘Rue Corderie’ or ‘Bourbon’ remind me of souvenirs of Saturday visits in the grocery stores with my father, where the flavours of spices, red dried chillies and smell of salted fish (‘poisson snouek’) were predominant. The visits to my grandparents are part of many cherished memories. The ‘case creole’, the vegetable patch and the delicious ‘vindaye poisson’, the pickles and the legendary stories and gossips in the village counted by my grandmother are still fresh souvenirs. Picturesque landscapes which blends views of mountains, forests and blue skies and sandy beaches are places I am fond of, which I enjoyed through ‘randonnées’ with school friends or picnic with family members on the beaches, where we enjoyed and shared the beats of the ‘ravanne’, drums and, the ‘séga’ dance with other communities. The ‘joie de vivre’ of Mauritians is best exemplified by how they enjoy and relax around a special weekend meal either a ‘briyani’ or a ‘kalia’ with ‘dholl puris’ accompanied by soft drinks, a beer or rum in family reunions at home or at the beaches under the ‘filao’ trees. There is a spirit of camaraderie and sharing that goes along without formalities among diverse communities. Mauritians are seen as outgoing, generous and welcoming. This is part of what I briefly describe as my experience of the Mauritian culture, which is part of me and highlights a sense of nostalgia and belonging to a patria. It reflects diversity within my cultural markers and the ways of understanding how I identify my culture and identity.

These artworks relate to memories as snapshots from my home country with bearings of postcolonial vestiges and cultural inheritances. The influences and heritage from French colonisation is paramount in Mauritius through the use of French language and the influences of French cuisine. Multi-ethnic cultures, traditions and religious beliefs as inherited by ancestry have perpetuated and are practiced. Picturesque landscapes blend views of mountains, forests, blue skies and sandy beaches. The beats of the ‘ravanne’ and the ‘séga’ dance are traits unique to Mauritian culture.

My childhood memories take me to a time spent at my grandparent’s house, during school holidays with my brothers and cousins. The veranda of the ‘case créole’ is where I started to scribble and develop interest in sketching and drawing as we used sheets of paper discarded by my father and huge wax crayons. I remember watching my elder brother making a collage work for his art class assignment. He used a variety of materials such as dried bark of trees, coloured paper and I remember how inquisitive, curious, and observant I was watching him making this piece of work. The day he handed me his old watercolour paint box I treasured it as it was the first painting materials I owned. I remember painting on A4 scrap paper and making sketches and drawings through observation. The first painting I saw was when I visited my uncle’s place; it was a huge portrait of a
seated figure, which looked very real to my eyes. At that time, I was about seven years old and I could hardly make any difference between a gouache and an oil painting, but I was intrigued with the details, the colours and brush strokes. Later on my uncle became my first mentor as he was an artist and an art teacher and I learnt all my drawings skills from him.

The themes and places represented in this series depict my childhood memories, and lived experiences and have become souvenirs that I cherish. I underscore a flexibility, versatility, and nostalgia encompassed through events, interaction, and sharing of moments within an ethnically diverse community. I demonstrate such flexibility in ‘Down memory lane’ as a series of sketches and paintings, which mirror my nostalgia, the scripting of memories, events and places as snapshots of my home country. Franz Fanon, (1986), Hall, (1986) and Edward Said, (1978) frame an understanding of ‘culture’ as constructed. The way I find my cultures as constructed and rooted upon my inheritances, memories and lived experiences informs my cultural capital, which I situate within Bourdieu’s terms in defining capital and the concepts of ‘field’ and ‘habitus’. In engaging with the metaphors of Bourdieu, ‘capital’ can be assigned a value that is arbitrary but it cannot be taken as a commodity and likewise “‘field’ is never neutral territory” (Anderson, Reimer Kirkham, Browne, & Lynam, 2007, p. 183). There are hidden messages and meanings and metaphors that evoke - “a semiotic construction” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 19) through what is represented and these shape my perception, understanding and experience of a reality made accessible. This “conscious experience” is a construction built out of such signs and sign systems that I inherited, on which I develop and access a reality of myself.

The concepts and function of space, place and time have a strong interplay in what I depict through these works. The notion of ‘locality’ as defined by Appadurai, (2005, p. 61) is “neither spatial or scalar but relational and contextual” and he overthrows the idea of “soil and place to be no longer central to identity construction” (Rembold & Carrier, 2011, p. 365). I am quite ambivalent in agreeing with the concept of ‘locality’ as not directly related to space and place. I argue that the landscapes I painted of Mauritius significantly correspond to how I identify the relational and contextual as my lived experiences.

‘DOWN UNDER XPERIENCE’ SERIES 1 and 2

‘Down Under Xperience’ Series 1 and 2 refer to my observation, vision and new perspectives after migrating to Australia. These artworks represent what I have encountered and visited as places in Melbourne. I renegotiate a sense of place and belonging through them, as each of them is connected to events and time spent on location. In some places I did on location sketches, which I have later reworked as paintings on canvas. The ‘Down Under Xperience’ Series 1 and 2 are part of lived experiences and they reveal transitions in ways I use my art expressions. The
themes and ideas are not from memories but from direct observation and the use of photos I took on each trip and then I used them as references when making the final paintings.

These paintings situate a sense of space, place and time, a ‘progressive sense of place’ (Massey, 1993) as I encounter new places which bring positive relationships and a sense of belonging that reinforces where I am and how to situate myself. My living structures changed when moving to Melbourne and the concept of ‘space’, ‘time’ and ‘place’ was challenged. My new house at ‘Lasiandra Avenue’ and the Mitcham station are places that I painted as they reinforce a sense of belonging to what I refer to my new home and community now. There are ‘affective links’ that build with these places and although I adopt an alternative interpretation of place it does not affect what my memories of home country, but I try to find a dual sense of belonging. The other paintings refer to places I visit regularly as I enjoy bushwalking and walks along the beach in Melbourne. There encounters with people, nature, birds, kangaroos, other animals provide new boundaries that build a sense of integration and acculturation into new spaces. The culture shock and sense of anomie (Atteslander, 2007) fades with such interaction as I build new memories and value codes and cultural markers for social and cultural recognition.

‘METAPHORICAL DIALOGUES’ SERIES 1-3

The construct of the ‘third space,’ has been taken up by key postcolonial and cultural theorists including Homi Bhabha, Edward Soja and Gayatri Spivak who establish this concept as an important way of understanding the potential for ‘dissonance’. A negotiation within ‘the third space’, the ambivalence, hybridity and dissonance foreground my ‘démarche’ to work on ‘Metaphorical Dialogues’ as a series of artworks.

Metaphors of migration as a journey are represented by many migrant artists including Picasso, who often act as ambassadors of how their identities and cultures are enacted through their art. My artistic representations extend to communicating metaphors of migration experiences, as a means of re-creating and expressing them, which resonate ‘hybridity,’ while I depict ideas from the metaphoric to the imaginary. These works reveal elements of mediation, negotiation, adaptation through what I experience next to new social and environmental cues, and the hermeneutics that mingle newness, exposure, and vision that open up new avenues for hopes, beliefs, expectation, and achievement.

Eisner (1991) describes metaphors as re-creating experiences through the different aspects they take, never signifying a closed literal meaning, but enabling the viewer and the reader to experience that which they express. ‘Metaphorical dialogues’ series 1-3 is based on my critical understanding of theory on migration and its transitions. The three works expand towards visual metaphors as my expression moves from representing objects, people and landscapes to abstract interpretations
and they are meant to provoke and incite reflection. The shift is distinct as I use lines, colours, shapes, principles and elements of art that convey visual metaphors and respond to my intention of conveying critical theory in using concepts such as ‘the liminal space’, ‘the third space’, ‘border lives’ and ‘the beyond’. These concepts articulate the representation of complicated entanglements of migration, dislocation, and relocation and negotiation of my identity through a visual method.

‘BREAKING SILENCES’ SERIES 1-3

I focus on three artworks in ‘Breaking Silences’ series, where I take a feminist approach in using my art as performative to represent subjective and hybrid stances in defining my gendered identities. My ‘démarche’ is inspired by third-wave feminist’s artists, although I do not fully affirm that my work fits cutting-edge feminist’s art or explicitly that I work from an activist or ideological feminist agenda (Dekel, 2011)

These three artworks represent issues, challenges and struggles I face in situating the ‘self’ and how I am negotiating for more consolidated positions in my new environment. There is a strong link between imagination, creation and resistance to expose the ‘self’, which in fact takes a great deal of courage and readiness to unwind conventional norms and opinions in referring to unsaid issues. I refer to what Derrida describes as an idea of the “secret that we speak of, but are unable to say... the sharing of what is not shared” (Derrida, 2001, p. 58); and how “absence and differences rather than presence and consensus” (Pearce & MacLure, 2009, p. 250) can be worked through in unfolding unsaid issues.

However, in analysing what is represented through these artworks I believe I can express the sifted, unadulterated and unconscious. These works are meant to provoke, disturb, and confront the viewer. ‘Eye Witness’ and ‘Do Nishaaniyan’- The Blueprint are straight frontal angle close ups image that perform a ‘visual demand’ with a visual salience of the image as conveyed by the size as confronting enough to decode why it is about breaking silences. This is intended to position the viewer to enter in an imaginary social relationship with the images and the messages and meanings in them. The concept of the starring gaze and the tearing eye and the fissures in ‘Eye Witness’ is meant to invite the viewer to sense empathy and to bring their own interpretation. It leaves a sense of wonder, curiosity and openness for viewers to a multiplicity of readings, meanings and interpretations and may be to want to find out the cause for breaking silences.

‘Vortex of hope’, gives a closure to the whole series of my visual narratives. It provides a closure to the turbulence of migration experiences and a search for my identity. I have used three distinct layers of colours – from grey to blue and finally to bright orange which is meant to represent a silver lining that is coming out of the tunnel of uncertainties as association with migration and dislocation.
Through ‘Breaking Silences,’ I put myself through what I represent from ‘inside’ to ‘outside’ the frame of a patriarchal logic which disguise oppression, suffering and dilemmas; which in other words, unveils part of lived subjectivity. I refer to hybrid borders as marked by metaphors within my representation, to distinguish between what is visible and invisible, the known and unknown and the acceptable and unacceptable. The category of the ‘other’ is a primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of duality – that of the Self and Other.... No group ever sets itself up as the ‘One’ without at once setting up the ‘Other’ over against itself (Simone de Beauvoir, 1988).

**REFLECTING ON MY APPROACH**

A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing, (Heidegger, 1971)

I underscore the importance of setting boundaries in understanding the different paradigms in research and how my approach overlaps in using different research methods. I describe the use of comparative research methods. My journey transits through different sites and experiences and I define the researcher being the subject and my roles as artist/researcher/ teacher in using my art to negotiate my identity.

**Using mixed research methods**

I elaborate on arts based research, visual methods, a/r/tography and the use of mixed methods in using visual narratives and reflective approach towards my analysis. I had not many issues in using these methods together as I was able to combine part of personal stories as an autobiography, within ethnographic writing genre to map my journey with my artworks, annotations and reflections. I have used ethno- mimesis as an approach in representing the social and cultural aspects of understanding my identity. I refer to why the personal matters and how my expertise as an artist/researcher/teacher reinforced my approach. I defined my art making as generative process in building my data in a creative and flexible and intuitive ways. I engaged in making sketches from memory and on spot drawing and taking my own photographs in Mauritius and India during my field trip. The use of family photographs and locating my ancestry was also part of the field trip work. In using feminist art my art becomes performative as representation of a voice and as a means of empowerment. For the reading of the visual semiotics, metaphors, messages and meanings of my artworks I have used reflexive iteration and a phenomenological approach. I underscore my research approach as unique in using a comparative study of research methods that build my data and analysis.
How and why the personal matters in negotiating and understanding my identity?

Thinking small... gives the opportunity to wind up bigger themes and events of a life passage...... Then there is the call from the heart ... to follow things that are important and meaningful to the ‘self’.

It is difficult not to involve the self and one’s own perspectives and experiences when researching identity and culture (Soja, 2009). This research has been more about understanding cultural shifts and transitions in situating my gendered identities and the ‘self’ - experienced through challenges, questions of ambiguity, and uncertainties that inform - who am I? Writing, talking or exposing ‘oneself’ sometimes is coined as ‘narcissism,’ however currently people are no longer concealing but exposing ‘themselves’, their personal profiles, statuses, stories and experiences by connecting through social networks. Postmodernity means that people need to keep abreast of new tendencies such as new technologies and digital literacy. Technology in that sense is not killing art, but I consider it as an asset that can be used to promote and empower art. Social networks are powerful interfaces which can bridge the personal, bringing support, solidarity, compassion and understanding for others. Art is a powerful ‘medium’ to represent and extend personal experiences to bridge intercultural understanding, build purpose, meaning, and agency, as underscored by feminist art. There are many issues experienced by women that remain unsaid and silenced, causing some women to be victims and on the margins of their society. My art underscores subjectivities about gendered identities while transiting through different cultures, ideologies and social archetypes and contingencies as lived by personal experiences and gives ‘voice’, legitimacy and agency to some unsaid issues.

Art empowers the ‘personal’ to expose often silenced and unsaid issues. The visual can send more powerful messages and meanings than words can do and such initiatives validate such perspectives. In relating to the ‘personal’, I selected themes, concepts, experiences, events and issues that represent transitions and shifts from different experiences, sites and spaces. I refer to a balance and insight in representing my experiences as I understand them through my different roles which provides the means to look through ‘personal’ with curiosity and reflection. My representations expose certain ‘truths’ and experiences of how I understand shifts and struggles. The construction of ‘who I am’ transits through the ‘personal’ but it is altogether shaped by what and how I am living in the present and my future aspirations.

An exhibition of my artworks was intended to share possibilities with others to recall and recognise similar experiences to my own, and to establish ‘spaces’ for sharing and reflection. The aim was to communicate messages and meanings through the ‘personal’ in order to address the broader discourses I refer to. The
dialectics that resonate from post humanist critics and feminist perspectives importantly surround an understanding of global shifts in regards to cultures, processes of assimilation and identification, into transnational ‘spaces’, and places.

Reiterating my roles as artist/researcher/teacher

I reiterate my role and engagement in art is a means for reflection on ‘who I am’. This kind of ‘démarche’ has been approached by many artists including Frida Kahlo, Tracey Emin and Jackson Pollock, who have used narratives as self-portraits and art forms representing their intimate lives, experiences and agonies and ultimately their own identities. Narratives of the ‘self’ as Anthony Giddens, (1991, 1992) explains offer ways to trace and explain journeys. It is important to understand and recognise an ethical sense of self (Foucault, 2000) and picturing life narratives as stories has been strongly supported by Paul Ricoeur,(1984).

In my inquiry, I provide an understanding of the relevance and use of art as a generative process, and use art as mode of representation and as a powerful ‘medium’ to narrate and communicate messages, meanings, semiotics and signs about the transiency within my identities, in a globalised context. “Faulkner used a poetic form of data representation” and based on such ideologies, my research aims to tie and bind the knots in communicating powerful themes that relate to experiences as lived and as happening. The aim is to expose and bring understanding and to build empathy, promote awareness and stimulate dialogue when the artworks are exposed to an audience. My research also aims to give ‘voice’ to experiences and issues often silenced and “subjugated [as] perspectives“(Leavy, 2009, p. 13). There is a need to break the rigidity and rules that stereotypes art as related to only high art and aesthetics.

For the same reasons, I emphasise the use of my artworks not merely as an act of representation, but how art teaches us a way of seeing (Ihde, 1995) and such “ways of seeing [can transform] contemporary self-understandings” (Lury, 1998, p. 3). Here, I refer to semiotics as a tool that can be used by self and others to analyse my artworks. An audience can also use such a tool in defining the arbitrary nature of interpretation that is often confined to perceptual and phenomenological stances and alternatives (Bryson, Holly, & Moxey, 1991); (Krauss, 1991). The visual and its representation geared towards reflexive understanding is a platform to communicate messages and meanings about identity, belongings, and the dimensions of ‘space’ next to global pressures such as migration, economic crisis, cyberspaces, cultural shifts and social transformations. This research through the visual can be a gateway to honour a more democratic sense of spatiality and bring intercultural understanding in diverse contexts as it exposes ambivalences within processes of identification and within social and cultural dimensions of interactions.
I bring forward my arguments as an artist, to say that the arts define and generate passionate self-expression that exposes an artist’s emotions, imagination, experience, expression, representation, and interpretation. The way artist’s shape an artwork is what values their intentions and makes meaning become rhetorically effective, accessible and equally significant for viewers. Works of art invoke emotions, and used with narratives and interpretation, they express and make sense more convincingly in deciphering meanings, messages and metaphors (Barnet, 2011).

The ‘visual’ in current research paradigms under a Deleuzian theorisation dynamically opens new boundaries and wider opportunities for accountability and scope in situating representation, interpretation, and visibility, whilst acknowledging personal experiences through narratives, artworks, images or photographs. Feminist art contributes by empowering women to have a ‘voice’ and come out of the margins to achieve more consolidated positions. In that sense, the artist is the one who interacts first with the artworks and gives the first perspectives without ignoring the viewer’s interaction with them from their own point of view. “Inside each artist is a spectator upon whom the artist, the artist as agent is dependent” (Wollheim, 1991, p. 101). There are anticipations of what viewers see and interpret, which is arbitrary. Yet I situate and frame my inquiry in using my personal experiences as narrated, my engagement in art making as a ‘generative’ process and my artworks as a mode of representation of cultural shifts and gendered identities.

**The wonders of my visual narratives and art as representation in setting a dialogue**

I open this discussion by looking at how my narratives and artworks help articulate answers to my research questions. I argue that how we see a work of art is very much determined by what we read through it. The confusion between artwork as possessing certain specific qualities and attributes and the dilemma of representation and meaning has been at the centre of many discussions. Formalist concepts contrast powerfully with more modernist and popular views about contemporary art, not only condemning it only to qualities and attributes, but extending it to more idiosyncratic and idealistic stances. Yet, if formalists have attempted to free literary theory from its dependence on history, biography and psychology, philosophical criticisms offered by Martin Heidegger, Bruno Latour and Gilles Deleuze argue about the value of art and ‘representationalism’. Similarly, Jacques Derrida contested the meaning of representation, and unlike Latour he questioned its significance in everyday life, by arguing that “representation permeates our lives,” (Bolt, 2004, pp. 14-15). I refer to such ways of thinking to bring meaning and agency to my arguments. My inquiry underscored how “communication is at the heart of international, intercultural and interpersonal relations” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 2), and how artistic expression as
a visual medium is an important means to expose and share views, ideas and concepts, as distinct from words alone.

