Negotiating Identity and Belonging for Young African Australians

By

Olalekan Olagookun

M.A. (Ed.) English Language and Literature, B.A. (Ed.) English Language.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts and Education

Victoria University

Melbourne Australia

2018

'Belonging is not just about social locations and [the] construction of individual and collective identities and attachments, but also about the ways these are assessed and valued by self and others' (Yuval-Davis, 2016, p. 6).

Abstract

This study investigates subjectivity, identity negotiation and the construction of social belonging for a small group of African Australians young adults. Homi Bhabha's (1994, 2012) theoretical conceptions of *hybridity* and *interstitial space* and Barad's (2007, 2014) concepts of *diffraction* and *entanglement* have been employed in this thesis to examine how five young people articulate their sense of belonging in Australia. The study comprises eight chapters and it is divided into three sections. The first section is composed of an introduction, a description of the positioning of the study and the review of the literature. The second section is the central part of the study, which emphasises the study setting and incorporates the methodological justification of social constructivism and interpretivism. The third and final section focuses on the theoretical framework, analytic thinking and the conclusion of the study. Finally, the investigation of subjectivity and identity negotiation suggest an on-going individual and collective reconstruction through which connection is established and social belonging is negotiated in Australia.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

"I, Olalekan Olagookun, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'Negotiating identity and belonging for African Australians is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Signature

Date 5|10|2018.

Dedication

I dedicate this research to the glory of God and the

blessings of mankind;

To my children Amblessed and FidaraOluwa who at one

time or the other will have to negotiate between their

African heritage and Australia;

To the African Australians and anyone who might be

struggling with the middle ground of difference within a

given territorial boundary.

Acknowledgements

I give all the praise and thanks to Almighty God, the giver of life, peace and prosperity that has granted me the privilege of undertaking and completing my doctoral research training program. I wish to express my appreciation for good health, inspirations, encouragement, support and guidance from my family members, supervisors, friends and colleagues. To all who have supported me in one capacity or the other in my academic journey, I would like to say thank you.

To my Victoria University supervisors, Associate Professor Julie White, Dr. Be Pannell and Dr. Dave Kelman who through patient, thoughtfulness and sound academic exposure guided me through completion. Words fail me to express my sincere appreciation. Thank you for helping me respond to my own middle ground of difference, which is about connection and negotiating personal entanglement to this thesis.

Many thanks to my third supervisor Dr. Dave Kelman for guidance and instruction, administrative and accessibility, support and assistance in the capacity of supervision and connection to the Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA). Your professional guidance as the Artist Director of WEYA, gave me not only access, but the needed human resources without which this study would have been completed. I will like to specially thank the participants who out of their tight schedule agreed to be interviewed, you all taught me there is more to know about *interstitial space* and accompanied experiences.

I have been fortunate to be *entangled* with many remarkable people who have not only sustained, but also nourished me by offering the gifts of friendship, affection and kindness. My gratitude goes to my former supervisors Professor Roger Slee and Associate Professor Katie Hughes, all the former Victoria Institute staff, and all the staff of former Graduate Research

List of Abbreviations

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics

ANCSE: Australians National Centre for Student Equity

ANSIC: Association of Nigerians Students in China

BEA: Bilateral Education Agreement

CECA: Cultural Engagement Capacity in Australia

DIAC: Department of Immigration and Citizenship

DIBP: Department of Immigration and Border Protection

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

ESL: English as a Second Language

ISA: International Student Apartment

LSES: Low Socio-Economic Students

NESB: Non-English-Speaking Background

NOM: Net Overseas Migration

OHEP: Offshore Humanitarian Entrant Program

PRC: People's Republic of China

RASP: Refugee Action Support Programme

RCOA: Refugee Council of Australia

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

VCOSS: Victoria Council of Social Service

VEOHRC: Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission

WEYA: Western Edge Youth Arts

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

A Visual Overview of the Study

'Negotiating identity and belonging for young African Australians' is a study that investigated how African Australians negotiate their identities and social belonging in Australia. This study is made up of 8 chapters focussing on the questions of cultural identity and subjectivities. For better understanding, the next page presents a graphical picture of the study in a circular pattern using one of the African background motifs. Following this graphical picture is a flowchart showing the division of the study into three sections. The first section is an introduction and orientation to the study. The second section is the central part of the study and the third section is composed of the theoretical thinking, analysis, climax and the conclusion of the study. The significance of using the African background motifs is contingent upon young people of African Australians' exploration of culture and relationships between the articulation of their cultural awareness and identity.