As better “global communicators” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 2) “we must learn new competencies, skills and sensitivities not the least of which involve new ways of looking at self, or identity, as this construct [and] relates to communication.” Currently, communication is primarily narrowed to the use of technology which consequently has a serious impact on the way we appreciate things in the natural way. In this technology-oriented society, everything seems to be affected by the way we perceive information. In referring to art and aesthetics, the impact of visual culture is predominant. How we operate and perceive things around us depends upon “the nature of our work”, the way we use our time, our “power relation and systems of stratification and values....” [and] “more fundamentally the way we conceive the self” (Mc Quail, 1989, p. 77). Within such frameworks, artistic expression and visual representations and my approach in using the visual and art as artistic representation of my identities can bring “cultural awareness to involve the recognition of values and attitudes that differ from our own” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1). More importantly, it is a tool for communication that brings more awareness to more sensitive “taken-for-granted social customs that signal a different sense of time, privacy, tradition, [and] status” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1) in the role of the ‘self’ in cultures. The definition of a ‘dialogue’ refers broadly to the conversation between two people; however in the sphere of artistic and visual representations, the dialogue is less literally a conversation but signifies the sharing of ideas via visual communication. In an extensive sense it refers to “a metaphorical dialogue” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 8), which is between the viewer, the artworks, and the artist’s intentions. In the next section, I extend my discussion on visual mapping and viewer’s perspectives.

My art exhibition and my reflection on visual mapping – What viewers see?

Contemporary research focuses on the importance of active, collaborative and constructivist learning (Burton & Bartlett, 2009; Jensen, 2004). Meadmore, Burnett, & O’Brien, (1999) argue that the creative process does not end when the artist ‘completes’ the making, and an active engagement of the audience is important to fully realise any artwork (Alexenberg, 2008, p. 141). I agree with the belief that “there is always more than one way to interpret an artwork [besides] reading it, [or] evaluating it” (Garrett, 2009); (Alexenberg, 2008). Artworks need to read from multiple standpoints, either from the artist or viewer’s perspectives, which invariably can differ.

Concept mapping delivers messages to the viewer. The use of concept mapping allows for “more flexible approaches” (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 68) which was important for me to understand my journey through different sites. As a visually oriented researcher, I focussed on this idea as a means of providing
innovative ways to present ‘participant-centric approach’ to research and presentation of data through the visual. A visual mapping approach exposed my artworks to bridge connections and “to ground data within theory” (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 68). My visual representations probed the ‘backstage’ of my ideas, perspectives, experiences and perceptions and provided a strategy to go beyond soliciting “a rehearsed form of narrative [and precluded] more spontaneous [responses]” (Hathaway & Atkinson, 2003, p. 162). The intention was to initiate in-depth analysis that engaged the audience in building their own judgement, analysis and interpretation. Maps used as a framework are useful in sharing such experiences in a unique way. There are “unsolicited reflections [that provide] visual snapshots” which goes beyond literal interpretation of the visual, while it provides possibilities as an experience (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 79). The complex dimensions of understanding and interpretation of visuality underscores experiences about the self.

As the artist I was the sole viewer of my artworks. The exhibition provided a new dynamic of interaction on how I came to understand that interpretation does not stand alone, and that reflection can be extended by utilising audience perspectives as well. My personal interpretation was initially limited to my vision and intentions, but listening to the audience interactions provided me with a real sounding board and a chance to defend my own position as artist. The exhibition was important to hear lateral views which informed my reflections. Professor Fazal Rizvi’s opening speech of the exhibition was informative and insightful and added another perspective to reflect on.

**Decoding my art as performative and bridging a pedagogy towards intercultural understanding**

My artworks trace my identity as I transit through different sites and experiences. I coin my approach in using my own artworks as ‘generative process’, yet I engage the reader/viewer into a multiplicity of readings, whether one has training and knowledge or not in art and or in viewing practices in art. My artworks start with figurative works and lead to abstract and semi abstract works and it trails my journey from stability to instability – a form of visual representation from reality to one of abstraction that reflects inner thoughts and feelings as “affective links” (Amin, 2012, p. 29).

As I describe and further analyse each series of paintings I try to encode and decode distinct meanings in the visual narratives that unifies my art expression as performative. A journey of my identities as constructed through my personal stories, firstly through my family ancestry and diasporic inheritances and cultural identity, and secondly through my experiences of migration and relocation transitions as I moved to Australia.
My art becomes performative as it reveals “affective links” (Amin, 2012, p. 29) that touch viewers and readers as Amin, (2012, p. 29) argues that material objects can be a social vehicle that promotes “friendship networks and intimate publics” as my art expression forges “affective links” (Amin, 2012, p. 29). I underscore my art as performative and if exposed to a bigger audience as a public exhibition, my paintings can be used to develop pedagogies for intercultural understanding and forge “affective links” in Australia where communities are challenged to be re-imagined with the flows of transnational migration.

I refer to experiences of relocation and how migrants negotiate their identity in my literature review. My artworks refer to postcolonial and diaspora history and my personal life trajectories and migration history. In pulling together literature from postcolonial, diaspora and migration and postcolonial feminist theories, my work potentially contributes something new to the politics of migration, place, belonging and identity politics vis à vis my artistic expression. I elaborate further on this in my concluding Chapter.

**Conclusion**

This Chapter outlined how I decode visual semiotics, meanings and messages through my artworks. I reflect on my approach and use of comparative research methods and I reiterate my role as artist/researcher/ teacher and the subject of my inquiry in using my personal stories and my experiences. I describe how my art exhibition as visual mapping and my art as performative and how it develops and bridges to pedagogies towards intercultural understanding.
Chapter 7 (Re) thinking and Reflecting-

On my representation of my identity and culture through my artworks

Introduction

This Chapter is a discussion and reflection on representation of cultural shifts, migration experiences and transitions through different sites and experiences that refer to ambivalence and hybridity in understanding and negotiating my identity. I refer to my artworks in some sections that highlight how they infer in how I understand my identity. However, I also refer my theoretical understanding and an input that sustains my arguments.

I revisit concepts and ideologies about processes of identification and representation within a global context. I describe how it becomes important to “know who you are” and how to define new ‘spaces’ and parameters of identification and representation. The shifts in ‘spaces’, places’ and new social interaction, I argue, indicates hybridity and ambivalences in situating the ‘self’. My arguments extend to reflecting on how identity matters, and why it is significant to make it seem present and less as ‘dilemma’ or ‘myth’ in an increasingly diverse, changing and challenging global context.

DEVELOPING VIGNETTES AND CONSTRUCTS

Connections to historicity, colonial and postcolonial, diasporic influences, life experiences, migration transitions and the shifts in spaces, places and time importantly frame my discussion. Exploring these concepts and issues contribute to further reflections on my experiences and journey. To structure this section, I developed vignettes and constructs to frame my discussion.

AMBIVALENCE AND HYBRIDITY IN UNDERSTANDING AND NEGOTIATING IDENTITY

Recognition of my culture and identities within postmodernity

Cultural markers signified through cultural traditions, practices and beliefs are recognised and practiced by a diaspora. However postmodern conditions can challenge, influence and mutate such practices via technology, social media and even fashion that supports revolutionary mindsets with new generations. Cultural markers and traits have perpetuated from my ancestors to my parents and myself and my children. My mother still wears a ‘saree’ as her daily outfit, and she uses Bhojpuri as a language with her peers and prepares Indian dishes in the same traditional style. Nevertheless, there are mutations in the way my grandmother practiced cultural traits and her beliefs, compared to how my mother and I practice and believe in them now. Practices, beliefs and traditions have been synchronised through generations based on the exposure to education and media.
which introduce conformities within a postmodern society. For my grandmother, her approach to religious beliefs, cultural practices, and rituals were informed by strict rules and often swayed by superstitious beliefs. My mother, on the other hand, follows the same beliefs and traditions, but with more adherences to what is linked to her ‘époque’ and generation, and she is less influenced by superstitions. I believe such a mindset applies equally to my approach towards inherited beliefs and religious practices or other rituals.

The differences in cultural markers from one generation to the other reflect postmodern traits, which are informed by education, new values and beliefs and I argue that my perception and experience indicates a stripping off certain practices, rituals, beliefs, which follows a simplification of ideals in a much more tokenistic approach and practice. In that sense, some cultural practices lose their essence and meanings. I barely use Bhojpuri and Hindi as languages now, although I still see them as assets which give me a sense of belonging to my roots. I practice my religion, traditions, rituals and beliefs, as I usually go for prayers in the Hindu temple in Camberwell in Melbourne, and I celebrate iconic festivals such as the ‘Deepavali’. I also try to dress traditionally in a ‘saree’ on such special occasions. Such practices sustain “the subaltern and postcolonial agency” and how it enunciates a ‘space’ between “symbolisation of the social and the ‘sign ’ of its representation” (Bhabha, 2005, p. 14). The discourse I develop relates to fragmentation in representation, a partial ‘erasure’ or social contradiction as cultural transition within a process of identification and agency. As “differences in culture and power are constituted through the social conditions of enunciation” (Bhabha, 2005, p. 17), the temporal changes seem to fade and fuse as cultural transitions happen.

**Constructing and Negotiating my Identities - Cultural Capital and Inheritances and Life Experiences**

I refer to cultural inheritances from my ancestors, postcolonial influences, home country and my upbringing and life experiences to analyse how ‘historicity and influences’ and cultural capital (Rosunee, 2012) inform subjectivities in identity construction and representation.

I make reference to the ideology of colonisation as represented in “a doctrine of cultural hierarchy and supremacy” (Kortright, 2003) My ancestors as indentured labourers were subdued as the subordinate ‘other’ through established control over territory imposed by a ruling power of the colonisers. I attempted to understand how they had to struggle to prevent being stripped of their cultural patterns and values, and how cultural traits have perpetuated through generations. I understand that native culture of my ancestors has been hybridised with transitions from one generation to the other. However, these inheritances influence and play a major role in defining current identities of those who acknowledge, value, and practice them. My home country, although a small insular island is sustaining the changes
within the environmental, social, cultural, demographic and economic situations, as
global tendencies dictate the lives of the residents. Eventually these changes frame
new practices of cultures, while distorting traditional ones. The concept of culture
within such frames “does exist as a tangible entity”, (Kortright, 2003) it is however,
an “abstract ideologies of comparison” between the native or inherited cultures and
the evolving and hybrid ones and the cultural identities of new generations are
negotiated.

Fredric Jameson (1991, p. 284) defines historicity as “neither a representation of
the past nor a representation of the future” but as “a perception of the present as
history; that is as relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarise it and
allows ... that distance from immediacy, which is at length characterised as historical
perspective.” This definition supports my perception of how historical perspectives
inform my present, which when deconstructed dissolves familiarity and distances
the immediacy of a direct involvement to it. Fredric Jameson also refers to the loss
of history within the postmodern and the breakdown of temporality, which I
underscore, happens through the ‘time lag’ and the cross-cultural transitions that
happen through time.

In the ‘Talk Back’ series, I use the Foucauldian and Derridean frames of analysis to
represent, interpret and deconstruct the semiotics, messages and meanings
underlying colonial and postcolonial perspectives. These works bring in the “politics
of location” and “agency” (Hall, 2000, p. 16) which manifest the contingencies of
postcolonial and diasporic inheritances and belongings. The ‘Talk Back’ series
depict my ancestors within a physical reality of habitation, work practices and daily
living, which gives an insight to disentangle discursive practices, inheritances,
thoughts and ideas. There are traits in their living habits and patterns that
legitimate knowledge and policies in those days. I refer to socio-spatial concepts
and cross cultural transitions through the temporal, where my ancestors were
relocated within new social structures, and how they managed to perpetuate their
traditions, religious beliefs, languages and their cultural heritage. The literature of
the Mauritian writer and poet Marcel Cabon, (1981) and his work ‘Namasté’ is a
symbolic testimony that reveals something of the rural life of Hindu communities in
those days in Mauritius. It reveals their struggles, and the changes that take place
within their lives with the coming of modernity. This work informed my
understanding of the everyday living of diverse cultures, alongside the changes and
challenges, and the struggles faced by indentured Indian labourer’s and their
descendants as marginalised workers. This literature was an important reference
when I was working on the ‘Talk Back’ series.

The ‘Talk Back’ series and the old family photographs situate a timeline in history. I
recently visited a village in Bihar, India where my ancestors came from and from the
pictures of women in their homes and performing their daily chores I try to
underscore a glimpse of their family and community living habits and perspectives.
In doing so, I located the differences between them, myself and my ancestors. Postcolonial writers have sought to address such issues to emphasise mobility, contingencies and the strategic nature of identity that claims solidarity across differences, but I would add that there is a sense of affiliation, alliance, and recognition that is predominant through a “time lag” (Bhabha, 2005, p. 17).

In taking up the concept of ‘time lag’, I uncovered the effects carried from one generation to the next, linking colonialism and post colonialism. I also understand postcolonial and diasporic inheritances through the “time lag”, where I compare myself to women of those days. The concept of space, place and time play a significant role in situating a form of struggle and resistance against colonial legacies. It was important to discover how such legacies are inherent within the postcolonial and thus how it is reflected in my identity. There are important traits in hybridisation of cultures and inheritances, when I refer to how my way of practicing religion, traditions, rituals and beliefs differ from that of my mother and grandmother’s. My grandparents used the Bhojpuri language to talk to my parents, and although I understand this language, I am not fluent in speaking it. The Mauritian ‘Créole’ is my mother tongue and I use it to converse with my family, children and Mauritian friends in Australia.

There are pressures and ambivalences in advocating inherited cultures, belief systems, and languages and Ramduth (Hannerz, 1996) discusses the problematic nature of speaking of ‘our heritage’ in the Mauritian context. He underscores that there can be different ideological implications involved and deconstructed, if viewed from the differentiated theories of Arjun Appadurai, (1996) and Hall, (1989) on the systems of representation and heritage.

Transiting through lived experiences, memories and nostalgia from home country

‘Down Memory Lane’ is a series of paintings that depict snapshots of places and events that marked my childhood as memories, souvenirs, nostalgia and a sense of belonging to patria. These artworks represent my cultural identity through performative stances. These perspectives present notions that identity is intertwined and edged through ‘performative stances’ (Butler, 1990) or “active processes for identification”(Weedon, 2004, p. 7). Adherence to a generic view of culture as norm and “part of lived-subjectivity,” plays an intrinsic role in processes of identification. Stuart Hall, (1997b) defines culture as the ‘production’ and exchange of meaning within society, and my living experiences construct and influence my cultural identity. The arguments brought forward by Franz Fanon, (1986), Stuart Hall, (1986), and Edward (Said, 1978) among others frame an understanding of the concept of culture as constructed. The conceptualisation of culture is constructed based on historical contexts, the social, cultural, economic and political grounds which people live in (Anderson et al., 2007). Cultural meanings can be negotiated, however the sense of belonging to home country remains “a relatively stable signified”(Ramduth, 2010, p. 47).
I grew up and lived in a multicultural context with democratic ideals about education, politics, media, and the “recognition of cultural and religious diversity” (Gopauloo & Gayan, 2010, p. 16). Such traits are important in promoting integration, peace, respect and tolerance of differences. My upbringing, childhood, and education have been framed on postcolonial legacies and the development in my home country. Opportunities and access to education, I argue have implications for identity construction and maintenance. My grandparents were illiterate in the English language, and my mother has a limited acquaintance with the French and English languages as she attended only primary level schooling. This relates to Jürgen Habermas view of identity as grounded in societal development (Côté & Levine, 2002) and it purports to differentiate how identity is constructed on attributes such as possessions, level of education, type of occupation, income level and living standards that have implications for ownership (Norton, 2000). The processes of reflexive modernity is associated with social changes and identity politics as supported by Habermas and Beck (Hetherington, 2000), and I recognise that my identity is articulated through the relationship between my history, inheritances, belongings, and the similarities and differences I recognise between myself and my ancestors, and postmodern conditions. I acknowledge geographies, histories, socio-spatial relations (Soja, 1989) and how cultural patterns contribute to understanding processes around identity, cultural identity, and representation (Hall, 1993).

**MIGRATION AND ITS CONTINGENCIES**

Migration is playing a key part in contemporary social transformations, although there are disenchantments about accepting the ‘other’. “World-wide restratification” is happening at a global level as human mobility increases and “new social hierarchy” (Bauman, 1998, p. 70) and “new forms of production” and “structures of domination” (Papastergiadis, 2005) happen. Migrants choose different pathways to cross boundaries that determine the different perspectives and experiences that have implications upon how they adapt to new places and renegotiate their identities within new social and cultural conditions. Social, ethnic, religious, historical and cultural attributes contribute to identity construction; and through migration transitions such attributes are often at stake and dismantled. The processes of negotiation and adaption to new socio-cultural norms suggest subjectivities that need to be addressed more deeply. Global mobility increases diversity, where heterogeneity should increasingly become the norm (Rizvi, 2011) and as underlined by Rizvi- cultural diversity needs to be ruled out as an exception. I address some of these notions by referring to my own migration experiences and how I negotiate my identities through cross-cultural transitions, within new ‘spaces’, ‘places’ and social interaction.
Migration transitions and experiences

Migration transition is about the move from home country to new locations and about adaptation to changes, challenges and experiences in negotiating a new sense of place, space and identity. I search for meanings in this transition as the hidden part of the iceberg that needs to be revealed, otherwise, if they stay submerged, some issues stand unaccounted for in defining cultures and identities.

Culture, identity, and migration - “Is there a hidden part of the iceberg to be unveiled?”

I define my experiences of migration to Australia as marked by initial anticipated fears and difficulties, as well as new aspirations, as identified in the analysis of the ‘On which footsteps’ series. I suggest that an ‘identity crisis’ involves a mixture of perpetuating inherited cultures, belief systems and traditions, and that it becomes problematic with the pressures and ambivalences in transitions of adaptation and relocation. In my drawing of ‘On which footsteps’ there are two series of footsteps, one splits off and takes a new ‘survol’ as it fade out towards the unknown, ‘an anomie’ and beyond. I reveal my migration experience as difficult and I suggest that adaptation to new social codes is challenging, where inherited social and moral frameworks are no longer similar, and a sense of alienation and disorientation occurs. In such a situation the adaptation to new social codes is difficult, where inherited social and moral frameworks are no longer similar and a sense of alienation and disorientation describes that ‘anomie’ metaphorically.

I use my painting of the ‘liminal space’ to relate to migration and relocation experiences and it throws light on such parameters. Through my reflection I pose the question: what it is like to come from ‘there’, an insular Island such as Mauritius, to ‘here’, a Metropolitan city such as Melbourne? There many difficulties faced living at “intersections of histories and memories” (Chambers, 1994, p. 6) and to abide to inheritances and cultural markers. Within an adaptation process, the use of a different language other than the mother tongue is initially challenging. As part of the ‘culture shock’, I also experienced challenges and struggles. “The struggle for domination as Foucault shows can be both systematic and hidden,” (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999, p. 82). However, Edward Said,( 1994) highlights how institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism are based on the powers of culture that sustain them. I refer to social structures that are organised in terms of “means and relations of production” (Jenks, 2005, p. 28), but such notions of social and cultural reproduction, hegemonic structures, racism, and stigma are reinforced through migration experiences. Besides the challenges of adaptation to language, I suggest that other cultural artefacts such as race, colour of the skin, nationality and social status that classify people based on social and socio-psychological criteria, and these have a major impact on how new migrants negotiate their identities. Alfred Schutz, (1944) refers to how ‘the
Stranger’ is meant to make an effort to adapt, where his past in terms of languages, cuisines, religious practices and beliefs is no longer relevant. A sense of ‘anomie’ and meaninglessness and even social exclusion happens when new migrants are isolated from accustomed schemas and this makes them lose social identity. In such situations, there is much effort needed to requisite a new start and to renegotiate identities. So far my migration experiences have not been to such extremes, and I have lived through my own experiences of negotiations. The adaptation processes migrants undergo cannot be shadowed as these have ubiquitous powers of resonance within societies in the global system (Omi & Winant, 2005) and within global cities.

Here, I share and discuss over my own experiences. I suggest there is an urge in most new immigrants to connect to friends, people or a community that share same languages, ethnicity, cultures or even the same religion. I believe that it is an important element that provides spaces and boundaries for recognition and socialisation. Transnational communities are defined as ‘nodes’ and these exist in most globalised cities where new migrants build up social networks (Samers, 2010). Social ties and the concept of ‘belonging’ have subjective interpretation, and much depends upon the surrounding societal structures and norms. The transitions within two cultures - the inherited and the new happen through negotiation within ‘spaces’.

Language is one of the barriers that direct subjectivity while expressing the meaning of experience in building identity structures of migrant subjects (Riley, 2007). Language and identity are intertwined structures, and I believe that the use of speech and thinking defines who we are and where we belong. “The source of personal identity is social” (Riley, 2007, p. 16) and it happens from interaction between individuals and other people in a given milieu. The “extrapolation of the inter to the interpersonal level” (Riley, 2007, p. 16), demonstrate that sharing and even an acquaintance with a same language does not determine who we really are. Communicating and interacting with new people in a new language, I suggest, is a challenging experience, although in my case a multilingual competence has been an advantage. I argue that there is a need for more complex negotiations between different linguistic patterns. It takes time to build recognition, acceptance and trust in a host community, when there are differences in terms of race, colour, culture, and use of languages. In this process, migrant subjects identify themselves first and then others identify them. This progressively happens through continuous interaction, sharing of views, interests and intentions that establish “intersubjectivity [and] a state of shared meanings” (Riley, 2007, p. 33) that build up social and meaningful contacts with others. I describe my experiences and discuss later how I define the ‘self as dynamic and in interaction’. In the next section, I discuss how as a migrant subject I perceive my transition through the ‘liminal space’.
The complexities within the ‘liminal space’

A ‘liminal space’ is what Homi Bhabha, (2004, p. 2) refers to as the “in-between spaces,” or the ‘third space’ as a terrain, where negotiations of identity structures and cultures take place. My painting of the ‘liminal space’ represents such negotiations and the discussion on this concept is based on my artworks and theory and my reflections.

Within such ‘in-between’ spaces there is room for movement. There is also room for the “articulation of cultural differences” and the use of “elaborating strategies of selfhood”; the initiation of “new signs of identity”; innovations for “collaboration,” and “contestations” within the “act of defining the idea of society” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 4). Within my migration experience, I underscore there are subjectivities in regards to struggles for identity and recognition with a tendency for both resistance and submissiveness. Concepts such as ‘otherness,’ ‘recognition,’ ‘alienation,’ ‘anomie,’ and ‘identity crisis,’ link to challenges faced and experienced. It is within such dimensions that I address new parameters of inherited belief systems, and cultural markers within my diverse roles, as I map new landscapes.

My interpretation of the ‘third space’ is defined as “a challenge to the limits of the self, as an act of reaching out to what is the ‘liminal’ in the historic experience and in the cultural representation” (Bhabha, 2009, p. xiii). This gives agency to what I observe and negotiate in my new milieu. “The edged boundaries of the ‘liminal space’ suggest ‘hybridity’ within “the temporal movements and passage that it allows,” and this subsequently “prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5). I refer to Bhabha’s, (2004, pp. 5-6) definition of an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity [and] entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.” This perspective empowers and fits in my representation towards understanding and gives ‘meaning’ to my experiences about migration, displacement, culture shock, which is hybrid and suggests a ‘dissonance’.

It is within the ‘liminal space’ that cultural changes occur and it can be defined as “a transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood can be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 130). The ways I describe and understand my identity is not simply a movement from one stage to another, instead I define it as a “constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 130). Homi Bhabha also refers to the liminal space as a “stairwell” as a “pathway between upper and lower areas and how it becomes “a space of symbolic interaction” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). The liminal prevents identities from polarising between arbitrary designations as polarities of imperial rhetoric, racial or national characterisation, or of social class
and hegemonic orders (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Bhabha, (1994, p. 4) argues that liminality and hybridity work in parallel and “the interstitial passage between fixed identifications open up possibilities for cultural hybridity that entertains difference without assumed or imposed hierarchy.” Bhabha, (1989) calls the liminal space the “in-between, hybrid position of practice and negotiation” and Spivak, (1990b) terms it “as catachresis: reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value-coding” (Prakash, 1992, p. 8). These definitions suggest a mixing of concepts of metaphors, but within my discussion it provides meaning to how I understand and describe the liminal space. Such terminologies describe what happens while transiting through the liminal space – cultural hybridisation and their practices, negotiations of value coding, reversal and displacement of ideologies and fissures of dominant beliefs.

**Identities and Belongings at Crossroads - The ‘Self as Dynamic and in Interaction’**

Migration brings forward an impasse for migrants in global cities and the processes of dislocation and relocation underscore struggles and dilemmas towards how to situate the ‘self’ and a sense of belonging. The social and cultural conditions and life experiences function as entangled connections that relate the past to the new. These traits serve as connections from past life experiences, family ties, and left homes to new homes in new ‘spaces’ and ‘places’. Migrants move from social norms and build up new networks. Such transitions significantly impact identity processes and a sense of belonging, sometimes underlining anxieties, uncertainties that often leave migrants at crossroads and within inconclusive tasks of “self-identification” (Bauman, 2011, p. 431). I see such negotiations happening within a ‘liminal space’, which I picture and interpret through an artwork (Rosunee, 2012, p. 34).

The process of negotiation and adaptation is “a challenge to the limits of the self, as an act of reaching out to what is ‘liminal’ in the historic experience and ... the cultural representation” (Bhabha, 2009, p. xiii). This transition “challenges the archetypes of culture which relates to languages, societal norms and values, differences in class, nationality, education, race and gender” (Rosunee, 2012, p. 34). These attributes play a significant role as “a matrix of random connections and disconnections” (Bauman, 2007, p. 3), while ‘society’ is increasingly viewed and treated as a ‘network’ rather than a ‘structure’. In such situations where social structures of transitions are not supportive and welcoming, ‘identity ‘crisis’ becomes problematic as it is an outcome of social interaction which plays a crucial role in “diminishing or enlarging the dimensions of [an] individual’s identity crisis” (Lewin, 2001, pp. pp 125-126). Attributes such as race, ethnicity, language, culture and beliefs have major importance in validating social identity among strangers, although such systems of ascriptions have been broken down in modern society, this is a factor which discriminates against migrants.
As a new migrant, I had as luggage cultural capital and inheritances as values, languages, religious practices and beliefs. I experienced a fragmentation of those attributes through transitions of relocation, where I encountered difficulties and constraints living in a new country. I perceived them as transitory fears and a sense of loss (Furnham, 2010), while setting my new parameters in my first year in Australia. It was challenging to enter a process of re-socialisation, whilst trying to negotiate and maintain between inherited cultural capital and new social structures.

The impact of dislocation is massive, and social and cultural ties are often at stake with new challenges, expectations and high ambitions to secure a better future. Priority is often given to recycling and upgrading skills so as to perform professionally at the expense of the social and cultural matters. Migrants are often “earmarked for recycling or rehabilitation” (Bauman, 2007, p. 31) which in some cases might outcast them in a condition of ‘liminal drift’, (Agier, 2004), that can be transitory or permanent. A sense of transience and indefiniteness is often the experience, which might challenge identity reconstruction and a sense of belonging within human conditions and experiences.

The process of adaptation is difficult as there are issues and changes that are unexpected, while migrants are often unprepared to face them in addition to limited choices and options they have. It is challenging to renegotiate identity on how successful one is in interacting and adapting within the social, cultural, professional and economic dilemmas of new spaces and social structure interactions. “Identities are formed through interaction between people”, while “people take up different identities,” (Woodward, 2004, p. 1) through different processes and individual positioning. My migration transitions redirect my thinking on how my identity is brought about, how I interact and what I recognise as common to a group of people that makes me similar or differentiates me from ‘others’ (Weeks, 1990, p. 88).

Within the process of relocation, I question if my identity is about the “relational self”? (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 26), as I encounter new experiences and people. Identity and a sense of belonging that is fixated on socialising instincts, and narrowed to home country and community of birth, can limit interaction with other communities. Within the processes of dislocation, there is a tendency to aggregate according to ethnic, religious and lifestyles enclaves, which gives a sense of recognition and belonging. For migrants it might become a priority to reinforce the archetypes of traditions, cultural and religious beliefs when in a new country.

I recognise diaspora as a social form of interaction within transnational communities also defined as ‘nodes,’ (Samers, 2010) and such interaction cement ties to common history and country of birth. The building up of social ties through nodal structures provides the ‘spaces’ to overcome transitions and uncertainties, while building new boundaries for recognition and social life. Such interactions help
to maintain collective identities as historical experiences and “ethnic myths” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 3) where common origins, ideologies, and interests are shared. This type of consciousness brings twofold awareness; first as shared experiences of struggles, discrimination or exclusion and secondly it fosters solidarity and identification to historical inheritances and heritage through cultural artefacts, religion and re-created memories and shared imagination. The building of negotiated identity structures for migrants, I believe can involve mutations and dislodging of binaries to construct a sense of belonging (Rosunee, 2012), thus opening other opportunities for interaction, connections and experiences. Such processes are sustained through cyberspace interaction, technology and social networking that support the ease of communication and connect migrants to their families and the world. These interactions are important to consolidate family ties and maintain solidarity and a diaspora to be held together or to be re-created.

Migrants take time to fit into a community of ‘strangers’, which often depends on how the host community approves their company and instil confidence in them, while building the right impressions towards legitimacy (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). My experiences of relocation informs my beliefs, where I argue that interaction happens through conversation and trust in getting to know each other in my neighbourhood and in making new friends. Social identity is not nurtured through accomplishment and material attainment, but I believe it is more about building trust and that one is worthy of company and reflexive acceptance. ‘Anomie’ (Atteslander, 2007) is a condition characterised by ‘rapid structural changes’ within socio-economic structures and it has been theorised in describing experiences of migrants undergoing difficulties of adaptation, resulting in loss of social orientation. In some instances, it might create insecurities, “marginalisation, uncontrolled rising expectations and the questioning of legitimacy of core values” (Atteslander, 2007, p. 511). A sense of ‘anomie’ is what I felt as a new migrant, but in gradually building a ‘place’ in the community and the nodes, this condition faded over time, as I constructed new parameters of my social identity.

Transnational connections helped me to maintain collective identities and practices (Hannerz, 1996) and it also continues to influences the upbringing of my children. Identity processes need focus and agency from social and cultural frames in particular, within cultural shifts in culturally diverse global cities. Each individual is different on religious, ethnic and cultural grounds, but the “personal dimension” contributes equally to the “identity equation” (Woodward, 2004, p. 1). The way migrants socialise and how they internalise “social structural norms and values” (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 7) depends on personal abilities to interact and how they build up a social construction of reality, as an ‘objectification’(Berger & Luckmann, 1966). I believe I have left traces of myself in my home country and undoubtedly I am making new traces in my host country. Most of what I believe in or choose as new ideals depends on my cultural identity but equally on my efforts and mindset to appropriate new experiences and connections within new ‘spaces’. This is what I
define as transiting from what is considered as embodied and enduring as culture and identity to what is constructed. Stuart Hall defines identity as a production, which is “never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” and “cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’, while “it belongs to the future as much as to the past,” and it is not something which already “exists, transcending place, time, history and culture” (Hall, 1993, pp. 222-225). I describe the ‘self as dynamic and in interaction’ (Mead, 1950) through the changes that do not necessarily happen within myself, but how the world and environment around me changes, and what is constantly changing is what matters.

**The Nexus of space, place and time in identity processes**

Lawrence Grossberg, (1996) refers to the confrontation of globalisation of culture, as movement of culture outside the spaces of any form of language. Cultural practices are difficult to understand or critique within one’s own territories. Within “the new global economy of culture there is deterritorialisation of culture and its subsequent reterritorialisation that challenge culture’s equation within location and space” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 169). Within such challenges of culture’s equation, there needs to be a rethinking of the politics of representation and location. An articulation of identity, I argue goes through processes of making, unmaking and remaking of non-necessary relations. In such instances so far, “questions of the agencies, effectiveness and modalities of articulation remain largely unexamined” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 170). I believe that it is crucial to locate identities within the broader context of a new spatial economy and to underscore identity as “a privileged site of struggle” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 170), as the influences of the global cannot be ignored through the new ways of organising and orienting space and power. Representational spaces as defined by Lefebvre (1991, p. 39) relate to spaces as directly lived and associated to images and symbols and in the artist’s interpretation such spaces are designated as “less coherent with non-verbal symbols and signs”

Through my artworks I only attempt to represent the ambivalence within the nexus of space, place and time within a journey in different sites, experiences, interactions, and observations. It has been a reconstructed response of how I understand and negotiate ‘space’, ‘place’ and ‘time’ and how I understand my identities as represented through them. Such responses on the canvas and its representations confront and ask for a reworking and rethinking of such notions. It also transforms and appropriates them and my own reflection and understanding as well. My artworks are a mutation in building ‘space’ that varies with changing situations and contexts. The ‘Down Under Xperience’ series is an experience in location that informs new experiences and ways of negotiating space, place and time. ‘The Metaphorical Dialogues series’ expose into hallucinatory expressions of lines, shapes and colours in fusion, but they address deeper meanings and themes
of temporality and the elegiac ambiguities of memories and nostalgia that defines lived experiences.

My narratives and artworks work to bridge connections of my identities as related to the temporal unification of the past, present and future. The hybridity through this hermeneutic circle of time is signified in that process and it defines identity and culture as ambivalent and increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic within the contemporary. Such experiences about culture and identity challenged me to recognise a sense of ‘place’ and to construct or reconstruct a sense ‘space’ empowered by the use of an articulated ensemble of memory, nostalgia, and past experiences through to the temporal. This assisted me to map and remap alternative trajectories in identifying the self. The global challenges present a struggle for individuals and especially migrants to grasp, reposition and act within new spatial and social scales. My reference to identities and cultures is a new mode of representing how I understand and grasp my positioning and repositioning as an individual through shifting experiences and time. The last two series of my works suggest the struggle and capacity to act through recent and present experiences as unsettled, transitive and in progress. I refer to Doreen Massey’s, (1993) ‘progressive sense of place’ which defines a positive relationship between place and identity. I adopted an alternative interpretation of place that did not neutralise past experiences or inhibited new encounters but transgressed and promoted construction of a new identities, within new spatial, social, cultural and economic contexts (Appadurai, 2005).

Situating the ‘self’ within nexuses of space, place and time

Processes of identification can be complex when I view ‘the self’ based on my cultural identity, life experiences and migration transitions. In ‘situating the self’ within nexuses of space, place and time, there is an uprooting from ‘there’ my home country to settle ‘here’ in Australia. It is all about making a step forward in renegotiating within new living and social structures. There is an uncomfortable fit in nexuses of space, place and time, (Babacan, 2005, p. 114) and it impacts on identity construction when undergoing migration transitions when pressured by cultural identity, globalisation, technology and other cyberspace influences. Migration experiences entail a reworking of spatiality where ‘space’ as importantly as ‘time’ plays a significant role in defining identities (Warf & Arias, 2009). Edward Soja’s initiative in making visible the “power of thinking spatially” informs a “socio-spatial dialect,” that underscores how “geographies shape and explain social processes and social action” (Soja, 2009, p. 22).

Migration is often a promise of change with a disjuncture between past life experiences and moving ahead in building new hopes and dreams as in ‘paper castles’. I recognise that this can happen consciously or unconsciously when moving to a new country and it is akin to ‘walking into the unknown’. Relocation
often leads to shifts of imaginaries of what is possible and it alters the sense of belonging, citizenship and the cultural itself (Rizvi, 2011). There are changes to my identity structures, which I believe are ongoing while I transit through the process of negotiation and as I encounter new experiences. There is indeed a lot of effort needed at the individual level and I focus more deeply on such experiences that define how I situate the ‘self’.

As my living structures change with time, the whole concept of ‘space’, ‘time’ and ‘place’ is being challenged. The parameters of social interaction and the achievements of goals is what contribute to sustaining and supporting my role in negotiating my identity as a professional woman. These parameters currently represent ‘who I am’ and how I view my own cultures and those of others. It is important to mention culture shock, which is often difficult to digest, however as transitions happen within the ‘liminal space’ there is ‘cultural hybridisation’. There are shifts into practices, negotiations of value coding, and the reversal and displacement of ideologies with fissures of dominant beliefs. These experiences inform differences “without an assumed and imposed hierarchy”, (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 5-6), however it appears more as an unsettlement of grounded identities and new identity structures in polarities that often suggest a ‘dissonance’. A sense of ‘anomie’ (Atteslander, 2007) often results from ‘alienation’ from that which is familiar, and I refer to Homi Bhabha’s, (1994) work which provides me with insights to reflect on the consequences of migration and loss of recognition. Social exclusion and a loss of social identity might accentuate the inability and possibilities to mingle, to adapt and adopt new cultural and social archetypes. Such situations might enclave migrants in node structures and ‘spaces’; comfort zones from where they are often resistant to move. Such behaviours make ‘l’étranger’ (the stranger) more visible in emphasizing the concept of ‘otherness’ in global cities, while ‘identity structures’ of both migrants and host communities are challenged, and this might have “ubiquitous powers of resonance”(Rosunee, 2012, pp. 34-35) within postmodern societies.