Section One: Graphical Picture of the Study*
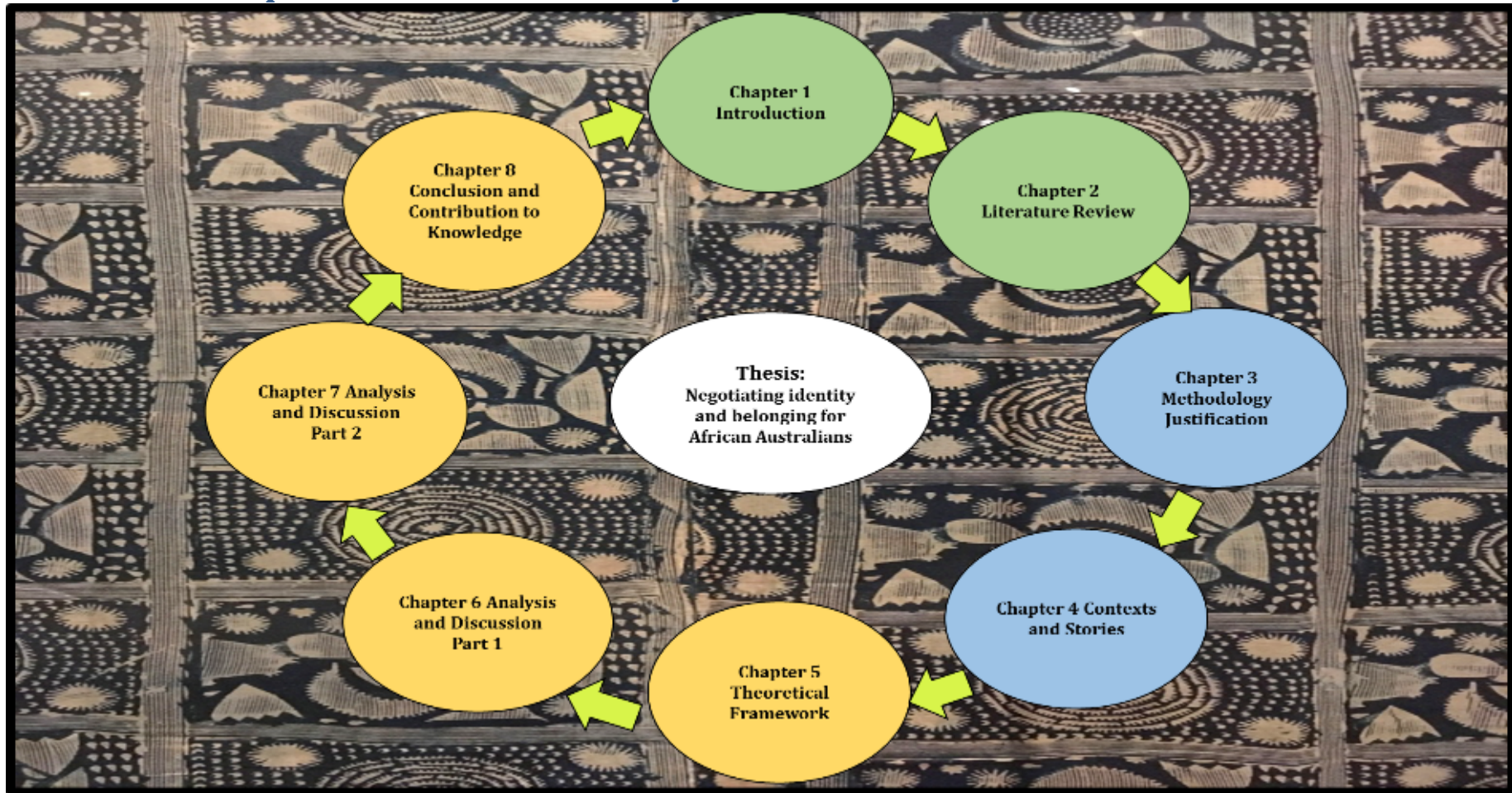
Fig. 1: *The background motifs used throughout in this thesis is called "Adire" (a fabric material popularly known as "tie and dye"). It is a resist-dyed cloth produced and worn by the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. These themes are used to suggest the relationships between human cultural awareness and identity. Adire has different patterns just like the motif above with pattern of oyster shells, water lily and some flat woven handcrafts showing the vocation of people of southwestern Nigeria, a sub-Saharan African nation.*
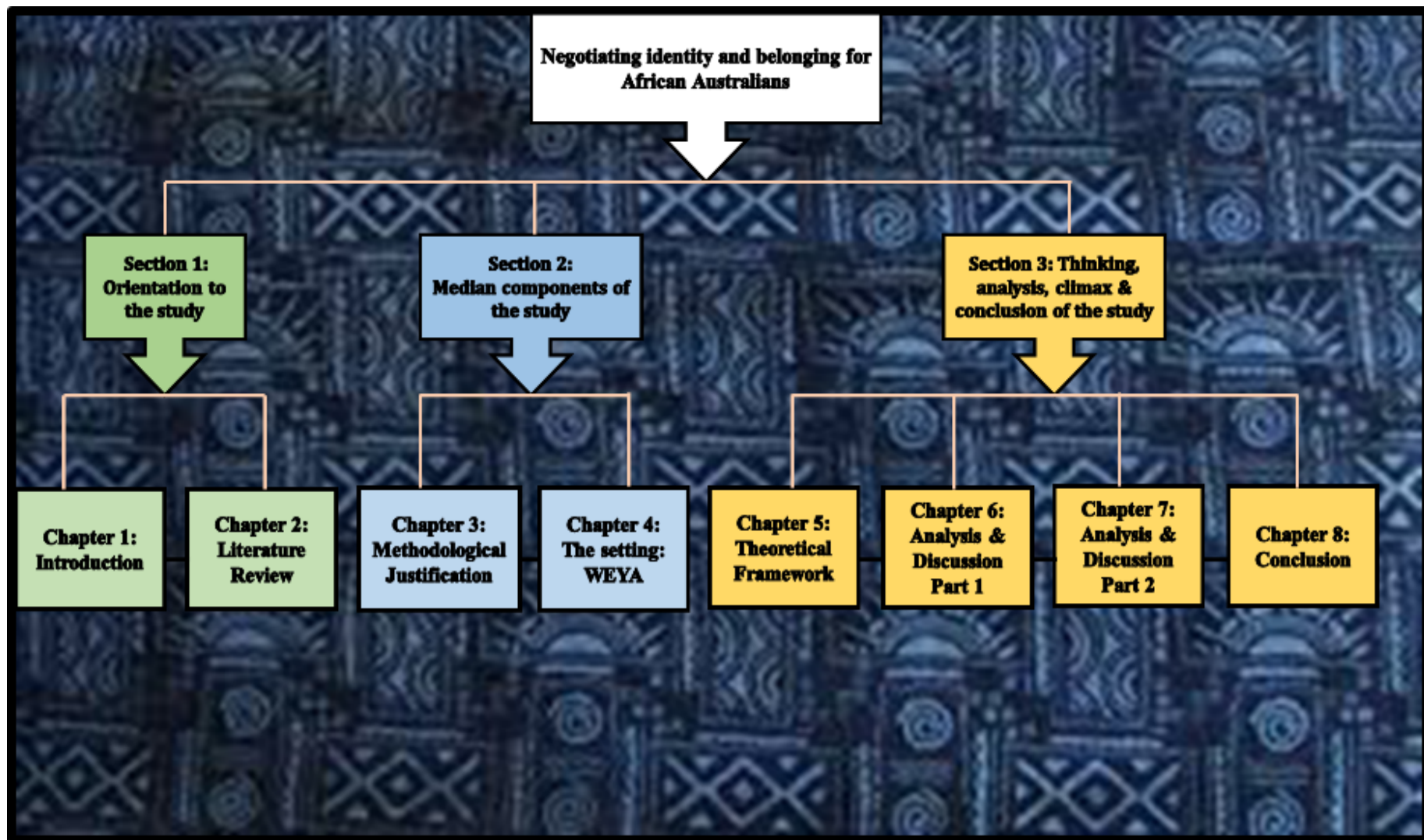
Fig. 2: *A flowchart introducing and explaining the arrangement of the study.*

Section One

Title: Orientation to the Study

Section 1:
Orientation to the study

Chapter 1
Introduction

Rationale for the study

Context: Global refugee crisis

Australian Context

Construction of African refugees

The gap in the literature

Extracts from participants

Theatre-art: WEYA Organization

Aims and Objective

Concepts and Terms

Thesis structure

Chapter 2
Literature Review

The resettlement process

Misrepresentation

Resettlement Complexities

Social realities

Multicultural realities

Cultural identity

Social Justice

Belonging & politics of belonging

Space of commonalities & Negotiating belonging

Re-imagining integration

African Australian social belonging

Who? & Belonging

Where? & Belonging

When? & Belonging

Belonging through the interstice

Fig. 3: *A graphical description of section one outlining the contents of the orientation to the study.*

Chapter 1:   Introduction

This introductory chapter explains the rationale for the study beginning with my experience in the People's Republic of China. This section also provides the background context for the global refugee crisis and defines the aims and objective of the study. It then moves to a broader construction of African refugees and a theatre art group of young African Australians. Lastly, the section explains the major concepts used throughout the study and outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1   Rationale for the Study

Sociology has made valuable contributions to the ambiguous field of identity, belonging and subjectivity, particularly about changes that affect embodied subjects. Recent studies into the identity construction of minorities has seen much emphasis being placed on developing specific conceptual tools for interpreting identity negotiation. These conceptual tools have been a good source of knowledge construction, and for making meaningful interpretations. On the other hand, the identity negotiation of African Australians has not been adequately addressed theoretically, and where it has been theorised, the focus has been primarily on a binary opposition of 'us' versus 'them' which may otherwise exclude the subject's everyday lived experiences. Therefore, employing the theoretical tool of 'hybridity' and the conceptual frame of 'interstitial space', permeability and entanglement, this study investigates the identity negotiation and social belonging of African Australians.

The secondary motivation for this study was to identify the less noticeable or taken-for-granted stories of Australians with African heritage through the instrument of theatre art in Australia. It soon became evident that these stories are not so much lost as concealed, and that there are no collective stories that can represent the different experiences of the population of former

refugees identified in Australia. The granting of humanitarian visas to this population in post-arrival settlement experiences has not translated to inclusion as they face significant barriers in the process of negotiating Australia and its lived experiences. The formulation of this study sought to reflect on in-depth enquiry into the social construction of African Australians' misrepresented identities and the element of exclusion in their post-arrival experiences. The intention was to investigate how African Australian negotiate their identities in Australia while thinking with the two chosen theorists: Homi Bhabha and Karen Barad.