Within “the new global economy of culture there is deterritorialisation of culture and its subsequent reterritorialisation challenges culture’s equation with location and space (Grossberg, 1996, p. 169). The challenges of culture’s equation reorient the politics of representation and location for identity. An articulation of identity goes through processes of making, unmaking and remaking of non-necessary relations within certain contexts. The “questions of the agencies, effectiveness and modalities of articulation remain largely unexamined” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 170) in relation to diaspora, migration and gender. It seems crucial to locate identity within the broader context of a new spatial economy and to underscore that identity is “a privileged site of struggle” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 170). The influences of the global inform new ways of organising and orienting ‘space’ or ‘spaces’ and also power relations in defining identity, in diverse contexts.
Migrants are burdened with a load of dilemmas and experiences which are often unseen or silenced. The culture shock, challenges, fears, struggles and issues migrants face need to be debated more fully. It is crucial to give them a ‘voice’ in expressing their issues for recognition, support and better understanding of their needs and dilemmas. Such initiatives can help in accepting migrants “not as the other” (Rosunee, 2012, pp. 35-36), and instead give them opportunities to integrate, find and build a ‘space’, where they can both reconstruct their identities, and become represented more inclusively.

The pain of dislocation and relocation is apparent as migrants have to articulate their thoughts within new ‘spaces.’ Through the renegotiation process, they assume new ways of defining their identities. The question about ‘space’, spatial relations and how to conceptualise it in relation to migration is scarcely debated. The space of globalisation is as ‘a place of struggle’ and it is framed by the local, global and a transnational context. These frames inform differentiations between the concept of ‘spaces’, ‘places’, the temporal and identity processes. The construction of a new and distinct model of contemporary globalisation frames new forms of migration and the flow of capital (Hall, 1997a). It is important to recognise “new structures of relations between processes of globalisation and the construction of multiple levels of localities” that “both interrupt and amplify such flows” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 173) and offer new ways to accommodate diversity.

Transiting through the ‘liminal space’ might prevent identities from polarising between arbitrary designations as polarities of imperial rhetoric, racial or national characterisation, or of social class and hegemonic orders (Ashcroft et al., 1998). Appadurai, (1990) acknowledges the dilemma of the postmodern or the postcolonial identity as tied to wider global forces, which he defines as scapes – ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes, and finanscapes. As constructs these characterise global mobility and capital, technological advancement, new ideologies and dimensions of global cultural flows. Appadurai’s, 1990) discussions around these different scapes makes reference to transitions from the local to the global, but with less emphasis on issues of displacement, loss of territory and relocation processes. He defines these scapes as building blocks of an imagined or multiple world historically situated by the imaginations of people scattered all around the world. He makes distinctions around the tensions of cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation, and he does not equate globalisation with homogenisation. Instead, Appadurai suggests that there needs to be new theories of thinking in terms of rhizomes and fractals that define space and change, attuned to what Rizvi, (2011) defines as taking heterogeneity as the new norm.

I describe the relational nature of a sense of ‘place’ through shifts of boundaries in defining spatial relations through my relocation and adaptation process in Australia. My boundaries remain abreast with a set of social practices, rituals and traditions
that persist through time, while new ‘spaces’ make socio-spatial connections between home and host country. Within the ‘liminal space’ cultural changes occur, and this place can be defined as “a transcultural space in which there is “a communal self-hood can be elaborated” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 130). This is a region in which there is “a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 130). Such spaces for identity renegotiation are both ‘spaces’ for resistance and change (Hetherington, 2000). Yet the way I describe and understand my identities is not simply a movement from one stage to another, instead it is a “constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 130). Currently, I face the ambivalence and challenges of a “dual sense of belonging” (Vertovec, 2001, p. 10) within an ‘integration’ and ‘acculturation’ process (Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007; Cohen, 2011).

New social processes and interactive relations create new ‘spaces’ and ‘places’, to which I start to attach new meanings. Spatial settings therefore reinforce ideologies about cultural capital and inheritances, while these can also be undermined under circumstances, where they cannot be practiced and situated in new settings. ‘Spaces’, I consider them as more abstract and are produced through “spatial practices” (Buenda & Ares, 2006, p. 38). These have “properties of securing anchor to stabilise identity” (Babacan, 2005, p. 114) and a sense of belonging and consent for social interaction (Castells, 1996). It also relates to objective and subjective realities when assessing ‘space’, ‘place’ and ‘time’.

This line of thought takes me to Martin Heidegger’s, (1971, p. 146) definition of place as traced on notions of dwelling, as he explains: “we attain to dwelling … only by means of building… as the goal… to build is to dwell.” This highlights how our relationship to ‘places’ and therefore to ‘spaces’ reside in where we dwell and how we accept and rediscover the present. Human subjectivity depends on exploring ‘space’, ‘place’ and ‘time’ that is established by our actions and experiences that enable us to celebrate and practice ‘cultures’ within ‘places’ (Babacan, 2005).

Through what I have experienced as ‘appropriation’ (Bhatia, 2012) within new ‘spaces’ and cultures there are social and ‘cultural lags’ (Josephs, 1960) with predominant patterns that persist because of grounded inheritances and cultural identity; while issues of gender, social class, religious, and ethnic differences also play an integral part. An understanding of my current cultural conditions can be defined as ‘ascribed’ to some inherited status, ‘accomplished’ and ‘managed’ by means of one’s own efforts, abilities and ambitions that might justify how reflexively and strategically I fit within. In other terms, this is what I define as the ‘unusual’. I agree that cultural translation through migration experiences, is neither about ‘appropriation’ of inherited cultures nor it is about of host cultures. It is a confrontation of both frames are transformed and reformulated (Bhatia, 2012).
Through my own experiences, I believe it is all about making the unfamiliar familiar in a new community of ‘strangers’ and how to appropriate changes.

**Situating the ‘self’- Hybridity and ambivalence in negotiating my gendered identities**

I focus on three artworks in the ‘Breaking Silences’ series where I take a feminist approach in my art as performative to represent subjective and hybrid stances in defining my gendered identities. These three artworks represent issues, challenges and struggles I faced in situating the ‘self’ and how I negotiated to find more consolidated positions when I moved to Australia. There is a strong link in these paintings between the past, present and that future, that convey memories, nostalgia, imagination, creation, aspirations as well as resistance in exposing the ‘self’. In fact, it takes a great deal of courage and readiness to unwind conventional norms and opinions in referring to unsaid issues. I refer to what Derrida describes as an idea of the “secret that we speak of, but are unable to say... the sharing of what is not shared” (Derrida, 2001, p. 58) and how “absence and differences rather than presence and consensus” (Pearce & Maclure, 2009, p. 250) can be worked through in unfolding unsaid issues. While revising and intercepting the logic of consuming images anonymously, Barbara Kruger proposed ‘shifters’ within linguistics in establishing the ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ “to reveal ways in which the place of the viewer in language is indefinite” (Reckitt & Phelan, 2001, p. 123) while it involves them in a struggle for power and control. I refer to the contrast of how words can only provide an appearance or an apparition of feelings, whereas artworks describe such emotions as exemplarized (Lehrer, 2011).

In using a phenomenological analysis of my artworks I enhance the possibilities of capturing the sifted, unadulterated and unconscious. In ‘Breaking Silences’ I represent from ‘inside’ to ‘outside’ the frames of a patriarchal logic which disguises oppression, suffering and dilemmas. In other words, it unveils part of lived subjectivity. I refer to the other hybrid borders within migration transitions and mark them by metaphors that distinguish between what is visible and invisible, the known and unknown, the acceptable and unacceptable, and the new aspirations that I envision.

It is easy to get entangled in a labyrinth of artistic experience and visual representation and dialects that analyse them; however my approach models my state of being and position, in assuming and fighting the dynamics of power rather than to engage in outright confrontation. For many women, the representation of identity and identification involves the challenge to understand, negotiate, expose and accept their positions. My arguments through such experiences attempt to define such experiences, as a matter of facing situations and accepting who I am, and where I speak from. It is about crossing and deconstructing boundaries, constructing new borders and bridges within gendered roles and identities.
enunciate such issues and positions, women need courage and the capacity for self-governance and resilience to foster integrity, financial independence and other possibilities ahead. Such an approach does not “simply [bring] what is hidden into consciousness” but it also “breaks into consciousness of hidden dimensions of [my] reality through…reflective engagement” Freire, cited in Heaney & Horton (1990, p. 85). As a woman, I underscore migration transitions, dislocation and relocation, patriarchal domination and barriers of transnational spaces, new cultures and language shifts to bring disruptions and challenges in negotiating my gendered identities. Such renegotiations challenge spatial and temporal scales within different sites.

Experiences of displacement bring changes to economic, social and cultural grounds, while there is an adaptation process and rebuilding of connections to new ‘places’ and ‘spaces,’ within a different pace of life. I acknowledge a culture shock within negotiations and in overcoming the barriers of Western culturally dominated norms. Such renegotiations challenge spatial scales within different sites including home, workplace, or public spaces. I take upon myself discourses on gender relations and notions of ‘place’ and spatial relations that inform how I acknowledge the concept of giving voice to unsaid issues.

As I refer to my own experiences of migration transition as a woman, I move to discourses on gender relations, while keeping abreast of the notion and idea of ‘place’ and spatial relations and scales. I reiterate Henrietta Moore’s, (1988, p. 12) analysis and questioning of “what is to be a woman, how cultural understandings of the category of “woman” vary through space and time and those understandings position women in different societies. Moore (1988) discusses two perspectives about gender which is seen “either as a symbolic construction or as a social relationship” (Mc Dowell, 1999, p. 7). There is need to dislodge the binaries of Moore’s perspective when it comes to understanding identity construction and the sense of place as interconnected to migration and to contingencies women face. It is important to introduce new norms of that can identify the complex processes of transitions and new connections to spaces and places. On these grounds, there is a need for new ways of considering how women’s lives and experiences are affected from a global perspective (Lahiri, 2004). Post feminism advocates call for distinctive new sensibilities (Gill, 2007), however such advocacy in relation to neoliberalism, raises some contradictions with feminist ideas and activism. I refer to those sensibilities as they relate to notions of autonomy, choice, and empowerment for women across social spheres as regulated by individualism, and the constraints and challenges within the neoliberal context (Gill, 2007).

I refer to such transitions to be framed by how “relationship between people and their surroundings encompass more than attaching meaning to space”, and how “it involves recognition and cultural elaboration of perceived properties of environments in mutually constituting ways” (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003, p. 14).
As a migrant woman with inherited cultural values and cultural identities, I recognise ambivalences in maintaining these attributes within an adaption and integration process in new ‘spaces’ in Australia, which highlights how my experiences of space, place and identity negotiation underscore hybridity and ambivalence.

**Why I use my art for breaking silences? And how it informs identity through performative stances**

Art is about aesthetics and beauty, but art also “humanises the creator and the audience” (Zinn, 2002, p. 1). From a feminist perspective in underlining the “relational understanding of the self and subjectivity (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007, p. 12), I bring that connectedness through my work.

The ‘Breaking Silences’ series underscore the relevance of the ‘self’ from a dialogical context; to crossing borders of several notions that address the visual representations of thoughts, feelings, emotions, contingencies, confrontation, and reflection on experiences in a way no dialectic can. My identity is reconceptualised as an ‘effect’, as ‘produced’ and ‘generated’ and my art opens possibilities for “agency”, while it determines my identity is neither foreclosed by my positions, nor categorised as “foundational and fixed” (Butler, 1990, p. 147). Identity as ‘effect’ is “neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary” (Butler, 1990, p. 147). Judith Butler, taking upon the feminist discourse, argues that constructing one’s identity as women is not free from entrapments of cultural constructions such as determinism or will, but it is more about affirming possibilities of intervention and contestation, without disavowing cultural location and configuration of gender and signifying practices (Butler, 1990).

There is a struggle for connection across the multiple sites and constituencies through migration, and how I map what is involved and what is at stake in terms of belonging, such as inheritances and the ambivalent process of crafting and re-crafting the ‘self’. The life of a migrant woman is about aspirations, however it is affected by memories not only as attempts to restrain or contain any linearity or borders within particular sites, but inadvertently how this deploys ‘selves’ and experiences in play. “The essence of the Ethics is that there is a constant struggle between our desire to grasp “being”, reality as it is, and keep faith with ourselves as responsible self-creators ” (Armour, 2009, p. 119). However within ‘Breaking Silences’ I address issues that cover experiences as events, and envision depth of feelings and emotions to bring forward representations of complex and unsaid issues. I deal with the dilemmas of women who are marginalised in society, in order to bring out in the open different understanding of their life experiences and dilemmas as silenced people. These artworks are representation of conscious experience (Lehrer, 2011), and although I coin my approach as being not fully functional, I use it as a more procedural and performative way to reflect on and
change views and opinions on such issues (Young, 2012). I use my art and reflections to demonstrate the power of art to communicate (Zinn, 2002), with a “potential to transcend social constructions and archetypes that predominantly touch the essentially human” (Figueira McDonough & Sarri, 2002, p. 20).

MOVING BEYOND CRITIQUES

Identity crisis - Is about change, liminality or hybridity?

Shifting from what I define as a personal view of identity, I understand how I was challenged to construct and renegotiate my gendered identities within challenges of social conditions. The changes within the social and economic climate; new technologies; current trends of global mobility and migration transitions; ethnic diversity and the acceptance of the other within global cities impacts on processes of identification and representation. Giddens, (1991) suggests that “identities become more uncertain and more diverse in a rapidly changing globalised culture” (Woodward, 2004, p. 24). Such issues underline changes, uncertainties, insecurities and subjectivities with increasing diversity, social changes and opportunities for new identities, and leads to a crisis in relation to who we are? How to view this crisis and understand individuals in renegotiation and reconstruction of their identities especially for those undergoing migration transitions becomes vital. It is important to give “voice, representation and respect” (Weedon, 2004, p. 21) to migrants in a host city; to challenge hegemonic constructions that enforce racism, and to support drives to accept differences within increasingly diversity societies.

‘Identity’ is often discussed at times “when it is in crisis” (Mercer, 1990, p. 43) and I suggest “the sense of self is achieved through identity crisis” (Xu, 2009, p. 301). I faced and questioned aspects of my identity when responding in times of crisis and challenge. Identity has been complexly defined as binary oppositions “dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprises” (Said, 1994, p. xxviii), yet Edward Said argues that new alignments happening across borders, countries, and such perspectives are coming into view, challenging and provoking the static notion of identity. Such entanglements over the concept of identity ideologically refer to interests and agendas of various groups, such as minority groups who have more interest in advocating and reflecting their particular identities (Said, 1994).

New migrants and refugees are vulnerable to an identity crisis as they are often victimised and exploited for cheap labour. The choices migrants or refugees have is often directly related to survival and their living conditions stigmatises them more than their colour, race or ethnicities in host communities. These are groups of people that are often excluded and they live at the edge of poverty although they really strive to work hard for odd hours and less pay to increase chances of employment. Such experiences are real and ongoing and can hardly be contested in global cities. Others assess migrants on the basis of who they are, what they
have, and what they can do. Such traits interact to sort and class identities and status is dominant. It takes much longer for migrants to claim and validate an image within a liminal space. Bourdieu’s, (1984) concept of lifestyle and consumption cleavages tells us about cultural capital that expresses social divisions and differences. Inequalities in society emerge through the “income parade”, where many people including new migrants live below the average income and this brings complexities and hierarchical archetypes, with “cross-cutting identities” (Woodward, 2004, p. 108). As a result of my own experiences I stipulate that there is indeed social polarisation and social exclusion where inequality widens, and it situates income and cultural capital as important sources of identity and crisis.

Frederic Jameson “attributes the postmodernist shift as a crisis in our experience of space and time, a crisis in which spatial categories come to dominate those of time” and within such mutations it is difficult to keep pace (Harvey, 1990b, p. 210). It is imperative to shift from a Marxist theory of historical materialism to define a new conception of space akin to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling and being, which is based on situatedness. Issues about migration, crossing of borders, boundaries, place and non-place is discussed both through literal and metaphorical dimensions (Mc Dowell, 1999). Transformations happening on a global scale show disruptions to the concept of place and the way people are linked to places. Global mobility and its consequences have implications for social relations and connections that tie places together. Such flows and movements have changed relationships between individual and group identity, their sense of everyday living, belonging, territory and place. There are an ever increasing number of people who are away from their country of birth and are now settled elsewhere. The ‘other’ place often aligns to a sense of being ‘displaced’ and ‘placeless’, leaving them “in limbo of not belonging” (Mc Dowell, 1999, p. 2) to a nation, a territorial base, a class or a region. The increasing scale of global interconnections and movement purport to suggest a decline in the significance of the ‘local’ (Mc Dowell, 1999). Social interaction seems to be restrictive within geographical areas and control over of the ‘local’ has implications on the sense of local attachment and belonging to a place, with all its specificities and cultural norms. The consequence is that the everyday life of many people takes place within a restricted locale. The processes of globalisation reflect on the social, economic, and cultural conditions, and predominantly in the conceptualisation of spaces, places and time. The advents of technology are changing ‘spatial practices’ and shrinking the element of scale, space, place and time and how they interact, communicate, connect and exchange information. The spatial turn (Warf & Arias, 2009) puts emphasis on how geography matters not to specify the importance of space and the cultural turn, but to critically understand where and why things happen and how it is important.
Is my identity performative or transitive through what I experience and express?

I refer to Stuart Hall, (2000) who argues that identity as a concept is paradoxical, next to significances and meanings. The term has been critically deconstructed through various notions signifying it as integral, originating or unified. My subjective thinking about my artworks and narratives helps to signify and integrate unifying meanings about my identities. Such a deconstructive approach as described by Stuart Hall, (2000, pp. 15-16) who brings “key concepts” about identities which seems to be under sense ‘under erasure.’ I refer to a journey within different sites to define my identity as performative or transitive which Derrida, (1978) terms as ‘thinking at the limit, as thinking at the interval, a sort of double writing.’ The interpretation of my artworks needed an expansion from a descriptive paradigm to a more dialectic one, as I negotiated through the diverse axes that influences who I am. I put emphasis on cultures, identities, cultural inheritances and linguistic capitals, historicity and inheritances that demonstrate nostalgia and memories, and other life experiences and migration. I suggest there are ambivalences in negotiating ‘in-between’ identities when transiting through different sites. Such negotiations are characterised often through the choices one faces and the decisions one makes. I further describe such uncertainties and subjectivities in the next section.

Identity processes - Subjectivities and Uncertainties

‘Who I am’? This is an important question that informs subjectivities and uncertainties in defining my identities. The moments of uncertainties and struggles I experience bridge subjectivity about identity processes making it complex. Identity processes are different from personality traits (Woodward, 2004). The way I understand my identities contributes as input in interacting and engaging within the cultural inheritances and how I define much of ‘who I am’. The “symbols and representations” contribute in making a difference to how [I] present [myself] to others and in “visualizing or imagining who [I am]” (Woodward, 2004, p. 39).