Thirdly, the study was inspired by a desire to recognise the subtle nature of exclusion and the continuous construction of African Australians as refugees after their arrivals in Australia. There are now different types of media narratives about the subjectivities of African Australians, and their number is increasing. In mainstream Australia, these narratives are contingent on negative stereotypical construction, and are often a misrepresentation of the possible actualities. Coincidentally, the issues of identity negotiation and the subjectivities of any group has now also become one of the most prevalent subjects to research in sociology because of increasingly complex nature of belonging and the politics of belonging.

I will now begin with a prologue to my personal story in shaping my experience of connection and living with the experience of being stereotyped while studying at Jilin Normal University, Sì ping city, Jilin province, in the Northeast of China.

1.2   Fixity: My Experience in the Peoples' Republic of China

Zhang, a self-proclaimed caretaker, accosted me on the stairway of the fourth floor at the International Student Apartment (ISA) of Jilin Normal University, China and offered to show me around the foreign students' building and later the Confucian Institute. We concluded the tour at the recreation room on the ground floor of the building where he introduced me to other

Chinese and foreign students from the European bloc and some other Asian countries. Guang, a middle-aged man who had left his door ajar opposite the recreation room peeked through the half-closed door. "Guang, I'd like you to meet 'Lekan, a research student from …, please where did you come from?" Guang rolled his eyes in different directions with his brown eyes glossing over me in a look of disapproval, and muttered "Huh, Fēi zhōu[1]! Ta shi fei zhou ren?" (Are you from Africa?) Guang briefly shook my hand with a cynical smile and shut his door, but the new vocabulary "Fēi zhōu" became fixed. Curiosity about the phrase began to raise surging questions; could it be a form of admiration or a compliment; or was it denigration? I did not know at that time.

I first became exposed to the term 'Fēi zhōu' during my master's postgraduate studies program in one of the elective courses from the most popular Chinese textbook for foreigners. The books known as *Conversational Chinese 301* and *Boya Chinese* were basic textbooks used by the teacher for those of us who had just started learning Chinese (Mandarin language). The concept of 'Fēi zhōu' and its meaning was understood. The comprehension of the title became a troubling symbol to me everywhere I went or travelled to within China. Thus, it forced me to push back and 'be on the defensive' explaining and answering questions that I am not asked when discussion centres around place of origin.

The rationale of using my own story as a prologue to this study above is contingent upon the notion of fixity and being labelled a "Fēi zhōu" in the Peoples' Republic of China. Also, it provides a platform to understanding of what African Australians might have negotiated or be going through, and this is consistent with the plan of making 'fragments speak for themselves'

---

[1]**Fēi zhōu (非洲人)** has a negative connotation for people from Africa and or Africa as a continent generally in China. The negative descriptions encompass "Empty state", "Backward continent", "Nothing state", "Uncivilised and undesirable". In addition to this derogatory description is the provocative term used to refer to the black people as "He He", which means "black black".

(Wu, 2014). However, it is not based on this account alone that inference is made concerning the connections and negotiations of African Australians. Rather, I wish to set out from a place I am more familiar with before establishing and explaining other frames of references that support this study.

1.2.1   Negotiating the Connection

The Bilateral Education Agreement[2] (BEA) offered me the privilege of studying for my postgraduate studies programme. I lived and studied in a city called Sì ping city (四平), which stands at the centre of the Songliao plain, Southwest of Jilin province. However, during my stay in this city, my self-conception as being black and from Africa changed because [black] Africans are identified as incompetent, anti-social and some believe they are intellectually deficient (Shapiro, 2014). With this understanding, I tended to want to answer such intrusive questions about my place of origin tactically. This earned me the label "Mei guo ren[3]" [American] by some Chinese, but most of them still attach a disparaging description to my identity, basically because of my appearance or, perhaps, race.

The invasive nature of this categorisation later gave rise to the birth of an initiative known as *The BE-BE— Before Becoming* by ANSIC[4] with the support from the Nigerian embassy, to help Nigerian students define their status in China. The programme was designed to celebrate diversity, ingenuity and mastery of cultural differences through essay competitions bridging

---

[2] **Bilateral Education Agreement [BEA]** is a formal educational treaty and exchange program between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and The Peoples' Republic of China, a programme geared towards assisting students particularly from Nigeria to achieve social, cultural and technological exposure.

[3] **Mei guo ren** (美国人)is a descriptive admiration that means beautiful people of United States of America.

[4] **ANSIC**, The Association of Nigerian Students in China is an association that looks after the interests of Nigerian students in educational development, culture, social connection, social support, job search and bridging of language barriers between the students and the Chinese community. The purpose is primarily to build a network of trust and help achieve the common goal of connecting with The Peoples' Republic of China.

Chinese culture and African— Nigerian culture, to be precise. Introducing this ANSIC competition '"The BE-BE"— Before Becoming' here offers two basic point of reference to this study.

First, it suggests that an individual is a micro representation of the complex ascription for the larger society. It suggests, too, that the youth-oriented social context platform from where the young people share lived experiences of different compromises are highly significant. Secondly, when young people negotiate identity, they are simultaneously navigating extraordinarily entangled in-between spaces. Identity negotiations are never constructed in a void because individuals come together to play roles in shaping their self-presentation and by extension, groups of individuals also shape the identity construction of the whole group at a macro-level. During this study, I will return to this story as occasion demands because it overlaps with the context of my investigation.

The next section seeks to establish the global situation around refugees. However, since the study is about African Australians who were formerly refugees, it is then appropriate to outline the global refugee crisis around the world. Returning to an overview of the global refugee crisis and describing its outlook sets the tone of what young people may have encountered before arriving in Australia. In addition, recent accounts of African refugee settlement through the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) will further assist the background of this research.
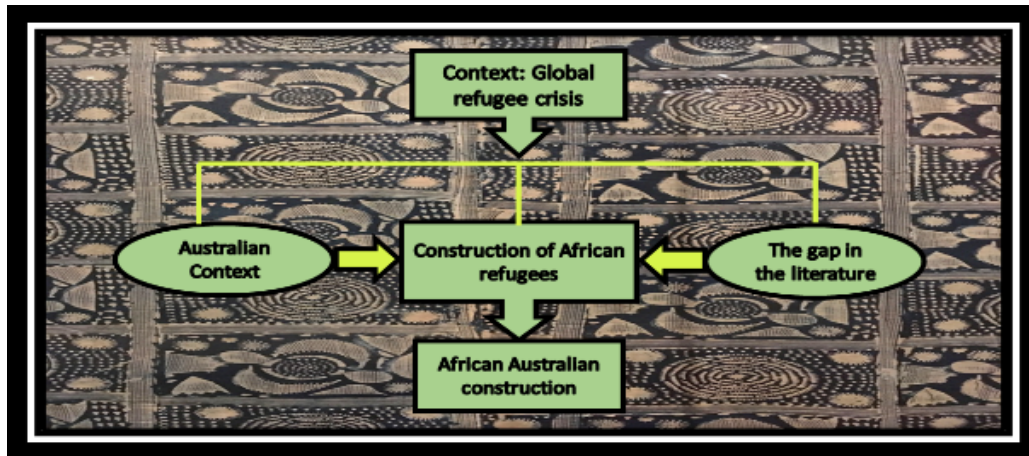
Fig. 4: *A chart showing the build up from the global refugee context to African Australian's construction.*

1.3   Context: The Global Refugee Crisis

The global refugee crisis and the number of forcibly displaced people remains at its highest level since World War II (White, 2017; Williams & Esieba, 2014). There are mixed reactions to accepting and rejecting these forcibly displaced and refugees in Australia and around the world (UNHCR, 2016). To put these images and their political ramifications into perspective, close to 1 per cent of the global human population or nearly 1 in every just over 100 people in the world is either displaced or a refugee, with an overall estimate of 68.5 million being refugees out of a total of 7 billion people around the world (UNHCR, 2017). Globally, the severity of the refugee crises has also been worsened by the horrific attacks in France, Germany and Belgium, which was clearly inspired by the "Islamic State[5]" from where most of the refugee crises emerged (Zunes, 2017). With these fatalities, countries have remained

---

[5] The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is a Salafi and deadly Jihadist terrorist organisation that follows a fundamentalist, Wahhabi and heterodox (a doctrine at variance with an orthodox position) doctrine of Sunni Islam. The Islamic State gained global prominence in late 2013 and early 2014 when Iraqi government forces were driven out of key cities in its Western Iraq offensive strike and capture of Mosul that culminated into the Sinjar massacre.

scepticalabout the real status of those who are truly facing humanitarian crises and those exploiting the process.