Societal structures provide opportunities for engagement, while identification shapes identities and gives agency; however I admit that most often we are not aware that this is happening. “Identities are formed through interaction between people” (Woodward, 2004, p. 1) and “people take up different identities” which involves different processes as individuals position themselves and are positioned in society, with different ideologies and needs. It depends primarily on individual situations and how we take up identities as products of society and how we establish the relational with others that connects us as individuals to the world. The way I view myself and how others view and recognise me involves the personal, the subjective and the peripherals. I explain how the “personal dimension” contributes to the “identity equation” as engagement, input and
control which one exerts to define ‘who we are’ (Woodward, 2004, p. 1). The ways individuals socialise and how they internalise “social structural norms and values” (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 7) depends on personal abilities and how to build up a social construction of reality, an ‘objectivation’ as termed by Berger & Luckmann, (1966). Woodward, (2004) describes identity as framed by social structures and influences within the global. I underscore social structures, the environment I live in, and work in, as having major influences on my identities which currently contributes to forming agency and a sense of acceptance and belonging.

Gender, class and cultures are important social constructs that assist identity structures. The interrelatedness of the personal (me as a woman) and the social informs other complexities and subjectivities. It is not necessarily a smooth fusion, as in my experiences it suggests tensions and challenges in between structures and agencies. Côté & Levine, (2002, p. 9) claim that “identity” is “a function of both the external (social) and internal (agentic) factors” which define the complexities of self-definition. In my experience, it establishes connections often as choices, control and constraints of what and how one aspires to be next to social pressures and opportunities in play. While, I believe that “material, social, and physical constraints” have an impact on identity positions, it also depends on references and to the perceptions of others as they view us. Mead, (1950) refers to identities being produced in the social context through “symbolizing,” by “producing images and visualising ourselves” (Woodward, 2004), and giving agency to a repertoire of symbols and reference to cultures. The use of a particular language, practice of a religion, rituals and traditions, use of objects and artefacts is illustrative of symbols of identity and belonging. It depends on how far we are able to practice them. The way we dress and present ourselves to others sets up our image (Williamson, 1986) and sometimes determines much about our identity as ‘agentic’ (Côté & Levine, 2002).

Identification processes are influenced by current social, economic and technological changes and global mobility impacts our lives and habits and environment (Harper, 2006). The use of social networking can relate to identity crisis issues, as one looks for recognition, interaction, building and disposing of relationships at the click of a mouse. However, social networking is a useful means to keep connected to family, friends and the world. As changes happen and transform social structures it challenges people’s abilities to be open to opportunities and to adopt new or hybrid identities. Within changing societies, the idea of ‘race’ and ethnic differences and the way people construct their identities bring scepticism, uncertainties and insecurities. Migrants and minorities renegotiate their identities by how they understand themselves and how they are viewed by others. Stuart Hall recalls his own experience of identity shifts, which he describes as not static but hybrid and ambivalent within changing contexts
Identity is ambivalent and hybrid within reconstruction, negotiation and renewal processes and it informs fluidity in how it creates uncertainties.

I situate how identity is about the ‘ontic’, but also how it is deliberately linked to social structures and constructs and how others view and assess us, and often we are not aware of this happening. The decisions and choices we make have an impact on identity positions and the relational in society that gives agency. Identity constitutes the way in which we practice religion, cultural beliefs and belongings. Identity becomes norm based when one is being assessed by people, surroundings and against the criteria of race, gender, religion, social class and position.

An analytical perspective – ‘the self as dynamic and in interaction’ – My identity as reconstructed

My discussion about the relationship between social reality and identity processes defines identification as hybrid, enigmatic and paradoxical and how it represents dualism and subjectivities. I also refer to Bourdieu’s work and how that refers to social relations and definitions of culture from an analytical perspective. It refers to embodiment as enduring and as constructed, where I make reference to the ‘self as dynamic and in interaction’ as conceptualised by Mead, (1950). In this view, I look at culture in the way it functions, influences and weaves in experiences in regards to human interaction with the environment and the social. I make reference to how culture is considered as embodied – as accommodated through beliefs, traditions, religious and cultural practices, and understood as dynamic, negotiated and constructed when facing challenges. I explore how I value and participate in cultures from my childhood up until I left my home country and what are the criteria that influenced my participation in locating cultures as embodied. As my journey through different sites moves on migration experiences and transitions, I respond to how I navigate to social changes and how I consider a viewing of my cultures and gendered identity as ‘agented’ while it is metaphorically tagged as constructed and negotiated.

Schutz, (1970) refers to individual experiences, the social world and Goffman’s, (1968) theories of the ‘self in interaction’ as scaffolded by social structures, and that how one is positioned in it structures relationships. However, I believe this is an out-dated approach to defining the ‘self’ within modern discourses. I bring light to “links between experiences and structures” and I consider the need for “positionality and processes of influence” (Lynam, Browne, Reimer Kirkham, & Anderson, 2007, p. 26) that aligns to feminist scholars thinking about how “processes of power operate.” Rosi Braidotti, (2006; 2011) discusses gender differences, nomadic subjectivity and how women struggle for agency, autonomy within ruthless power relations in neo-liberal context. I link this to my boundaries of cultures encompassing my own experiences, of transiting through the affect and
my position, influences, and changes in the process of adaptation and acculturation.

**Shouting across discourses- Making the unfamiliar familiar**

Derrida, (1992) builds a place for representation, where its flexibility resides on the basis of translation, as a ‘sending’ process, a ‘renvois’, and how is this a translation from one state to another, and one form to another, which finally is transformative in character. Yet Deleuze, (1990) has a different critique and way of thinking about representation and the work of art. Deleuze & Guattari, (1987, p. 21) theorise art and representation as an “organic representation” that takes form and structure like a tree. Here they contrast an ‘arboresque’ structure within an organic representation next to a rhizome. The rhizome, unlike trees or their roots, breaks off and continues to bud at any point, its proliferation is non-restrictive and it multiplies within a number of dimensions and in this way “a rhizomatic thinking is of a different order from representational thinking” (Bolt, 2004, p. 39). In that wave, Deleuze suspects that practice involves movement and movement involves setting things in process; more precisely a process of becoming, which provides the key to break the fixity of representation. In this research I discuss how representations break that fixity.

The work of art emerges through “lived, embodied experience, which is the source for art appreciation and artistic creation” (Heidegger, 1977b, p. 204). The ‘ontic’ is concerned with the lived, culturally mediated experience (Bolt, 2004, p. 88). My experiences as an artist/teacher/researcher and my artworks synchronise to build up “the ontic realm of be-ings” (Heidegger, 1977b). My interpretation is linked to an allegory, where my artworks both have literal and symbolic meanings and metaphorical and abstract representations. Coded meanings are embedded in my works, where the viewers are given hooks for them to access the secondary meanings they entail (Bolt, 2004). As a socially agreed code, “ allegory allows social meanings to be transmitted through an artwork” (Bolt, 2004, p. 93). The sharing of symbolic codes and signs brings meanings with the reader/viewer and it supports “the assertion that the essence of art lies in its socially constituted meanings” (Bolt, 2004, p. 93).

**Conclusion**

This Chapter outlined my reflection on my artworks through an iterative reflection. I highlighted the influences of postcolonial history, diasporic and cultural inheritances in setting cultural markers. A sense of nostalgia for the patria, childhood memories and life experiences are issues that forge identity structures. The struggles and challenges through migration experiences happen in a ‘liminal space’ where there are negotiations about identity as well as uncertainties and subjectivities. There are many issues involved in building a space and sense of
belonging. Such issues, if uncovered, bring a better understanding of struggles, challenges, fears, and inhibitions migrants face. I use my personal experiences to discuss identity structures and cultural markers, while I underscore how my experience challenges ‘the self’ in hyphenating, hybridity, subjectivities and a dissonance with a need to stretch for the beyond.
CONCLUSIONS

I draw my conclusions from summarising salient ideas raised in the course of the thesis. These are key ideas that helped bridge my understanding of my gendered identities. The analysis of my representations of cultural shifts and migration transitions bring interrogations of such issues. I conclude my reflection on how life experiences, nostalgia and memories frame identity, and how I identify the ‘migrant subject’ within the ‘liminal space’ and the processes of identification in a global context and how such concepts make the definition of identity as more and unsettling.

I look through my approach, method and reflection as a negotiation within ‘borderlands and spaces’ and how my artistic expression in representing personal stories forges affective links. I suggest further possibilities to research on artistic expression, the visual and the reading of visual semiotics in images as a powerful means to communicate significance and agency about performativity, experiences which extend meanings beyond what words can do.

I summarise by considering art as a method for representation and consider my approach in negotiating other modes towards representation and reflection through art that promotes intercultural understanding. I look through the significance of the study and on how breaking the rules on what is art enables me to make connections and gives significance to art as the ‘tie that binds’. A last sketch entitled ‘In and Out’ concludes my reflection on hybridity and ambivalence in negotiating my gendered identities.

REFLECTION ABOUT IDENTITY

From the different perspectives I see culture as “slippery” and even a “chaotic concept” (Smith, 2000, p. 4). In investigating the meanings of culture I have taken up a mass of interpretations and symbolic associations, yet through this research, I extend my understanding of the concept from wider socio-cultural perspectives as it links to histories, inheritances from diaspora, post-colonial influences and life experiences from home country and migration transitions. The theoretical frameworks I look through in my literature review have underpinned the implications of cultural agency in understanding culture and identity structures and processes from such perspectives.

In an attempt to define whose culture, where and why, I focus on how cultures and identities can be represented through artistic expression. The ‘ontological,’ is related to the multiples ‘selves’ of an individual. In reference to self-reflexive perspectives, I refer to my cultural and historical background, ethnicity, and life experiences and culturally mediated experiences through migration that provides evidence about how I negotiate my gendered identities. The intention has been to
investigate, represent, and analyse this manifestation as represented through both narratives and an artistic framework.

**Life experiences, nostalgia and memories in framing identification processes**

I make reference to postcolonial feminist ideologies, issues and notions that affect women and their roles and gendered identities within the contemporary. Here, I first draw upon Bourdieu’s work and the postcolonial feminist theories that suggest tensions in the conceptualisation of culture, which brings new insights in the way I make meaning of my arguments (Anderson et al., 2007). Bourdieu’s brings forward his perspective and postcolonial feminist critiques highlight “the tension between the view of culture as embodied and enduring and culture as constructed and dynamic” (Lynam et al., 2007, p. 23). I use this statement to open a discussion on the discursive space that reframes and strengthens theoretical perspectives on such issues. I refer to postcolonial literature that challenges the concept of culture as static belief systems and as transferred through generations. The conceptualisation of culture is constructed based on historical contexts, social, cultural, economic and political grounds (Anderson et al., 2007). Franz Fanon, (1986), Staurt Hall, (1986) and Edward Said, (1978) among others frame an understanding of the concept of culture as constructed. The way I find my cultures as constructed and rooted upon inheritances and lived experiences inform my cultural capital. Bourdieu’s term the significance and definition of capital with other concepts such as ‘field’ and ‘habitus’.

I elaborate on notions of capital, where I explain capital as entity, fixed and deterministic, although I argue that day-to-day interactions and social practices enhance and make visible capital through traditions I follow and the value I assign to them. In engaging with the metaphors of Bourdieu, ‘capital’ can be assigned a value that is arbitrary (Robbins, 2000) but it cannot be taken as a commodity and likewise a “field” is never neutral territory” (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 183). In other terms, Bourdieu’s mediated discourse suggest that ‘capital’, ‘field’ and ‘habitus’ as concepts importantly interpret social life and in relation to postcolonial feminist theories, I make connections to how the subaltern and gendered voices are related to everyday life experiences and the social.

**Identifying the ‘migrant subject’ within the ‘liminal space’**

I look through my own migration transitions and experiences in identifying the ‘migrant subject’ within the ‘liminal space’. Global migration indicates estrangements and predicaments generated through it (Papastergiadis, 2000) and that “migration is a central force in the constitution of modernity”, however so far there is not enough focus given to migrants’ ‘experiences that underlines” metaphors of [their] journey”(Papastergiadis, 2000, pp. 10-11). The “effects of globalisation, diversity...increasing multicultural societies,” and the nature and shifts within the processes of identification and representation of cultures are massive
Shaules, 2007, pp. 24-25). I suggest that notions of how cultural history, inheritances of linguistic and cultural capital, belonging to a race, ethnicity, nationality, community and gender issues play a part in migrancy experiences, yet I believe these traits are still vague and fragmented. Such issues need further attention in current global movements within the postmodern. I refer to Edward Said’s life conditions that inform struggles of dislocation, while “the text of his identity weaves in all his writing and it gives voice” to his experiences and concerns of worldliness (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999, p. 5). On those terms, migrants need to voice their dilemmas, challenges and experiences to improve intercultural understanding and cultural integration.

Identity, Processes of Identification and Representation in a Changing Global Context

Identification importantly situates an individual as an authentic ‘self’, but it also builds up a sense of agency as one resides in society. Lawler describes how “there are various forms of identity with which people identify” (Lawler, 2008, p. 2). For instance, as a ‘woman’, I belong to a gender category. Other features such as languages, food, dress code, colours, religion, cultural practices and beliefs define identification, however all these traits also differentiate us from others. “The world is made up of numerous identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically” (Said, 1991, pp. 4-18), often within complexities. Gilroy stipulates that identity “matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life” (Gilroy, 1997, p. 301). Definitions about identity take us to different dimensions and meanings, where it is transient and it “undergoes development and evolution” (Austin, 2005, p. 1). It suggests contingencies in the processes of identification and representation with the spatial turn and global pressures (Soja, 2009). The radical thinking about the relationship between space and time was initiated by Lefebvre and Foucault; and cultural theorists and postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai, who extended critical spatial thinking to other strands and fields (Soja, 2009). The spatial turn is “an attempt to develop a more creative and critically effective balancing of the spatial/geographical and the temporal/historical imaginations” (Soja, 2009, pp. 12-25). Likewise, the cultural turn addresses cultural, socio-economic and geo-political dimensions of the postmodern, where Jameson (1998, pp. 6-20) suggests that “the individualist subject is ‘dead’”, and the consumer society drives the individual away from its past and history, and makes people adapt and live in a perpetual present.

Do such concepts make the definition of identity more complex and unsettling?

Identity as a term relates to multiple concepts and notions beginning with race, ethnicity, religion, cultural capital in terms of practices, beliefs, affiliations and attitudes, social positioning, hegemony; the influences of technology, media, a consumer society and other social interaction. Such traits stretch to the current
global economic crisis, which increases uncertainties and insecurities that tend to inflate migration moves and asylum seeking towards safer and more prosperous places. The challenging theoretical concept and coherence about ‘race’ takes new heights, as its meaning is being utterly transformed. The transcendence of the term comes with a replacement of its category by other more objectives terms such as ethnicity, nationality or class.

The meaning of ‘identity’ changes again when in ‘crisis’, and becomes linked to “renegotiation”, and “re-formation,” (Bauman, 2011, p. 431) with an increase in human mobility. There is need to understand the twin processes of globalisation and global mobility so as to understand the pathways, options, mindset and contingencies of people on the move. The consequences and effects of social saturation through migration and displacements, and other cross-cultural transitions have implications for identity structures. Such arguments follow the complexities around ‘identity,’ where new terms such as ‘transnationalism’ and transnational identities emerge. This redirects rethinking about the relevance and subjectivities involved in considering cultural identity, processes of migration, dislocation and relocation. “Globalisation, national identity and social capital are three major concepts” (Atteslander, 2007, p. 513) currently dominating the postmodern and living in a world intricately entangled to global pressures. From my own experiences these concepts make processes of identification and representation complex and more than ever as something which matters. I construct and renegotiate my identities as framed on my cultural inheritances and capital, lived experiences, and migration transitions. This process involves ‘subjectivities’, as I transit through an integration process within new ‘spaces’ and ‘cultures.’

**REFLECTION ON ART AS METHOD AND REPRESENTATION**

**Art as method and representation**

In Orientalism Said, (1978) articulates how culture becomes a productive site, where aesthetic representation found as texts, films, artefacts provides an awareness of the “exotic” through the economic, social, historical, anthropological and philosophical stances of a complex system of Western domination and cultural hegemony (Behdad, 1993, p. 43). However, this form of representation has also informed policy issues and empowered multicultural perspectives within the school curricula in the United States, and also in Australia, where there have been efforts to shift from the Eurocentric paradigm to recognise the socio-cultural diversity of a growing population for a better educational democracy. The representation of culture not only opens new spaces for recognition of migrants and minority groups and their imperatives, it also brings meritocratic and democratic openings of institutional ‘spaces’ within them.
The celebration of culture and identity through artistic expression and representation by theoetricians and postcolonial artists has been demonstrated through documentaries and films (Trinh, 1991; 1999); (Fusco, 1991) as a platform to exhibit a hybridizing phenomenon, which has been salutary, although it does not sufficiently portray the effects of global mobility and the economic and cultural disenfranchisement of many migrants and their imperatives (Behdad, 1993, p. 44). These representations highlight post-colonial narratives, the discourses of power relations, and the free-floating metaphors of mobility and hybrid structures through their expressions.

Bhabha, (1999) discusses with Trinh Minh-ha in a conversation about “Surname Viet” (Trinh, 1989) a film that has hybrid perspectives and innovatively mingles fiction and real in interviewing Vietnamese women. It stretches borders of censorship between film and documentary, where finally, the interviews are re-enactments of immigrant actors from the United States. Although it purports to question again the relations of representation, this film successfully exposes issues of plural identity, themes of social disorientation and dislocation and exile after war, and as a film it provides a means of translating women’s personal stories, their transitions, and struggles through generations. My aim has been to go deeper in understanding this form of representation and hybridity. Yet, such an example of representation has a connection to my work, although my approach is different as it focuses on art as a process, production, representation, and interpretation directed towards a reflexive analysis on social and cultural conditions that links to culture and identity as hybrid perspectives. My approach can be compared to an ‘ethno-mimesis’ (Adorno, 1997; Benjamin, 1992) in suggesting ‘reflexivity’ (Pink, 2001); a method of exploration of subjectivity, individual experiences, and negotiation which contributes in understanding production of cultures and its representation as related to cultural identity, Inheritances and agency.

I situate art as a ‘generative process’. Artistic inquiry as supported by Heidegger, (1977b) has a propensity to frame what cannot be known and seen. Art can be judged by all people who can see art - Giorgio Vasari (Kliemann, 1996), whereas the representational artist is challenged in inventing ways to depict the world that reflects reality (Denis Diderot; Adhémar & Seznec, 1957-67). The audience as critic has the “challenge to capture the artist’s depiction from one step further removed than the artist’s” (Barrett, 2011, p. 16), as words are often not enough to express feelings and experiences. Art is not only linked to powerful emotions of what the artist wants to convey, it extends to other dimensions that sometimes travel from the rational to the irrational in uncovering a motive and then confronting it as it creates a ‘space’ and brings identification or representation. Art is more than an engagement in working, playing and experimenting with media and it involves
digging deep into the emotions and perceptions behind what is output expressed on a canvas.

As a ‘generative process’, I underscore my artistic expression to translate historical, cultural, and linguistic capital, values and beliefs that override formality and aesthetics of art making, expression and representation to unveil deeper reflexive significance and meanings. Art making is about choices and combinations, where there are no rules and my instincts dismantle and invest in my ideas, often through risk taking and during experimental processes. Narratives of the ‘self’ can translate artistic representations and visual narratives to communicate meanings and give significance to embodied, generative and transitive experiences. The next section puts emphasis on how art and my research can make connections and bring an original contribution to academia, and further inform and extend boundaries in considering research, teaching and representation through Art Education.

**Art and the power of representation**

“Art is a representational practice and its products are representations” (Bolt, 2004, p. 11) and the question of representation is central to any debate about art making and interpretation. Representation is defined as enigmatic, however it concerns the notion of representationalism that dominates our perception and thinking in fixing and mastering the world. Through modern and postmodern art history and criticism there is a collective hysteria that “pictures do not speak and do not mean anything aside from their trappings of legible signs” (Elkins, 1999, p. 16). However, if pictures are reservoirs of ambiguous meanings they give indefinite interpretations through the use of metaphors and illusions. In that sense, artworks transcend the adequate explanations of narratives and symbolic meanings that extend to other meanings as a ‘renvoi’ as described by Jacques Derrida, (1987). Following such principles, artworks evoke emotions through the colours, tones and lines without the need for words. Images dominate the world and I agree that “perceptualism often renders art banal” (Bryson et al., 1991, p. 3), “as mere nothing” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 76). The rhetoric behind the power of images is what needs to be understood and how they work. In this sense I agree with the notion “pictures do what pictures want” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 34). As critics we “may want pictures to be stronger than they actually are in order to give ourselves a sense of power in opposing, exposing or praising them” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 34).

Besides the diversity of theoretical ambitions about iconologies, methodologies and visual culture about art and representation by Marshall Mc Luhan, Guy Debord, and Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudillard, I summarise my argument around the role and power of the visual. Artworks are forceful instruments, besides controversies that suggest the irreconcilability of the semiotic view of representation described by (Bryson et al., 1991). Such a view is in contrast to the traditional Marxist theory
which does not acknowledge the role of power in visual representation, as the structure in which paintings belong reflect changes at economic levels in society. Power through such Marxist theory is defined and located through agencies such as capital and hegemonic structures rather than discourses, which I contest. Within the perceptualist and phenomenological accounts on representation, I find the role of the power of the visual through my paintings is not lost in the swirls of such superstructures and social constructs, instead it stands out.

Within such paradigms, I locate Althusser’s principles that devoid representation from the ideology of social class or its constituents, and reiterates visual representation from a semiotic view”, and it thus brings the notions of power as Bryson describes “as an integral part of the semiotic structure of the visual arts” (Bryson et al., 1991, p. "4) into play. I focus on visual sign systems that can both define the historical, cultural horizons and the ways these operate through my artworks as representations of my cultures and identities. I highlight the role and power of representation through artistic expression which I describe as a distinction between “original meaning” and “subsequent interpretations” that dissolve and thus leave it to the domains of pragmatism. On the same line of thought, what the audience see and interpret in my artworks determine the power of visuality, decoding, deconstruction and interpretation of visual signs and metaphors involved. I suggest that my inquiry calls attention to my role as an artist and also as a researcher in representing and analysing cultural shifts and my gendered identities.

Reflecting on my research approach and method in using art

Artistically grounded research is intended to promote further understanding as it is presented through canonical images and storied narratives. In my approach, I provide such frames to help ensure a clearer focus (Barone & Eisner, 2006), where the viewer and the reader can understand my creativity. I see my artistic interpretations as enabling the building of deeper appreciation that touches both the rational and irrational spheres, through active and subjective reflections. The “view of truth is a view that requires some form of critical acceptance” (Barone & Eisner, 2006, p. 87). I tend to borrow ideologies as described by Philippe Petit, (2008), Patrick Roger, Anish Kapoor and other ‘philosophical framework’s (Papastergiadis, 2005) that are traced upon a ‘reconstructivist model’ in using art, medium and expression. These frameworks assisted in making sense of my experience and ‘reality’ through my narratives and artistic representations which translate shared meanings. My visual representations present both figurative and more complex representations of meta-narratives and metaphors. They access new dimensions of understanding and representation about my cultures and identities.
Art is a particularly complex phenomenon as it produces a number of interesting responses and comments (Melcher & Bacci, 2008) as concepts and themes which induces either aesthetic appreciation or stimulates emotions and other perceptive reactions. I translate my narratives and metaphors with the intention of targeting the “exquisite sensitivity to visual information,” (Melcher & Bacci, 2008, p. 358). These access and allow dialogue, appreciation of artistry and aesthetics in representing cultures and identities trailed upon complex and transformative stances. In taking a reflexive approach (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009), I recognise the role of ‘self’ as being the researcher and subject and in producing and analysing my data. My role as artist / researcher /teacher and my artworks bridge a “sense of ownership and personal purpose” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 81) as aligned to my research title.

I summarise my approach in using an artistic expression to represent my identities. With the formula “A is A”, abstract identity alone appears, and I set few questions: “Does it get that far? or “Does the principle of identity really say anything about the nature of identity?” (Heidegger, 1969, pp. 25-26). These questions are part of an extended reflection that departs from my initial inquiry. Heidegger (1969) informed this investigating of my identities and led me to break silences on some unsaid issues.

I define my journey through different sites as thus:

In the hustle bustle and noisy realms of a lifetime, one encounters human relationships, experiences, events, memories, nostalgias, histories, inheritances and ties. In signifying what one has gained and lost in this journey of existence, at a point in time one reaches at ‘crossroads’ and through such ambiguities emerge the need for reflection and predicaments to cite certain ‘truths’. Then words materialize as narratives, poems or visual representations. My attempt through this inquiry has not been to deliberate an auto-biographic content of my life stories. The focus has been more focussed on ‘me the researcher’ as ‘subject’, where I used my art as a means of expression to represent how cultures and identities are transient through life; what I define as cultural inheritance and what I experienced in different stages and encounters in life.

“Postructuralist’s and deconstructionist writers such as Barthes, (1977), Derrida, (1978, 1981) and Foucault, (1970) effectively obliterated the modernist conception of the author, altering how we understand the connections among author, text and readers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 202). However, “the influence of Bakhtin, (1981)” creates “an interpretative space” to extend and promote various perspectives on “unsettled meanings, plural voices, local and illegitimate knowledge that transgress against the claims” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 202) of feminist theories and critical discourses. Such approaches bring new scope to expose marginalised discourses and contingencies around notions of race, class,
culture and identity that are interwoven with personal life experiences. It opens avenues to make art as performative and in using affective links.

**Negotiating within “borderlands and spaces”- towards my approach, method and reflection**

My research approach explored new territories of improvising and innovating with visual research methods. It merged the personal, professional, social and cultural perspectives that depart onto “inter subjectivity” and “intra-subjectivity” as situated in and through a dialogue (Pinar, 2004a, p. 9). A/r/tography allowed for displacement of meaning and “slippages” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 898), with ‘openings’ or ‘spaces’ which allowed for “knowing, doing and making [to] merge” and “disperse.” The concept of researching, teaching, and art-making as “interweaving and intra-weaving of concepts” (Irwin, 2004, p. 28) is “the third space”, “the opening” – “the borderlands” for reformation and transformation. My approach is an engagement within “the borderlands” (Pinar, 2004a, p. 10), (Irwin, 2004) and it allows my creative engagement with the ‘self’ to unfold and to be re-imagined.

I underline what Pinar, (2004a, p. 10) says about a/r/tography and how I used it as an approach in building and bringing my own contribution to visual research methods.

a/r/tography is a form of representation that privileges both text and image as they meet within moments of métissage and most of all a/r/tography is about each of us living a life of deep meaning through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known and imagine what we hope to achieve (p.10).

Pinar’s, (2004a) definition assisted me to define, situate, and understand both dialectically and visually ‘who I am’. In a/r/t, there are far more possibilities and opportunities to create “a space or spaces” to express ‘who I am’ (Bresler, 2008, p. 267). I focused on the space between myself, my practice and my experiences in and through a/r/t (Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001). This approach narrowed my investigation through self-inquiry and reflection through discovery, creativity, conceptual and analytical thinking, while responding to my research questions and objectives. It intensified my engagement and contribution in locating ‘the self’ within a/r/t. Bresler, (2008, p. 269) explains that “parallelism does not imply equivalence,” instead, I suggest that my approach has been an alternative to reflection and discussion alone. The approach I adopted in this enquiry enabled me to demonstrate how I weaved in my experiences, perspectives, and my curiosity and wonders in the process of creating art.
I unfold my historical, social, cultural, and diasporic links and how they link to my lived life experiences and current perspectives as a new migrant in Australia. My engagement in art is a ‘generative process’ and a reflexive analysis of my representations gives meaning to them. My intention is not merely to create self-expression that displays “certainty and ambiguity” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29), but instead, I am more concerned about highlighting the search for response that links to “the inner struggles” and that defines my standpoint. I refer to my reflection as being “iterative” (Leavy, 2009, p. 10) as it involves hyphenating, bridging, slashing, and creating an understanding of the “thirdness,” and “the space or spaces” that are extended from and through artistic expression in addressing deeper “exploration, translation, and understanding” (Irwin, 2004, p. 30) of my perspectives.

Irwin, (2004, p. 29) mentions Ted Aoki’s, (2005) definition of “thirdness embedded” within artist/researcher/teacher and I argue that this approach unfolds through the art-making process, that enables the unleashing of “the metaphoric and metonymic properties” within my artworks and my roles in a/r/t. Such an approach sharpens my insights concerning the understanding, appreciation, and reflection about art making and expression. The approach I choose has also broadened my visioning of art through analytical frameworks that address the formal, personal, cultural, and contemporary stances, and has empowered my professional experiences. A/r/tography is an appropriate method that extends to modes of expression and reflexivity using visual methods and a phenomenological approach towards interpretation and analysis of my narratives and artworks.

“Metaphors, the essence of which is the conceptualisation of one thing in terms of another, have always played an extensive role in the dialogues surrounding discussions of identity (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 10).” I used metaphors both through texts and the visual to link “otherwise disparate and seemingly unrelated parts of reality” (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 14). Metaphors set a dialogue between my artworks and the visual semiotics, the messages and meanings in them. Such dialogues send messages of identification as viewers and I interact with the artworks. Such an experience extends my reflection about identity as woven through an academic metaphor for self-in-context, where I refer to social, historical and cultural context, and my lived life experiences. The use of metaphors suggested another dimension of my experience and mindset and provided a bridging dialogue about my interpretation, creativity and expressivity. ‘The ‘metaverse part’ empowered my artistic experience to take a new ‘survol’ to explore and reflect. This highlighted aspects of the “self that exists outside the social” (Pinar, 1984, p. 76). I go further to cultural and historical underpinnings in viewing the transition of migration and relocation as a more isomorphic or even spiritual expression of the ‘self’ and of ‘my reality’. Such reflections broadened my understanding about making meaning through artistic expression about identity as differentiated and empowered through
the ontic. It also suggests how cultural identity undergoes transitions, and negotiations that develop new frames of references and expressivity concerning the current influences of globalisation.

**Negotiating other modes towards representation and reflection through art**

I refer to other modes of representation that have access to other levels of reflection about my artworks and how I represent my cultures and gendered identities. I make reference to current feminist activism, post-humanist critics (Hansen, 2000) and advocates of affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) who demand an intersection of theories in unleashing critical concepts that legitimate ‘positionality,’ (Villaverde, 2007) the ‘self’; in order to create agency to acknowledge differences within spaces, positions, contexts and everyday realities. Through the politics of difference and nomadic subjectivity as scrutinised by Rosi Braidotti, I locate my own migration experiences that inform hybridity and ambivalences in how I negotiate my gendered identities. The concept of ‘voice’ is crucial to communicate messages, meanings, and metaphors involved in my artworks. I underscore ‘affect voices’ to essentially play out through my representation, as it critically underlines feelings and emotions through my artistic expression, where language only cannot transmit the same “percepts, affects and blocs of sensations” (Gregg, 2006, p. 10).

Affect theory has been categorised as a vast and muddy terrain as it addresses intersecting disciplines of philosophy, psychology, psychoanalytical and physiological underpinnings, critical vocabularies, as well as political, pragmatic and performative ends (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Lauren Berlant, (2011) conceptualises affect within increased mobility that impinges on recognition with a lesser grip on meritocracy and durable intimacy within a neoliberal context. In the context of my work, I particularly focus on the affective structure of attachment (Berlant, 2011) which provides frames for survival when undergoing an identity crisis. I recognise that affect includes optimistic attachment to fantasy, aspirations, and the ignition of a sense of possibility, while being surrounded by uncertainties, ambivalences and precarious conditions of the contemporary. For the purposes my work, I refer to overlapping approaches of affect through a feminist perspective of understanding the ‘self’ and other subjectivities within identification. I engage in a critical discourse that unfolds ways of expressing ambivalence and hybridity in defining my gendered identities through a ‘voice’ that ties to matters of belonging, agency, while it also questions the concept of place and position, the emotions involved and the ethics of agency within a new environment.

I rely on the notion of nomadic subjectivity, where I find “creative alternative spaces of becoming” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 7; Pratt, 1991), while undergoing dislocation and relocation experiences through migration. While current feminist perspectives shift towards new ways of defining identity, I particularly focus on how my gendered
identities are made up of “heterogeneous and heteronomous representations” that cut across ethnicity, place of birth, inherited and adopted cultures and languages which define “implications of the gendered nature of subjectivity” (Braidotti, 1991, p. 281). From the discourses of transnational feminist praxis (Pratt, 1991; Roy, 2011), I draw attention to my own experiences and the need for diversity of ‘voices’ that address shifts and parameters of geographies, spaces, places and time and new modes of connections and belongings. I argue that new feminist constellations with shared perspectives for critique and politics of activism represent the immense potential for women with differences, to have new means to achieve empowerment (Pratt, 1991; Roy, 2011).

**Art as an expression of personal stories - Forging ‘affective links’**

The study of signs (semiotics) in my paintings encompasses the theme of representation. Studying and reading these signs assisted me in understanding their roles and how they impact upon my identities. Exploring the semiotic perspectives of my artworks goes far ahead in making meaning and sending powerful messages. The meanings were created as a complex interplay of codes or conventions that normally is unnoticeable. As I interpreted my artworks, I became aware and conscious of such codes that build up my arguments around concepts as the ‘time lag’ and ‘affective links’. Through such an experience and process I increased my understanding of the power of images and how visual language can be used to make an impact and influence our vision and understanding of several topics I addressed in this inquiry.

I make reference to Ash Amin’s, (2012) book ‘the land of strangers’ where he discusses “the fate of the stranger that lies in the play between hybrid and singular performances and projections of the social” (Amin, 2012, p. 2). The gap between “singularity and plurality” is the space that he explored where “some humans are labelled as insiders and outsiders” and defined as hybrid, and where ‘the stranger’ is not afforded to breathe (Amin, 2012, p. 2).

Zgymunt Bauman, (2007) refers to an unsettling nature within postmodern society with displacement and relocation, and the weakening of traditional ties with homeland and the risk of inequality and uncertainty. While, I take on the complexities around these issues, I refer to what Amin calls “friendship networks and intimate publics” (Amin, 2012, p. 27) to understand how social ties and interaction can be reinforced through ‘intimate publics’. Amin defines the complexities of material culture and the building up of social ties as complex. Friendship and networking on a new land and space is a venture into new alliances and allegiances that involves both ‘the host and the stranger’ living in a space (Amin, 2012). This process requires an ‘affective link’ that is nourished by the willingness to be open and exchange with the unknown and distant. An emotional binding is important in such experiences and spaces for bonding. Lauren Berlant,
(2008) explores spaces of identification in her book and coins them as porous affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a sense of belonging and provides a complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline and discussion about how to live as a ‘stranger’. The stereotypes of ‘self’ and the ‘other’ and of past, present and future have been discussed through blockbuster movies and these have been absorbed as measures of conduct, wellbeing and hope (Amin, 2012), which Berlant, (2008) argues was sustained by affective swirls of such intimate publics. Work on social ties largely ignores the significance of intimate publics (internet communities - social media, bloggers, tweeters, television publics) in which circulation of feelings defines community and its outside (Amin, 2012). Intimate publics can be spaces that bring together dispersed populations.

Taking on these concepts, I reflect on how my research and series of paintings can be used as a social vehicle to promote ‘friendship networks and intimate publics’ as an artistic expression of my personal stories that forge ‘affective links’ and how it can bring intercultural understanding. My paintings as a journey through different sites forge ‘affective scene of identification’ if exposed as ‘intimate public’ (internet communities - social media, blogging, tweeting,...). On the other hand, I am looking forward to get my thesis printed as a book and also bring my artworks to a public audience in a bigger exhibition venue in Melbourne. I am also working on an idea to create a blog of my research interest and a YouTube video of my findings. These artworks can address to a multiplicity of audiences and the visual semiotics in them can certainly be read by anyone, no matter if they are knowledgeable in the arts or not. The journey through different sites in these paintings has different levels of signification and the semiotics represented have strong signs which are powerful and iconic. The art form and visual language in them do not need many conventions for deconstruction and reading of messages and meanings in them. Scholars, artists, art teachers and students will also benefit from it. The messages and meanings in them have powerful, strong and tangible signs and symbols that go beyond words. In using artistic expression in forging ‘affective links’, I stress on the power of the visual to create avenues for intercultural understanding through art that can empower tolerance of the ‘other’ and bridge an understanding of other forms of art and expression of identity and worth.

**Extending further research through my findings (Artistic expression and visual semiotics)**

Through my findings, I am developing pedagogies that can bridge intercultural understanding through Art Education and art activities that go beyond teaching and learning ‘art for art’s sake’. Recently, I have undertaken personal development workshops sessions organised through Deakin University (Rosunee & Fox, 2013) for art teachers and in these sessions I have used my personal stories (paintings and findings from my thesis) as narratives and visuals and other support resources and materials that initiate ways to learn about culture, identity and my art expression to
bridge intercultural understanding. I proposed art activities and teaching approaches and methods that could empower these traits in the workshop. I am looking into further initiatives and interventions in Art Education and art practices at community level that will align to the politics of National Cultural policy (Australian Government, 2011) and Asia literacy (Asia Education Foundation, 2011) to legitimise the growing diversity in Australia. In this view, there are several avenues to collaborate with academia and scholars in Australia who are working on similar ideas and projects. Among other studies that refer to art making and identity there is a current project that involves women’s artworks and stories in Australia that deals with their lived and embodied experiences where their art making is more a connection with the spiritual that builds a sense of connectedness and wellbeing with who they are (Mackay, 2013). Such projects show prospects for collaborative work and extending the use of visual semiotics and my interest in researching further in this field.