In recent years, numerous conflicts have erupted around the world. From the African continent, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, North-Eastern Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and now Burundi are through a state of turmoil (Crawley, Duvell, Sigona, McMahon & Jones, 2016). From the Middle East, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and around Asia, incorporating Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Pakistan, the refugee crisis remains a problem (Chatterjee, 2016; Baldwin-Edwards, 2005). Currently, the Rohingya (now known as the Rakhine state) is going through the hostility of 'ethnic cleansing', thus becoming the most persecuted refugee group on a large scale in the world since the end of the World War II (Silove, Ventevogel & Rees, 2017). Therefore, the refugee crises and its resultant persecution in and around the world is not reducing but rather on the increase. In addition, the ripple effect of these crises does not just impact directly the displaced or asylum seekers but also leads to questions about the social status and entitlement of former refugees. Specifically, the prevalence of negative stereotypical constructions of disadvantaged groups of people can be said to have influenced their sense of belonging.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides the definition of refugees as a person who:

> …is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-
> founded of being persecuted because of his or her nationality, race, and religion,
> membership of a social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to
> return to that country for fear of persecution (UNHCR, 2011, p. 1).

In the wake of the problems of instability around the world, particularly in Africa, some have been forcefully ejected, fleeing persecution for fear of their lives. While these refugees are often constructed as people who migrate against their intentions, the decisions to leave are always complex to comprehend. In Australia, refugees are regarded as people who have been granted refugee and humanitarian visas but are distinguished from 'asylum seekers' who are seeking protection as refugees but has not officially been recognised as refugees (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011).

Studies have shown that refugees spent a considerable length of time in other countries and in the process, some young African refugees were born during this 'in-transit' experience in which the families sought asylum (Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015; Sampson, Gifford & Taylor, 2016). Although, young African refugees' experiences differ, there are similarities, and these are dependent on whether they lived inside or outside refugee camps. The common experience of all refugees still revolves around exposure to violence, hardships, lack of basic life amenities, different forms of racism and discrimination (Berthold, Kong, Mollica, Kuoch, Scully & Franke, 2014; Quinn, 2014; Tempany, 2008).

While the complexities surrounding millions of refugees worldwide continues, only a few are being resettled in another country (Ramsay, 2017). The burden of resettling refugees in another country is shared in a more coordinated way among 28 countries only, including Australia (UNHCR, 2015). More places however, are offered by the United States of America in its resettlement program than any country, followed closely by Australia, Canada and the Nordic countries to the northernmost part of Western Europe (UNHCR, 2015). Both in the past and recent times, the movements of refugees have continued to grow out of proportion, coupled with their hazardous journeys especially in Africa (through the Mediterranean Sea), the Middle

East and Europe when compared to the journeys of those attempting to enter Australia (UNHCR, 2015; Browne, 2006).

1.3.1 Refugee and Humanitarian Visas: Australian Context

Australia granted 17,555 refugee and humanitarian visas for people in Australia between 2015 and 2016 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016, p. 70). These included 2,003 visas for people already in Australia and 15,552 visas for people outside Australia. Every year, between 12,000 and 15,000 refugees are resettled in Australia (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011, p. 19). Towards the end of last decade, Africa became the focus of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Specifically, from 2003 up to 2005, there was a 70 per cent increase in the number of refugees being resettled from African countries (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2011, p. 24). After the decade, there was a slight change in the priorities of the Australian government in terms of resettlement as African countries saw a decline in the number of its refugee and humanitarian intake. Significantly, between 2012 and 2013, Australia recorded a significant increase of over 12 per cent for refugees that come only from the African region (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013). By implication, the number of resettled refugees from African nations are on the rise in Australia.

However, with the arrival and resettlement of young African refugees in Australia, complexities and questions around their belonging remained unresolved (Andreasson, 2016; Bongiorno & Eklund, 2014). For instance, challenges around misrecognition and the misrepresentation of former African refugees continued (Keddie, 2012a, 2012b). In addition, the young people have commonly been constructed by the media as 'unwanted invaders' (Majavu, 2017; Parker, 2015; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010), 'violent' (Windle, 2008),

'underperforming' and 'lacking in confidence' (Windle & Miller, 2012). These types of construction have contributed to their being stereotyped, thereby increasing their experiences of discrimination and racism (Harris, 2010; Kim & Noh, 2016; Onsando & Billet, 2017). While resettlement is pivotal to the reconstruction of new experience for the young former refugees, they still face a significant barrier to having a sense of belonging and inclusion in Australia.

1.3.2 The Gap in the Literature

The experiences of young African Australians who had been refugees and how they build a culture of connection socially and negotiate their identity have not been adequately documented in Australia. There are detailed accounts in studies of the educational connectedness of African refugees into mainstream Australia (Olagookun & White, 2017; Naidoo, 2015; Naidoo, Wilkinson, Langat, Adoniou, Cunneen & Bolger, 2015; Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012). However, accounts of how this group builds a culture of social connection is not sufficiently acknowledged and discussed in the literature. Where the account of social connection might have been only slightly documented (Keddie, 2012a, 2012b; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Block, Cross, Riggs & Gibbs, 2013), it is often included in discussions of school experiences through the pursuance of social justice and ethical concern but does not consider how the former refugees negotiate or re-negotiate their own culture within a 'host' culture and what the implication might mean for the group. The re-negotiation of cultural identity and belonging by these African Australians and how they build a culture of belonging to Australia is one of the major focus of this study.

There are several studies of young people's experiences of multiculturalism or of how African refugees shaped their construction and connection in Australia (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Hanson–Easey & Augoustino, 2010; Nunn, 2010; Uptin, Wright & Harwood, 2013; Correa-Velez, Gifford & Sampson, 2017). Previous studies have also focused on inclusive education,

health issues, especially mental health and experience of violence for the African refugees (White, 2017; Stevens & Walsh, 2016; Vossoughi, Jackson, Gusler & Stone, 2016; Hughes, Corcoran & Slee, 2015; Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2013; Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010). Most of the past and current research focused on the education and the health status of the refugees, rather than considering how connection is socially constructed without necessarily falling into the notion of cultural dichotomy of "us" versus "them". It is with this understanding that this study seeks to investigate 'belonging' among young African Australians with prior refugee background experience. In addition, this study sets out to investigate the pathway through which subjectivity and belonging is reconstructed from the young peoples' stories.

In the next section, I briefly discuss the negative construction and description of young African refugees. This discussion briefly focused on how former African refugees have been labelled and how that description continues to affect them in Australia.