The advocacy, support and empowerment in recognising diversity, cultural diversity and equity are important factors for societal balance. The arts through ‘intimate publics’ and a change in the strategy for Art Education (ACARA, 2012) to better understand cultures, arts forms from different perspectives and context through the art curriculum is an avenue that needs to be reinforced for socio-economic growth and healthy cultural traits and tolerance for future development in Australia.

**ARTISTIC EXPRESSION THAT PROMOTES INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING**

My approach can be construed as an ‘appropriation’, while it defines the motivation to understand and negotiate or search for my identity. The way I see and respond to art and how I engage in interpretation bears my own signature in a unique way. I do see my experience as a milestone, but I describe it as an asset that I can contribute to the field of inquiry that brings new insight and knowledge and experiences about social, cultures, identities and artistic expression. I define my paintings as a social vehicle that promotes “friendship networks and intimate publics” as my art expression forges “affective links” as described by Amin, (2012, p. 29). I describe how my paintings can be used to develop pedagogies for intercultural understanding and forge “affective links” in multicultural Australia, where communities need to be re-imagined with the increasing flows of transnational migration.

To understand culture in this way, we need to provoke others to understand the immensity and reach of it and to think about inclusiveness and equity in approaching education and Art Education. Cultural diversity and intercultural understanding is important to bring about tolerance and maintain unity, peace, and harmony. The relevance of the researcher as ‘subject’ and art expression can
be a ‘medium’ that break the rules in order to inform innovative research possibilities in overlapping research methods, and in addressing innovative methodological frameworks.

The arts are identified as generating passionate self-expression that exposes an artist’s emotions, imagination, experience, expression, representation, and interpretation. Culture and identity are some factors that surround such eclectic happenings. Works of art invoke emotions, and used with narratives and interpretation, they express and make sense more convincingly in deciphering meanings, messages and metaphors (Barnet, 2011). The way artists shape an artwork is what values their intentions and makes meaning become rhetorically effective, accessible and equally significant for viewers. As an artist, my attempt is to fuse the rhetoric of art with the dialectics around understanding my cultures and identities. The ‘visual’ in current research paradigms under a Deleuzian theorisation dynamically opens new boundaries and wider opportunities for accountability and scope in situating representation, interpretation, and visibility to acknowledge personal experiences through narratives, artworks, images or photographs.

My effort purports to take hold of such measures and methods by using my narratives and visual representation to bind the understanding of a ‘rhizomatic thinking’ under the Deleuzian notions, that refer to conceptualisation of art as practice and a ‘generative process.’ This approach was the leeway to inform meaning and opening of ‘spaces’ for ‘representation’ and the representation of cultures and identities. My focus was geared to show how discursive shifts and transitions along with geographies of space, place and time work. At the same time demonstrating how semiotics and symbolic meanings operate through premises and contingencies of social and cultural experiences; and how these are linked to inheritances, personal lived experiences and migration transitions that have implications for the way I negotiate my gendered identities.

**Making connections and significance - Can art be ‘the tie that binds’?**

*Art is coined ‘to happen’, whereby “a definition of art itself can only be a description, on an abstract plane, of one kind of event in the world” (Fleming, 2003, p. 7).*

As I refer to the “development of artistic interests and abilities [as] a regular part of learning and cognition” as described by Efland, (2002, p. 7), I underscore that art production, representation and interpretation all inclusively reside in social and cultural processes. Through my research, I sustain how I represent individual cultural identity, and construct cultural meanings and social communication using my artworks. Art learning includes a capacity to achieve “culture building” (Sosnoski, 1995) and the views as stipulated by Efland, (2002, p. 39) highlights “art [as] not produced in an empty space” on the basis how it is related to how “individuals [are] born in specific cultural situations acquire the accumulated
knowledge structures of their culture.” Arroyo & Salvador, (2009) describe how the development of linguistics is connected to diversity of meta-cognitive and socio-cultural processes, similarly, I suggest that the process of art making is not static; it is reflexive and it involves subjectivity within new ways of expression and representation.

Through my own experience, I see art making as linking to narratives and to extend from meta-narratives to micro narratives and other discourses. Through my inquiry “the visual has implications not only for the discourses of modernity and ethnographic practice” (Lury, 1998, p. 2) that I refer to, but also how it brings a fusion in understanding the ‘self’ as a new migrant in relating to the ontic. My experience reinstates the role of the researcher as the subject, but it also brings visual representations to be acknowledged as a “thought through” (Perkins, 1994, p. 3) process. I describe my outcomes that underline an understanding of messages and meanings that unleash the role of power through my representations (both visual and textual) and the instrumental value of them.

I shift to a different perspective of how artistic expression can make a more significant contribution to Education in general, and how it aligns to the objectives of a cultural policy for Australia (Austin, 2005; Australian Government, 2011). When launching the National Cultural Policy in October 2009 the Hon. Peter Garrett AM, Minister of Arts, stressed some key themes for consideration regarding how to keep culture strong, engage the community and empower the youth. In brief, the policy aimed at giving all Australians an opportunity to help shape a cultural future and to celebrate the strengths of an Australian culture which is forged by diversity.

There are seven billion people in the world, in one hundred and ninety four countries, practicing twenty major religions and speaking around seven thousand languages, (SBS news, 2011). We cannot deny such diversity in our world, while “cultural identity is understood in terms of difference” (Mansouri & Miller, 2009, p. 46). Globalisation challenges notions of cultural authenticity and puts forward negative perceptions on notions of ‘hybridity’ (Mansouri & Miller, 2009), and Bauman, (2007) identifies the role of modernity to globalisation and global mobility as a result of “deep social inequalities that lead people to leave home in search for a better life through choice and or compulsion” (O’Neill, 2010, p. 30). While I have stressed such issues in my research, I believe that as humans we are inclined to be connected to one another and it is normal to seek the company of friends and family; to congregate in towns and cities; and have groups we belong to - our communities of faith; our nodes and to know our neighbourhoods that in a sense becomes part of our sense of ‘self’ and place” (Lam, 2009, p. xv).

However, the concept of global society raises many questions and dilemmas around global mobility and the process of integration for migrants. There are changing and dominating economic forces that inform shifts, from the long domination of
western countries to the expanding influence of Asian countries such as China and India. Yet, even if there is a focus on accepting differences within the global, it is still arbitrary over “[the] locus of power in globalisation” (Connell, 2007, p. 60). The process of globalisation, I suggest is not producing cultural uniformity, but rather it is making us aware of new levels of diversity. If there is a global culture, it is better to conceive it not as a common culture, but as a ‘field’, in which differences, “power struggles and cultural prestige contests and are played out” as defined by Featherstone, (1995, pp. 13-14).

Mike Featherstone, (1995, p. 14) describes globalisation as bringing awareness “of the sheer volume, diversity and many-sidedness of culture.” Global mobility is having an invasive impact on the way we negotiate and understand culture and identity, involving a massive number of migrants and refugees who undergo experiences of migration and transitions of dislocation and relocation. Large numbers of migrants, asylum seekers, and even clandestine migrants in many parts of the world are affected by such transitions. How do migrant subjects and diasporic communities then face issues and contingencies of religions, beliefs, cultures, ethnicities, race, nationalities and identities? I argue that these issues need to be given relevance next to social, cultural, educational and economic stances. The transcendence of the term ‘race’, in current discourses has been replaced by other more objectives ones such as ‘ethnicity’, ‘nationality’ or ‘class’, (Omi & Winant, 1993), yet these notions do not highlight contingent issues related to racism, cultural hegemony, habitus, social inequalities and discrimination for anyone considered as an ‘étranger’. As a key issue, such contingencies centre on numerous debates and concerns at national level in Australia and at global level, yet I would contend that so far only a few studies have focused on them.

Research and debates vaguely discuss the sociological theory of globalisation, and “the broad impact of the ideas of global society as global modernity or postmodernity” and its implications as “socioeconomic dynamics” (Connell, 2007, pp. 56-64) that underline polarities “between system and singularity.” To overcome such polarities, in dealing with ideas of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’, it is imperative for research paradigms to shift focus from the “basis of a dynamic” to “an antinomy” (Connell, 2007, p. 59). Research on migration and related to socio-spatial dynamics and a cultural awareness lens, so far has not provided much about the implications on identity processes, structures and representation (Bailey & Boyle, 2004).

In my inquiry about ‘cultures’ and ‘identities’, I address these notions through a personal lens of experiences as represented through art. The concept of ‘visuality’ gives a new meaning that transcends mere analysis of artistic representation, while it gives meaning and significance, to issues, experiences and contingencies. It acts as an identity-bearing signifier that unveils silences on many taboo and unsaid issues. In addressing such diverse fields from cultural studies, postmodern
concepts linked to identity, culture shifts, globalisation and its pressures, migration transitions, and identity production and identity crisis I have created new ways of understanding such issues and how I use art as a ‘medium’ for representation. Such an approach defines new means that might bring more tolerance and comprehension for differences and to value culture, and identities of others more inclusively, which might be relevant in a diverse context such as Australia.

I elaborate further on the concepts of historicity and day-to-day experiences of migrant subjects that can be a signifier of how they acknowledge, recognise and renegotiate their identities and cultures, while their personal life experiences and transitions are issues that need to be given more focus and agency. The politics of assimilation is often overlooked in recognising how migrants considered as the ‘other’ engage in new environment and social structures. I describe negotiating life in-between cultures through my own experiences in this research, and I agree that background experience about identity crisis and construction is a highly “contested territory” (Mansouri & Miller, 2009, p. 46). Cultural identity, identity renegotiation is salient in the way migrants make efforts to relocate and adapt and this accompanies their efforts to preserve their own native languages, religion, historical and cultural values and beliefs and social inheritances. As markers, I understand that such traits play a core part in migrant’s representations of their identities and value or re-value their own cultures, and assimilate into new social structures that also highlight the dangers of seclusion or a state of ‘anomie’. As a notion of citizenship is important, migrant subjects need acknowledgement of ‘who they are’. Although such issues make the headlines of news and policy issues currently at the global level, these need to be taken from a more universalistic perspective (Cooper, 2005). I suspect manifestations in terms of writing policy issues on representation, should surpass narrations of injustice, inequalities, discrimination and violence against migrants. “The only way in which a model of hybridisation can be sustained [I agree] is by prior reification of culture[s],” (Connell, 2007, p. 59). This can happen as a consequence of “endless series of differences being overcome[d]” (Connell, 2007, p. 60). I understand that an interdisciplinary approach is vital in order to offer broader perspectives and a better understanding of diasporas and how migrants can give ‘voice’ to personal lived experiences and dilemmas. There is a dearth of research on such issues and only a few studies focus on surveys and case studies as narrative accounts; statistics, and photography throw light on culture and identity issues and they also merit further research. There are salient questions about identity (Austin, 2005, p. 2) and it needs to be described through more extensive research. As a matter of fact, we transiently forget to ask ourselves questions such as; Who am I? Who are we?, “what are our relations to others might be”, and involve [ in terms of ] rethinking of our responsibilities (Pearce & MacLure, 2009, p. 250).
As I underlined the struggles of migration through my own experiences, I reflected on identity crisis, the struggle for recognition and the rebuilding of a sense of belonging, space and place. I started by looking through my own experiences, to revert back to my lived experiences, memories and to trace my roots from my home country. This work has neither been an attempt to only achieve Doctoral thesis requirements, nor has it been only to reap the fruits of an intellectual labour, but my attempt stretches to broader horizons. The self-narrative within my series of painting is re-representational of my identity as an artist as embodied through these works. My signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyle (Barker, 2000) are inhabited by images within the other complexities of the globalised and technical changes that assemble and now aggregate the self. My artistic expression and my narratives in an increasing visual world are like cultural signifiers that address social discourses and these act as an agent in shaping and representing my gendered identities and behaviours.

**Breaking the rules on what art is?**

As an artist/researcher/teacher, I found it imperative to focus upon an analysis of the context in which art expression; representation and art curriculum are guided and happen. One of the primary needs in researching the field of visual arts is to find ways to evaluate the effects of Arts Education that provide convincing arguments to justify its significance in Education (Eisner, 2002). If the benefits of this inquiry are extended to the whole community, it can inform artists, teachers, students and researchers to initiate and extend reflection over future engagement in art expression, representation art teaching and research. Through an overlapping on inter-disciplinary fields this inquiry can inform policy makers to reflect on reforming the ways art is given worth and value in approaching and addressing issues of identities and cultures. The outcomes of this research can give new directions for art learning and art representations (Eisner, 2002) to have more meaningful objectives and outcomes that expose challenges and adversities of diverse global cities. This study can contribute by informing the global perspective on the value and importance of the arts and how Art Education can contribute to the efforts of acknowledging diversity and in promoting inclusion. For the academic and scholarly community, it can assist in the advocacy of cultures and art forms from other cultures, in allowing the arts as a discipline to promote inclusive learning. In this research, there is an effort to predominantly address issues around ‘culture’ and ‘identities’ more openly, yet I also argue about art as the ‘tie that binds’. Such a tie can bring a significant broadening of knowledge and understanding and empower the visual representations of the arts in general.

To conclude, I refer to the importance of history and cultural inheritances from my home country and how it produces ‘spaces’ within the temporal and constructs my grounded inheritances and identity. Migration and relocation processes posit entanglements, dissociations and disjunctures in situating, identifying and
representing the ‘self’ and the notion of ‘space’, ‘home’, a sense of belonging and negotiations, while transitions underscore hybridities and ambivalences. Within the ‘liminal space’ transitions challenge cultural capital and social archetypes, thereon suggesting ‘cultural hybridity.’ Global pressures present struggles for individuals, but predominantly for migrants to grasp, reposition and act within new spatial and social scales in an increasing diverse global environment. Soja, (2011) explains how ‘space’ has been superficially used, and next to globalisation there needs to be more conscious, oriented, and directed thinking about democratic existential spatiality, that honours social action and identity formation and integration more inclusively. The hybridity through this hermeneutic circle of time from past, present and future is signified in that process, which defines ‘identities’ and ‘cultures’ as ambivalent and increasingly dominated by the spatial logic and technology. I describe my way of experiencing culture and identities to challenge the notions of a sense of ‘place’. I do this to construct and reconstruct a sense ‘space’ as empowered with an articulated ensemble of cultural inheritances, memories, nostalgia, past experiences through ‘time’, which can help researchers to map and appropriate new ‘spaces’ and changes in new social structures, thus opening alternate trajectories in situating the ‘self’.

Art is about aesthetic beauty, but art also “humanises the creator and the audience” (Zinn, 2002, p. 1). Feminist art includes giving a ‘voice’, an engagement in critical ‘self’ in identifying and reflecting on dilemmas women face when they break silences and articulate their experiences and concerns publicly (Manicom & Walters, 1997). In ‘Breaking Silences’ I underscore the relevance of the ‘self’ from a dialogical context to a performative stance; that crosses the borders of several notions, and is represented through the visual as thoughts, feelings, emotions, contingencies, confrontation, and reflection on experiences in a way no dialectic can really achieve. I focus on this precept to conclude my views of how my research offers a new approach to research in underlining the “relational understanding of the ‘self’ and subjectivity (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007, p. 12). It brings connectedness of my narratives and artworks that represent shifts, transitions and challenges in negotiating my gendered identities but through artistic expression.

I use a final artwork to conclude my reflection and understanding of the use of a visual and reflexive interpretation to represent issues concerning the negotiation of my gendered identities. I identify these gendered identities as open, hybrid, ambivalent and always in process. In this final artwork the turmoil is still there, yet there are traits and notions that will never be disconnected. The subaltern, cultural and linguistic inheritances and my views through feminist concepts, my professional engagement as an artist/researcher/teacher are all part of the hybridity that I have defined and described.
This is the last sketch ‘In and out’. I completed this sketch months after I painted ‘Vortex of Hope’. I thought it was imperative to include it here to represent the concept of hybridity and ambivalence I discussed earlier in this thesis, and about identity and reflection, and how I represent them through my art. I feel that the dot as the centre of focus relates to my shifting aspirations. The turmoil through the concentric circles I used previously in the other paintings have disappeared, but I think it has been transferred through a different structure that gives new directions in the way I represent how I am positioning myself. Looking through the dot, I can see the spectrum of opportunities and different stages ahead in life may be framed through a more objective mind. These satellites as traits or states of being or thinking as within and represented in and out the structure as ‘spirals structures’. It is within the limits of subjectivity as real and imaginary and as anchored somehow.
Appendices 1

Defining Culture

Culture is a term that cuts across wide and numerous definitions and contexts and it overlaps upon many concepts and notions. Culture is considered as an everyday or a key feature of social reality and predominantly part of many ‘social facts’ and it requires to be adequately understood, ‘described and represented’ (Inglis, 2005). The details of everyday life currently make reference to ‘culture’ (Inglis, 2004). Culture has been defined as having a “slippery” and even “chaotic concept,” precisely when related to the “social” (Smith, 2000, p. 4). As a complex and overarching concept, culture embraces a range of topics and processes (Jenks, 2005), and it has been informed by various meanings through different perspectives.

In order to respond to my research questions it was crucial to review ‘culture’ as a broad term in order to situate its significance and meaning in understanding the implications it has within the processes of identification, within a global context. To sustain my arguments, I started reviewing culture from a socio-anthropological perspectives in other diverse disciplines of cultural studies, sociology, postcolonial diaspora theory, globalisation, migration, and its consequences on new boundaries of culture (McCarthy, Crichlow, et al., 2005).

Theorising Culture

To theorise culture, I looked through the definitions from social anthropologists that relate it to “the most mundane aspects of everyday life,” (Hendry, 1999, p. 1). Social anthropologists study the different aspects of human life and culture by examining how people live, think, interact within an environment. Following (Hendry, 1999, p. 2), social anthropologists are interested in studying “the different ways people have of looking at the world they live in,” and these different ways refer to the different views of the world learned as people grow up in different societies or within different groups which make up the larger society. This definition accentuates the interrelatedness between society and culture, where culture refers to living experiences shared by people in social groups in the form of cultural patterns. The term ‘cultures’ and ‘societies’ in this respect overlap and it is used to refer to specific societies, and vice versa. Cultural anthropology expands from academic disciplines with strands from sciences and humanities, which hint at the connections to behavioural sciences, such as sociology and psychology and more.

From a social anthropologist profile of culture, the Durkheimian perspective was coined as conservative (Nisbet, 1967) and linked to functionalism. The conception of culture was referred to “system of representations rooted in and reflective of concrete social groups.” (Lincoln & Haas, 2004). Émile Durkheim, (1933) focused
on the study of social facts that “make reference to orderly, patterned and enduring relationships that hold between elements of a society” (Jenks, 2005, p. 25). These ‘social facts’ as defined by Durkheim “exist in their own right” (Jenks, 2005, p. 25) and do not depend on the actions of individuals. Durkheim’s viewpoint is based on the link between “social structure and the symbolic order,” where he focuses on the “hermeneutic function of symbols” other than “referential function of signs,” which differentiates “the symbolic and the semiotic views of culture,” (Jenks, 2005, p. 28). In short, Émile Durkheim’s contribution in defining culture can be explained through his ‘démarche’ to understand what holds society together. Society is divided through different units which are represented through various kin groups, classes, and political and religious groups. What makes and determines the unity of these different units as a coherent society is what Durkheim tries to understand, which he defines as a force which integrates separate segments in society. A shared system of beliefs and values is a force that unites members of the society and controls individuals’ behaviour.

Talcott Parson’s, (1951) view of culture nears to or distorts the Durkheimian perspective, and it focuses on “a role for culture in legitimating social order and thus provides for its existence and yet integration with social structure” (Jenks, 2005, p. 28). In this instance, “shared beliefs, interests and ideologies” form the cultural interface that justifies social order, (Jenks, 2005, p. 28). In such a social system the members have their conduct regulated through ‘pattern variables’, which is referential to a semiotic view of culture. A Parsonian view shows that in real life situation, people’s cooperation and social integration is determined through the values of the people, who are the social actors and their actions are regulated by shared values and norms of the society in which they live which forms the basis of social order, (Knapp, 1994).

Radcliffe-Brown, (1957) defines social structure “where he saw it as a network of social relations including persistent social groups, social categories, classes and social roles” (Jenks, 2005, p. 39). “Each social structural system was assumed to be self-sustaining, homeostatic, harmonious functional unit; hence the primacy of interrelatedness” (Jenks, 2005, p. 39). In this way, Radcliffe-Brown is known to have defined the influential social theory of ‘structural-functionalism’. However, Malinowski, (1944) defines culture as consisting of the seven basic human needs, where his perspective on functionalism was different, which focussed basically on the individual needs rather than on that of a social system (Jenks, 2005).

The shift to a Marxist perspective within cultural analysis from 1960’s onwards was directed to a materialist or structuralist conception of culture and social reality, which has made a consequent contribution towards contemporary thinking about society and culture. For Marx, (1970), the social structure is organised in terms of “means and relations of production” (Jenks, 2005, p. 28). The surfacing of different classes in society is eloquent to the historical materialism and economic factors.
The Marxist view of culture is expressed more through a group consciousness, which is directed to particular sets of interests and changing institutionalised social and political structures. In this view, the distribution of labour specific roles and attributes is designated to people and “relations are established between people according to the economic division of labour” (Jenks, 2005, p. 70).

**Appendices 2**

**Cultural reproduction**

To better acknowledge the concept of cultural reproduction, it is important to look into what Bourdieu, (1977b) describes as the “habitus” and to understand how “social class” as a discourse functions through society (Meadmore, 1999a, p. 57). Bourdieu, (1990b) describes that “habitus” is what creates “social reproduction” as it is at the centre of all that regulates and generates social activities. “Habitus” consists of “the principle that regulates the act” and it is typified as “the system of modes of perception, of thinking of appreciation and of action” (Jenks, 2005, p. 130). In short, people learn to condition themselves in making choices and to accept certain norms that are accessible to them and as such they deny other aspirations that are not available to them (Bourdieu, 1990b). “Habitus” is in “one sense the metaphor for membership of a community grounded in intellectual or aesthetic considerations,” as pointed out by Jenks, (2005, p. 130) and he further exemplifies this idea, by treating “language as a habitus,” where “certain ways of speech provide for membership of particular communities.” In that sense, ‘social hierarchy’ is established through ‘different habituses’ generated through different ways of conditioning in individuals which instinctively groups them in a social class system’ (Jenks, 2005). ‘Cultural hegemony’ (Gramsci, 1971) and “ideological dominance” predetermine what different values, attitudes and skills are going to emerge from an individual.

Bourdieu has coined the term ‘cultural capital’ as a way to explain cultural differences which underpin and reproduce social class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It is worthy to point out that Bourdieu argues that certain differences refer to ‘cultural practices and activities’ which are learnt and these help to define social classes reproduce and reinforce social class divisions. Most significantly, he argues these forms of cultural capital are inherited from “family background and resources” and learnt “through social and cultural interaction and environment” (Meadmore, 1999a, p. 59). Yet, social classes as one of the great social structuring have been fractured, fragmented, undermined and dispersed (Hall, 1989). Identities are defined on political and economic purposes and interests with a shift from social class principles within globalisation and in response to what Bourdieu, (1977b, 1990c), and Meadmore, (1999a) assert as challenges to defining identity statuses, culture and representation within society. Notions of “race”, “ethnicity” and “culture” as “socio-cultural constructs” and “cultural differences” can be
understood as precursors in having “a particular racial or ethnic identity” (Arber, 2008, p. 9) where “the current social world is marked by the appearance of identity politics” (Kaya, 2007, p. 706).

**Appendices 3**

**Situating feminist theories**

Feminist scholars have attended to the meaning of “social beliefs, human nature, family duties, sexual ethics, credibility”, while addressing subjects of “cultural traditions and dogma about gendered [identities],” and relations of equity (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007, p. 1). Such theories have developed and sustained arguments for the emancipation and empowerment of women (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007; Francis, 1999). Feminism is associated with either an “unspoken language” of “actions glossed over capitalist empowerment”, which is still considered “a historical place or space that informs and forges new spaces for greater analysis in postmodern studies, identity representation, power and access” (Villaverde, 2007, p. 2). A typology of feminist politics and an epistemology as outlined by Allison Jaggar, (1983) presents liberal feminism, traditional Marxism, radical feminism and socialist feminism that make distinctions between the ideologies and political standpoints in relation to liberation of women. Villaverde, (2007) summarises liberal feminism as a search for gender equality to participate; that purports to access and gain resources based on existing systems, whilst radical feminism targets an essentialist perspective on gender and oppression.

Other consistent definitions of approaches to feminism assume equality for women despite gender differences and the hierarchical concepts implied through traditional Western social and political thoughts (Beasley, 1999, p. 16). Post feminism is underlined as a shift and backlash against feminism, but not necessary opposing it and it is situated within contemporary neo-liberal capitalist societies, characterised by consumer culture, individualism, yet with decreased interest in politics and activism (Gill, 2007). Considered as central to second-wave feminism, post feminism endorses ‘body politics’ that reject gender differences through their practices (Gill, 2007). Post-feminist cultural texts extend to emancipatory discourses that create potentials to interrelate the political and critical. There are efforts to challenge the dominance of Western feminism with rising dilemmas women face within other parts of the world. Looking through the lens of current feminist theories, transnational feminism, the challenges of globalisation and nomadic subjectivity, women’s concern for empowerment and agency is apparent (Rosi Braidotti, 2006; Davis & Evans, 2011; Nagar & Swarr, 2010; Roy, 2011).
Appendices 4

Locating different theoretical perspectives surrounding culture and identity

After reviewing selected literature on culture and other notions that overlap and bound it, it is crucial for me to position my thinking within such complex theoretical discourses and to summarise my arguments.

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<th>SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGIST’S</th>
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<tr>
<td>DURKHEMIAN – Functionalism</td>
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<td>(Durkheim)</td>
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<td>STRUCTURAL-Functional tradition</td>
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<td>(Talcott Parsons, Radcliffe Brown, Malinowski)</td>
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<td>MARXIST PERSPECTIVE – Materialist/Structuralist</td>
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<td>(Marx), (Pierre Bourdieu)</td>
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<td>FRENCH DECONSTRUCTION towards Post-structuralism</td>
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<td>(Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Lyotard, Baudillard, and Guattari)</td>
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<tr>
<td>POST-STRUCTURALIST’S</td>
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<td>(Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Zygmunt Bauman, Paul Du Jay, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Arjun Appadurai, Weedon, Austin, Bielharz, Omi &amp;Winant, West)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHIFTS FROM POST-STRUCTURALISM – Neo-Marxist and Feminist Critics</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Fredric Jameson, Jürgen Habermas, Alex Callinicos and Richard Rorty), (Ritzer, Schwab)</td>
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<td>(Spivak, Judith Butler, Henrietta Moore, Linda Mc Dowell)</td>
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Schema – Situating myself within theoretical paradigms

Using this schema, I try to situate my perspectives in understanding my identity and culture to fit a post-structuralist framework and other discourses of cultural theorists such as those espoused by Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Zygmunt Bauman as they address notions on identity construction and agency, with a focus on disaporic, postcolonial and historical discourses and the contingencies of migration transitions. I look through feminist discourses and post-humanist critics and affect theory to inform how I understand my gendered identities, and how I use my art for representation.

From a social anthropologist perspective culture refers to living experiences shared by people in social groups in the form of cultural patterns to particular set of interests. Referring to the Durkheimian perspective of ‘social facts’, and Marxist view of ‘dominant interests’ that equates to power being mediated through existing systems of stratification within society in relation to race, religious beliefs, class, gender, abilities, age and so on. Concepts such as “hegemony” emerge from
modern theory and ideologies related to the theory of culture. On such grounds cultural values are only one element of the social system, while the political situation, institutions, economy, religious beliefs, and practice of rituals, amongst others, are proposed to shape the cultural fabric of society, whilst living standards of people are determined by economic and global forces (Jenks, 2005).

While Jenks, (2005, p. 26) differentiates between culture and social structure as discussed by Durkheim, Parsons and Marx, he develops quite a different viewpoint which is “viewed as an emergent process stemming from social action.” In exposing an understanding of culture from the perspectives of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, I try to understand the complex definitions, development and interpretations of ‘culture’. The ideology in defining culture is ever-changing and it refers to the commercial, and technological cultures, and mass communication within the postmodern (Jenks, 2005).

The postmodern affects the conception of culture, and challenges it as it changes it (Jenks, 2005). The whole concept of modernity is liberating and provides opportunities to consider and voice what is different. However, currently the world seems to drift towards acknowledging shared vocabulary and syntax, collective conditions and common identity. The phenomena of the ‘post’ make us understand conditions not in terms of what they are, but in terms of what comes after (Feher, 1990). The era of the ‘post’ inform altered structures of social relations and production, as global economy and technological advancements changes these notions. Bauman draws attention to such structural drifts in relation to social relations, and such transformation within the postmodern ‘attends to the necessary allegiance of ‘techno-science’ with national and transnational consumer capitalism” (Jenks, 2005, p. 203) – which is known as globalisation.

Jenks, (2005, p. 1) enunciates his views about ‘culture’ where he describes, “the idea of culture [embracing] a range of topics, processes, differences, and even paradoxes,” which in a sense challenge the possibility and necessity of designating a single definition of the term. I agree with such a perspective, and I argue that an extensive understanding of ‘culture’ overlaps to other complex notions. Globalisation, global mobility and technological influences and communication are certainly bringing various changes in how we understand culture and identity. “The current cultural studies approach to culture as the production and circulation of meaning in stratified contexts remains inadequate” and as argued by Mc Carthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, (2005, p. 155) “culture has and remains significantly undertheorized.” In this perspective, it is important to cross-examine and research culture in the way Raymond Williams theorised culture “as a whole way of life” but within the contemporary. Austin, (2005, p. 2) further supports this claim and he describes “culture as a semantic term, [which] has undergone considerable development and evolution of meaning over the past fifty or so years.” There has been a shift to conceptualisation of culture as “a set of dynamic, productive, and
generative material (and immaterial) practices in the regulation of social conduct and social behaviour that emphasize personal self-management ... political affiliation, and transnational identity” (Mc Carthy, Giardina, et al., 2005, p. 155).

In this response to my research question culture links to identity, identity formation, agency, and identity crisis through a diasporic involving historical inheritances and migration transitions. These perspectives drove me to explore overlapping concepts that link to culture. Theoretical frameworks around culture and identity as explored by post-structuralist and feminist perspectives broadened my thinking about spatiality, and how geographies shape social processes and social action, which in turn influences identity and culture (Soja, 2009).

Reviewing how culture is being theorised and formulated through these paradigms of thought broadens my understanding of the term, however it also unravelled the deepest and absorbing concepts I tried to underscore through my narratives and artistic representations. The focus of my research was on understanding how culture is manifested through the self. How culture impacts on identity processes and how it can be understood and articulated through the social, historical and cultural, and the effects of global changes including migration, shifts in spaces, and social processes and interaction.

**Broadening my definitions of culture**

I conclude my review with my interpretation of what is culture? It is important that I come back to the term as it signifies and has maintained core importance through this inquiry. It is not until I addressed all the issues that relate to the implications of culture that I could deliver my own thinking and interpretation about it.

**Culture as ‘entanglement’ – ‘The spaghetti ball’**

Through the different theoretical framework that defined culture, it was pictured as embedded in the social system through several interlocking strands. Culture is part of society, and it is linked to social and cultural processes including the effects of postmodernism, globalisation and technology. The processes within such an understanding are complex, interrelated, in fusion and can be described as happening simultaneously. Yet, I start this study with a linear understanding of culture on my own terms, to then identify the complexity that surrounds it.

My picturing of culture suggests tangled strands like in a ‘spaghetti ball’ (refer to sketch), which exemplify that complexity, entanglement, and fusion. A description of ‘culture’ as ‘entanglement’ refers to an understanding of socio-cultural processes, which are complex, interrelated, in fusion and happening simultaneously. My picturing of culture as tangled strands like in a ‘spaghetti ball’ exemplifies the complexities, entanglement, and a fusion of structures. Read three dimensionally from different vantage points this representation of culture suggests
a non-literal description of the term, instead it needs a more elaborate framework viewed through divergent perspectives, implications, significance, meanings, manifestations, and critical analysis.

Sketch - Picturing culture as a ‘spaghetti ball’

Culture as ‘Tessellations’ – ‘The flower tower’

Extending to a more elaborative framework to understand culture, I use the Japanese art of folding paper, the ‘Origami’ as both a structure and a metaphor that allows me to depict and describe the complexities of the term. ‘The flower tower’ depicted as tessellations is the structure I use to compare the ways ‘culture’ is intricately embedded through the mosaic of society. ‘Origami structures’ are usually shaped out of a single sheet of paper, which I parallel to the social system. When folded within multiple ways and directions in respect to specific rules and orders, it creates multifaceted and complex structures, which I compare to how culture is interpreted, viewed and understood through different paradigms, within strict compartmenting, yet coinciding and overlapping in many instances.
Expressed metaphorically, ‘the flower tower’ helps in visualising how culture in society is narrowly defined from the vortex, and as the structure expands multiple viewpoints and perspectives of culture are exposed. Taken from the circumference it presents an analogy with which to define and analyse ‘culture’ from anthropologists, structuralists, Marxists and other sociological perspectives. The multifaceted folds and folding rules, suggest the synonymous ways culture can be structured and reflexively analysed. The folds and interlocked structure in its three-dimensionality can be paralleled to the evolution of culture as both interdependent and interrelated. It is quite impossible to show this three-dimensional nature of culture through a flowchart diagram, let alone analyse it. My focus is to understand the complexities and relevance of the term from a sociological perspective, where I attempt to identify how ‘culture,’ ‘identity’, and ‘identit(ies)’ as current buzz terms are subjected to ambivalence and hybridity, more precisely through migration experiences.

**Defining extensive spheres of culture**

The theorising the different concepts of culture in formal terms derived from anthropologists, structuralist’s, Marxists, Weberian perspectives, culture touches upon notions such as race, ethnicity, religion, cultural identity and capital, cultural hegemony, and social status. These traits set parameters and margins in defining culture as socially shared symbolic and meaning systems. From “anthropological catch-alls like customs, rituals, routines, or habits” and “social practice” (Inglis, 2004, p. 135) the definition of culture extends its boundaries within the postmodern. In sketching a detailed structure of the flower tower, I attempt to show the strength of understanding and thinking around complex dimensions and extensive boundaries of culture. The three dimensionality in this structure pictures the different strands as striated from the vortex, indicating the strict disciplining of the different spheres around culture. As the design expands, there is an overlapping, intersecting, and superimposition of other strands that make
reference to post structuralist perspectives, and address more abstract and complex notions.

Sketch - ‘Stretching spheres of culture’

I refer to Tomlinson, (1999) analytical description of five new processes of culture defined as:

‘deterritorialization’ (culture as torn out of its geography and made homeless), ‘hybridity’ (cultures as mixed up together), ‘liminality’ (poor cultures shoved off the edge by rich ones), ‘diasporization’ (cultures scattered worldwide but persisting in a mutant form) and ‘mediatization’ (the stories of culture detached from their local habitations and carried largely by the electronic media) (Inglis, 2004, p. 146)

This description summarises what I try to uncover through my visual interpretation. It suggests extended strands that direct new avenues and slices culture as mediated through changes of territory, marginalisation, mixing of cultures, scattered diaspora and the sense of belonging, while such concepts are accelerated by globalisation and its consequences. Globalisation is a crux for culture and as an inheritance of postmodernism (Inglis, 2004, p. 143) and it doles out larger concepts such as global mobility, diaspora, hybrid cultures and more by its very existence. Such concepts cannot be braced against culture, but can only be regarded as fusing, overlapping and overshadowing the fragmented boundaries of culture. ‘Spheres of culture’ comes as a new slogan in contemporary definitions of culture in which globalisation plays a significant role (Inglis, 2004). I try to
picture this understanding (stretching spheres of culture) that suggest the extensive borders of culture as fragmented, folds of different shapes and colours signifying different large concepts as overlapping and overshadowing each other, creating different mutations that blurs and dissolves globalisation and its consequences within the social system. My interest in understanding the impact of such notions is crucial in this research as it relates to issues I address through my personal experience in defining my identity. The new processes of culture as analysed by Tomlinson, (1999) embed the overall picturing of culture and the way it impacts on identity next to postmodernism, globalisation and its consequences. Clifford Geertz, (1973) defines ideologies that offer maps of problematic social realities and presuppositions that need to be considered to accompany the way we feel and think. I refer to the affect theory and how it maps the way I am through my experiences and my art.

A definition and review of how culture functions, develops and extends through the social system indicates how as a concept culture is hybrid. Principles and politics pattern relations in society, through the power and influence they exert on how we express, accept or resist to culture. Culture is evaluative in the way it frames the everyday life and how it enacts values (Geertz, 1973) in fusion with our experiences. I would agree that “culture is a structure of values and feelings which belong to them, moving through a force field of social action” (Inglis, 2004, p. 162), and identity takes bearing and agency on such established, imposed or constructed values that wind through our experiences.
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