1.4   The Construction of African Australians in Australia

In the Australian context those from African countries can be considered a homogeneous group. This of course denies the countries that make up the continent of Africa. The African nation is characterised by different cultures, practices, values and complex linguistic repertoire. In this thesis, I have investigated African Australian identity but point out that each participant has a distinct language and culture from the actual country their families have left.

In contextualising this thesis, I paid close attention to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's annual reports between 2008 and 2015 (VEOHRC, 2008, 2014). I also considered *Social Inclusion Australia: How Australia is Faring* (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012). I consulted, too, reports by the Victorian Multicultural Commission

Forums for Young People, 2014-2015. These reports suggest a point of reference in terms of how to engage and maximise the young people's potentials. In light of the title of an earlier report into Australian-Sudanese young people by the Commission entitled, *Rights of Passage* (2008), I seek to investigate whether the 'passage' described is accessible for everyone including the more recent African former refugees.

The civil tension of the past and the current social reality of peddling xenophobic rhetoric against refugees and asylum seekers inform this investigation (Gough, 2017; Crane, 2016; Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016). These factors inform the study in the sense that racism, discrimination and xenophobia are built on apprehensive display of intolerance and cultural tension between two groups of people. With this cultural tension, misrecognition (Keddie, 2012a) ensues as a simple consequence, but how the minority group relates to these misconceptions through their own alternative negotiation of cultural identity and consequent reconfiguration is pivotal to this study.

Furthermore, there has been a significant debate around stereotypical construction of ethnic youth gangs and whether, young African Australians membership of ethnic gangs are shaped on the basis of ethnicity (Harris, 2016). The images depicted through these debates around young African Australians as member of ethnic youth gangs are extensively upheld in Australia. This upheld notion has not only "taken hold in the public imagination" (Harris, 2013, p. 68) but has trigger an introspective question on belonging, social alienation and exclusion.

The event that took place in 2016 during the Moomba festival in Melbourne attested to the way negative construction of African Australians are upheld in the public perception. Every year, Australians celebrate a culturally significant and most-attended community festival that holds on the Labour Day, a public holiday in March. For over six decades, the Moomba festival has remained a historical aesthetic and cultural landmark for Melbournians. The festival celebrates

Australia's laid-back lifestyle and people coming together to have fun showing the spirit of Australian family values. During the festival, some aggrieved young people took their aggression and social anger to Melbourne streets and the media basically had a field day with overstatements that target young African Australians:

> Hundreds of hooligans, of African … and other backgrounds swarmed into the city… [with the] intent of wreaking havoc…, people have been hurt and traumatised, after businesses have been wantonly damaged (*The Age*, *March 15, 2016*).

The criticism levelled by the media against the young people was panic-stricken based. Also, the media disapprove the manner at which the police managed the civil unrest, showing discontent about little or no actions taken during the Moomba festival turned 'riots'. Two Melbourne's newspapers[6] were insistent and argued that the police were constrained by the pressures that the young people will claim racial profiling if they were apprehended (Buttler, Argoon & White, 2016). Statistically, there is an uneven number of young black males on police watch based on ethnicity and the reporting on African gangs has been likened to 'media terrorism' (Farnsworth & Wright, 2016; Wahlquist, 2018). Moreover, racial profiling especially of South-Sudanese 'constantly [being] stopped' by the police because of possible affiliation to Apex[7] stigma is still prevalent (Farnsworth, 2016). The likelihood that these experiences may have had adverse effect on the African Australian community is a sheer underestimation.

---

[6] Melbourne's two major newspapers are the *Herald Sun* (a tabloid publication) and *The Age* (which is a more respectable broadsheet).

[7] The Apex gang is a group that has been loosely termed a street gang in Melbourne, Australia. The founding members were part of Victoria's South Sudanese community centred around Apex street in Dandenong North.

In addition, there have been conflicting reports in the public space that refugees are both 'lazy' and taking up the available 'Australian jobs', a scathing remark that has enraged activists upset about the government's apparent attitude towards refugees (Smith, 2017; Fletcher, 2015; Iltis, 2015). Furthermore, Peter Dutton the present Immigration Minister, came up with a deeply offensive characterisation of the refugees as "illiterate and innumerate" individuals who relished the dole and the use of the free health services provided by Medicare (Bourke, 2016). Subsequently, the *Challenging Racism Project 2015-16 National Survey Report* considers the positive, negative or neutral feelings towards some specific groups (Blair, Dunn, Kamp & Alam, 2017). The project explored Australians' disposition to issues around cultural identity and diversity, religious diversity, migration and the criminalisation of African refugees. The outcome showed that the challenges of intolerance towards minority groups in Australia continued to result in disharmony.

Racism and discrimination are two characteristic elements of experience that can easily dispossess individuals of their socio-cultural and educational entitlements. These factors do not merely increase the struggle of African refugees trying to navigate Australian life; they lead to young people becoming frustrated and disillusioned with life. The African refugees are vulnerable and disadvantaged because of their history and backgrounds. They may have had experiences through which their human rights were violated (VCOSS, 2015; VEOHRC, 2014). However, despite Australia having a stronger human rights culture, racial vilification and discrimination in education and social domains remain subtle and complicated in discourses where inclusion is negotiated. The levels of systemic discrimination, which refers to a structural practice of limited representation of a minority group in industry, are almost farcical.

The misrepresentation and misrecognition of refugees creates a tension around description that does not adequately embody what the group represents (McDonald, 2017; Keddie, 2012a,

Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). In other words, making inferences and jumping to conclusions, whether unhealthy or factual, leads to categorisation, stereotyping, racialisation and demonising of the group. The role played by the media in constructing refugees and the resultant misconceptions around multiculturalism in Australia mark them as a difficult group to deal with culturally (Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011).

Australia is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. It has students from many nations. It contains different communities and enclaves comprising racial and ethnic families some of which are members of various religious communities (Clark & Ashton, 2013; White, 2016). While the Australian community might know the status of refugees and perhaps where they come from to some extent, they probably know little or nothing about African refugees' past experiences or their negotiation[8] of these differences. By implication, it is likely that Australians' conceptions of these refugees are shaped by their narrative construction through the media (Windle, 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Hanson–Easey & Augoustino, 2010; Nunn, 2010). These conclusive descriptions are, however, not always a reflection of what African refugees might represent in Australia.

The next section introduces the theatre-art organisation site and brief extracts from the participants interviewed in this study. Introducing the theatre-art context at the outset clarifies both the direction of my enquiry and the purpose of connecting to WEYA.

1.5 Theatre-art Organisation: Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA)

This study chose this context to investigate African Australians' identity negotiation because the participants in this study had lived experience of the subject under investigation. The young

---

[8] Negotiation in this study is not restricted to how the African Australians articulate and re-articulate their identities such as issues connecting historical construction, economic factors and social belonging, but includes past and present experiences of social connection, cultural factors and exchanges.

people engaged in this study have also explored the concept of identity and belonging in their theatrical presentations, which are relevant to the issues investigated.

The history of Western Edge Youth Arts span over two decades across culturally diverse communities especially around the Western suburbs of Melbourne and some parts of regional Victoria. The artistic vision and purpose of WEYA is to engage with the diverse stories of young people to touch the hearts and minds of communities and Australians at large while making sense of the world they live in. This is achieved through the instrumentation of art. The organisation employed different mechanisms in art through which the young former refugees pushed the boundaries to make awesome contemporary performances in communities and schools. With the aid of a professional artistic director, they blended complicated subject matter with normal encounters in a performative, expressive way with the goal of building a network of connection through storytelling.

Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) is a non-profit, registered charity, which was established to provide positive arts and education experiences to culturally diverse young people living in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and the western region of Victoria. Their mission includes empowering young people, particularly those facing social, economic or cultural disadvantage, through access to quality arts experiences and the creation of artistic works that have a genuine adolescent and youth voice between the ages of 14 and 26 years. The participants saw art as a form of leverage through which fragmented spaces could be reconstituted and negotiated. Considering the nature of this study; the sensitivity and social risks, pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the actual identity of all the participants, which is consistent with good ethical conduct.

1.5.1 Extracts from WEYA participants' response

> Everything has changed really because, you know, I don't really know my mum's language. So, I kind of like get stuck or confused when she is talking to other people. So, people think I'm more Australian in my culture, but they don't really know much about me… yeah instead of them asking me about what I know about my culture, they judge me by saying you are too Australian. You don't know anything about your culture. (Rothania[9], participant from WEYA).

> All I can say is Australian culture is more like if you come from another country, if you act the way they want you to act and talk the way they want you to talk and be the way they want you to be, then you [are] going to feel like you belong here because you are doing what they want but as soon as you try to pull out your own individual traits and what you are that's when you know [who you are], and other people show you their real colors and tell you, you don't belong here. (Xhaka, participant from WEYA).

> Well, it was very hard to fit in into the environment you know my skin colour! I was scared first, I was very [very] scared, and I was like what are people going to see me like? What's my accent like? What's my question like? How do I talk? How's my interaction? Like if I speak, are they going to be able to understand me? So, I was quiet!... I knew I was in a battle I could not help myself by sitting down and keeping quiet. So, I decided to join in [conversations]and risk it and speak the way I speak because if I don't speak the way I speak, I am never going to fit in. (Dwayne, participant from WEYA).

The above extracts are from three African Australian participants. These participants present three different perspectives on their identity negotiation and belonging after their resettlement experience in Australia. Each extract offers a glimpse into the complexities of having to lay claim, reconstruct and contextualise the meaning of *belonging* and negotiating it. These identity negotiations occur within a fluctuating Australian social and cultural landscape of 'outsiderness' and newness as well as the challenges usually accompanying youth identity construction.

---

[9] In accordance with good ethical conduct in protecting the actual identity of all the participants in this study, pseudonyms have been given to all the participants.

The next section outlines the aims and objectives that guided the study. It draws upon the endeavours of Australian's National Centre for Student Equity (ANSCE), the mission of which hinges on widening participation and inclusion.

1.6   Aims and Objective of the Study

Gale and Parker (2013) reported that a range of documented discourses continue to impede the current approach to widening participation in Australia. The notion of 'widening participation' would appear to be narrower in scope compared to 'inclusion' (Florian, Black-Hawkins & Rouse, 2016). This was a remark made in the light of commentaries on the standings of the social systems and educational systems that this study introduces. This, in turn, underscores its significance. Gale and Parker (2013) explored Australia's National Centre for Student Equity (ANCSE), noting it is built on the premise that:

> Social systems (including education systems) tend to produce unequal outcomes (advantage and disadvantage) and that in part this is because individuals' starting positions [of cultural awareness] and the processes involved in the production of social and economic outcomes are unfair [and or unevenly distributed]. In this context, commitments to equity, [inclusion & belonging] is/ [are] a commitment to adjusting social [and educational] systems for socially just means and ends. In short, equity [inclusion & belonging] is a strategy: (a) to achieve (more) just ends; and (b) is informed by a theory about why and how a social system is not just (Gale & Parker, 2013, p. 5 [emphasis added]).

I quote in full to emphasise the notion that as we have unequal outcomes of social systems, so, too, do we have unequal educational systems that influence individual's and groups' experiences and outcomes. Because these inequalities exist, connection and or disconnection

are common experiences that individuals trying to adjust to social and educational demands must negotiate. Nevertheless, beyond the emphasis on inequity is the root of individual cultural awareness that often defines how well any individual fits in and/or otherwise.

The main *question* of this study was: How do young people who are of African Australian heritage negotiate belonging in Australia? The scope of this investigation includes exploring the empirical social construction and meaning of African Australian identities in relation to identified themes: racism, entanglement, discrimination and exclusion practices. Secondly, it investigates how African Australian identities are constituted, not just in a binary opposition of *us* versus *them*, but individual trajectories of identity negotiation.

In addition, focussing on the participants' lived experiences, new emergent African Australian identities in Australia become accessible. The main data collection method of in-depth interviews was to enable enriched access into the meanings of identity negotiation and expression. It would have been valuable also to investigate the experiences of school-aged students and also parents' negotiation and articulation of cultural identity and connection. However, the plan to accommodate that was beyond the scope of the current study.

Epistemologically, this enquiry was not conceived to be a definitive representation of all young African refugees in Melbourne. However, it furthers the debate around identity negotiation, and seeks to recognise and distinguish young African Australians' subjectivities in the times after they stop being a refugee. For brevity, the terms 'young people' and '[young]African Australians' are used interchangeably in this study.

1.7 Concepts and Terms

This section introduces some of the concepts and terminology used in this study. These notions are taken from generally accepted terminology in the literature and are explored in greater

depth in the theoretical framework chapters. Specifically, this study employs the theoretical concepts of Bhabha and Barad to investigate identity negotiation and so all definitions are contextually reliant.

Hybridity: The concept of 'hybridity' is suitable for unpacking the complicated history of how an individual fare when two or more identities mingle. Hybridity is associated with the notions of cultural and identity origins and a process by which the coloniser undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised (Bhabha, 2012). For African Australians, reconfiguration, a process through which they seek to make sense of cultural complexities, certainly occurs. Hybridity and its alignment with the concept of 'third space' became a theoretical tool with which to investigate newness and how an individual negotiates the cultural practices, beliefs and values of a place.

Fixity: Bhabha argued that fixity "is an important feature of colonial discourse" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 94), which is dependent on ideological constructions of otherness. Fixity designates what is symbolic in the historical, cultural and racial difference in the discourse of colonialism (Bhabha, 1994/2012). It is also a contradictory mode of representation in that it can signify rigidity, the state of being unchanged, disorder and misrecognition. Stereotyping is the main discursive strategy of fixity, and it is a form of knowledge that hesitates between what is often 'in place' or already known and what must be repeated. The construction of the colonial subject in discourse and the exercise of colonial power demands an articulation of forms of difference.

Interstitial Space: This is an 'in-between' space that introduces new cultural possibilities. From this in-between space, individual experience metamorphoses, through a combination of past and present experience into a hybrid identity. Bhabha (2012) argues that it is in the emergence of the interstices, otherwise known as the overlap, the articulation of cultural differences and displacement takes place. Extrapolating from Bhabha for this study, it is through the spaces of

the interstices, via a process of hybridising identity or 'mixed-ness' that African Australians reconstruct their identity, establish connection and introduce newness into the fragmented world.

Permeability: This biological concept focuses on the penetrability of thought and is based on a consistent metaphor. This is the movement of water molecules passing through tiny holes or small particles moving through a synthetic material. To extend the metaphor further, a semipermeable membrane only allows certain types of particles to move through it under certain conditions. For instance, particles can move fast, slowly or remain static on each side of the membrane depending on their concentration, pressure and temperature at any given time (Lopes, Ibaseta & Guichardon, 2016; Waugh & Grant, 2010). When particles move from a region of higher concentration to a lower concentration through a semipermeable membrane, diffusion takes place. This metaphorical concept is further discussed extensively in Chapter five, theoretical framework section of this thesis.

Entanglement: Barad argues that 'entanglement' is not simply being intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but involves lacking "an independent, self-contained existence" (Barad, 2007, p. i). The African Australians in this study did not merely emerge; rather, inter-related and intra-acting factors working not isolation but in diversities across time and space played a significant role in their self-contained existence. Furthermore, entangling factors such as culture, articulation, negotiation, identity, inter-subjective realities and the experiences of everyday encounter change based on each encounter resulting in different enfolding experiences. The traces of this enfoldings "involve the reconfiguring of the connectivity of the spacetimematter manifold itself, rather than mere changes in the shape of a bounded domain" (Barad, 2007, p.181).

Intra-action: Barad uses the term 'intra-action' in place of 'interaction'. Intra-action is the mutual constitution or the mingling of people or things possessing the ability to act. In addition, Barad (2007) reminds us, existence is not an individual affair, and because individual existence cannot be isolated from their interactions, then individuals emerging through such experiences become part of their entangled intra-relating (Barad, 2007). This concept assisted in the investigation of when Australians and African Australian intra-act because the ability to act emerged from within the on-going relationship not outside of it.

Diffraction: This is a physical phenomenon that focuses on significant workings and discussions in physics and philosophy of physics. In a way, it functions as a kaleidoscopic metaphor for describing and analyzing each dataset while responding to the details and mysteries of 'difference, specificities of relation and how they matter' (Barad, 2007, p. 71). The concept of diffraction makes a parallel with the theory of multifaceted analysis to highlight significant difficulties that are not attuned to differences; differences that can re-orient us about the effects of our knowledge on the world.

1.8   Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One described the conceptualisation of African Australian identity negotiation beginning with the rationale for the study, moving to an account of the global refugee problem and of how former refugees are stereotypically constructed after resettlement in Australia. The purpose was to investigate how the participants reconstruct their identity and renegotiate the experiences of connection and social belonging despite having been identified as problematic.

Chapter Two reviews the literature of resettlement and post-arrival experience pertaining to Australians with African heritage. This section acknowledges that difference between one culture may contradict what the other may stand for, shaping one's sense of belonging thereby.

This acknowledgement is crucial to shaping our understanding of identity articulation and belonging and to realising the exigencies of cultural identity.

Chapter Three explores the philosophical assumptions underpinning this thesis, using the social constructivist worldview as an interpretive framework. In addition, this section employs the methodology of 'thinking with theory' to invoke African Australian subjectivities. The research's ontological construct and its method of data collection are at the heart of this chapter.

Chapter Four focuses on contexts and stories, itemising how and where data was collected. In addition, the data used in this study consist in the participants' construction of what they are up to at certain times. This section opens with a description of the setting, WEYA, and following this are the individual participant's stories.

Chapter Five is divided into two parts and it provides an outline of the theoretical and conceptual framework of colonial subjects and their negotiating experiences. The first section focused on the troubled identity of the colonised, currently xenophobic rhetoric and the socio-political pushback against liberalism. I unpack all these using Bhabha's (1994) concept of 'hybridity' and the manifestation of third space in order to theorise 'permeable space'. The second section uses Barad's (2007) concepts of entanglement, diffraction and intra-action to suggest that the African Australians are entangled through intra-relating with time and space.

Chapter Six focuses on the analysis and discussion section of the study. This section uses Barad's (2007) concept of 'diffraction' to analyse emanating themes and this involves considering a lens of reading insights through one another in attending to differences and how they matter. This chapter analyses the 'taken-for-granted' knowledge or that which is recognised as being insignificant 'everyday change,' especially the composition of the participants and how uninformed judgements are reflected back in their narratives.

Chapter Seven continues the analysis and discussion segment of the study. It describes and explains the participants' identity negotiation and social belonging using a method suggested by the concept of diffraction. This section analyzes the socio-cultural aspects of life for African Australians, particularly how they negotiate different zones of building friendship, relating with their peers, engaging in social debate and managing cultural differences.

Chapter Eight marks the end and it focuses on the identity negotiation and brings forward a summary of 'what it all means', beginning with a poem adapted by one of the participants. Furthermore, it makes informed conclusions about longing to belong based on data from and by the participants, catalysing their involvement in the Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) programme. The conclusion consolidates the theory of permeability, enriching Bhabha's concept of hybridity and interstitial space and Barad's concepts of diffraction and entanglement.

Chapter 2:   Literature Review

> 'It [*in-between space*] is space of being that is wrought from the interruptive tragic experience of blackness, of discrimination, of despair. It is the apprehension of the social and psychic question of 'origin' – and its erasure – in a negative side that draws its worth from an almost substantive absoluteness' (Bhabha, 2012, p. 341).

2.1   Introduction

In this section, I focus on the post-arrival experiences of African Australians and consider how the categorisation of race has shaped the construction of African former refugees as criminal, other, violent and inferior. Beginning with the resettlement process in Australia, this segment critiques the identity construction of the African Australians in post-resettlement and the contentious cultural differences realised as part of the process of identity negotiation by noticing difference. I acknowledge that recognising differences between cultures may shape sense of belonging through the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference. This knowledge is crucial to shaping one's understanding of identity articulation and belonging, and this happens through the recognition of the exigencies of cultural identity and what they mean for these groups.

2.2   The Resettlement Process in Australia

Globally, for the first time in the recorded history of the changing world, nearly 1% of the world's population are people forcibly displaced (Olagookun & White, 2017; UNHCR, 2017).

Still, the recorded number is expected to rise due to the on-going conflicts around the world, especially with the genocide of ethnic-cleansing of the Rohingya people of the Rakhine state of Myanmar (Silove et al., 2017). With these types of challenges, millions flee and migrate to countries that are seen as able to sustain the quest for life fulfilment. Young people from African refugee backgrounds fall within the category of those who fled from perils before arriving into a developed country (Ramsay, 2017; Schultheiss & Davis, 2015).

Australia has a reputation for resettling refugees with the average acceptance falling between 12,000 and 15,000 being resettled yearly. Towards the end of 2016, Australia's net overseas migration (NOM) received an increase of 182,165 persons compared to the small proportion of 17,555 on refugee and humanitarian visas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016). At different times in history, especially before and after the World War II, Australia's refugee resettlement program has focused and advanced the Australia white policy. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection recently changed their focus and priority to accommodate Asia and the Middle East (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013). In the last decade, though, Africa was the focus of resettlement and many refugees have been resettled in Australia.

African refugees have faced significant setbacks when settling in Australia as there are systemic barriers which include, but are not limited to, skills recognition and economic or financial constraints (Tempany, 2008; VEOHRC, 2008, 2014). To be socially included means that people irrespective of their culture and creed possess the resources and capabilities to learn, engage, work and have a voice that can influence their own decision. However, this is not an accurate reflection of African Australians experience who are former refugees. Other barriers involve education to facilitate fast transition from intensive English language programs and centres to mainstream but without regard to their prior linguistic background (Major et al, 2013;

Tempany, 2008; VEOHRC, 2008; VEOHRC, 2014). Education is a fundamental human right (Reiner, 2010), which offers a pathway through which the African refugees can reconstruct their life and associated experiences, overcome stigmatisation and other forms of prior negative experience.
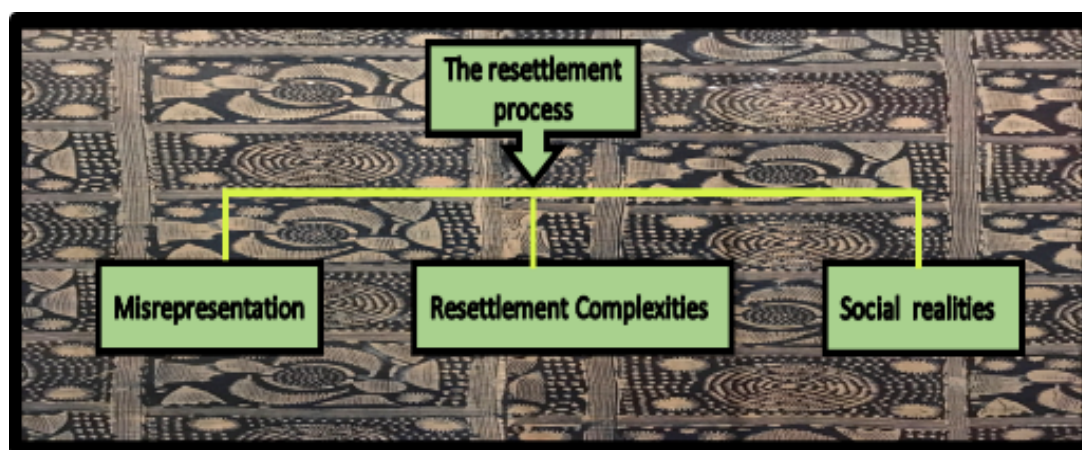
Fig. 5: *A flowchart showing the complexities of the resettlement process*

2.2.1   The Complexities of Post-arrival in Australia

It is not uncommon to encounter a group of young people who might have experienced disruption to their studies or whose education might have been hampered before arriving in Australia or going through the resettlement exercise (Matthews, 2008; McDonald, 2017; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Also, young African refugees struggle to have sustainable employment but beyond unemployment is the thought of being confronted by stereotype and racism (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008, 2011; VEOHRC, 2008). Research established that discrimination and racism against young African refugees are a common day-to-day experience whether in the public spaces such as school, community gathering and in relation with the police (Major et al, 2013; Reiner, 2010; Tempany, 2008). However, enrolling refugee students may have a complex history of traumatic experiences, post-resettlement difficulties, discrimination and being stereotyped, all the while lacking appropriate mechanisms of support. This all suggests a critical point of being disconnected from Australia.

In Australia, the resettled refugees are often provided with basic amenities and services in terms of education for school-age arriving students, adequate health care, material needs and standard housing (UNHCR, 2014). Fozdar and Hartley (2013, p. 24) argued that one of the main concerns of Australia is "the successful settlement and integration" [of former refugees]. These are the key objectives of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. However, with these basic provisions, questions around their belonging, entitlements, connection and acceptance of being identified as Australians remained problematic to negotiate (MacDonald, 2017; White, 2017).

The notion that basic citizenship entitlements are available and accessible does not necessarily translate to having a sense of belonging for African Australians. Rather, for former refugees, belonging is not just about construction (Uptin et al, 2013; 2016); rather, they continue to build a structure of negotiation and reconstruction through creative encounters to connect with Australia/ns. Belonging, therefore, becomes an operational experience of connecting with others because of obvious racism and implied racialisation that can be an everyday occurrence.

The next sub-section considers the post-resettlement challenges of the young people from African refugee backgrounds and of *fitting into* a new culture such as that of Australia. Post-resettlement in this thesis means resettling experience and encounters in a new community or country. This experience usually comes after navigating the challenges of trauma that are not restricted to displacement or leaving a war-torn environment, but also involve making sense of post-trauma experience and building a culture of connection in their present country and *new* home.

2.2.2   The Reality of the Complexities

Once refugees arrive, private and government institutions unfold practicable means of supporting them, specifically within the social ecosystem of connecting to Australia. Most

support services are for the initial settlement period of the first year with a higher stake of *becoming* ideal Australians, 'fitting in', acclimatising to the new culture as soon as possible (Matthew, 2008; McDonald, 2017; RCOA, 2015; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; White, 2017). Part of what makes 'fitting in' so tricky in Australia is the fact that the contexts in which African Australians are operating are also fraught with debate (De Gioia, 2017; Edgeworth, 2015). The contexts of belonging do not just happen by chance; they take place because individuals possess different experiences of where restrictions exist and how such experiences affect them or other people. The feeling of being alienated soon becomes a reality for the young Australians, continually made aware of the ongoing negative construction of former refugees in the public domain. As a result, the feeling of being excluded automatically permeates their thoughts even before connection.

The former refugees do have practical challenges around thoughts such as discrimination and racism, a common day-to-day experience whether in the public or private spaces like school, community gatherings and in relation to the police (Major, Wilkinson & Langat, 2013; Reiner, 2010; Tempany, 2008). Finding a suitable job and other economically viable opportunities are common challenges confronting the African Australians (Abkhezr, McMahon, Glasheen & Campbell, 2017; Abur & Spaaij, 2016). In addition, other concerns after the arrival of the former refugees revolves around employment in low-skilled and low-paid occupations (Abkhezr et al., 2017). Going through the experience of unemployment and/or under-employment can be daunting and emotionally draining as many of those who completed tertiary degrees at Australian educational institutions were still unable to find jobs (Correa-Velez, Spaaij & Upham, 2013).

In negotiating these issues, Correa-Velez, et al (2013) came up with an interesting study of the former refugees suggesting that those living in the regional areas of Australia are more likely

to experience social exclusion than the urbanites. While this may be unquestionably true to an extent; first, they fail to acknowledge that discrimination is no longer subtle and indirect as before. Secondly, they did not identify how social exclusion and construction of *fixity* continue to change the discourse of belonging and perhaps why reconstruction and renegotiation of identity is crucial for individual connection to Australia.

2.2.3   Responding to the Complexities

Spaaij (2015) considered how 'community sport' could shape belonging for a group of Sudanese youth and thereby cultivating a culture of inclusive experience. In the pursuit of positive and healthy social change in supporting settlement and associated challenges, community sport shapes the overcoming of social exclusion for refugees. Negotiating identity requires a focus on "discourses and practices of inclusion/exclusion that enable or impede a person's ability to claim belonging" (Spaaij, 2015, p. 305). However, as much as this may be an invaluable idea, this is just one aspect of connecting to Australia because belonging is both an individual practice and a social matter and it is contingent upon individual interpretation. Furthermore, other open-ended opportunities are typical to the idea of building a culture of connection, and this lies in the idea of having *a sense of belonging* despite noticeable difference.

Negotiating identity construction is strongly associated with the markings of difference and this is born out of cultural specificities in terms of race and the extent to which basic information about the Australian culture could be significant upon arrival (Uptin et al, 2013, 2016). Having proper information upon arrival is crucial, but it does not necessarily translate into reality of experience, especially when confronted with managing the pressure of the *in-between* [past and present experience] space. But with accessible social services and follow-up targeting both the newly-arrived groups and working with the former arrivals, a pathway to

building structure of a safe cocoon and healthy community would have been charted. What remained paramount is the social-reconnecting skill, which is focused on how the young people in this study connect and negotiate belonging.

In addition, the re-introduction of the young former refugee to Australian culture, which incorporates the complexities of gender roles and education systems, can only strengthen the cords of nationalistic tendencies and inclination. The acceptance that resettlement is not only about the necessities of living in a new place (Westoby, 2009), but also involves knowledge of culture, attitudes, norms, learning and un-learning of unproductive addictions. However, it is important to ask whether this acceptance is not pathologising the refugee as aberrant in need of change to fit in or function.

To avoid pathologising people from refugee backgrounds in general, significant studies have focused on seeking out *their* voices, to hear about *their* settlement experiences, or to engage in a dialogue with people from refugee backgrounds (De Gioia, 2017; Edgeworth, 2015; Westoby, 2009; Westoby & Ingamells, 2009). These types of studies indicated the importance of rehabilitating the refugees through the provision of effective settlement, which is an obligation of the resettling country.

While the acceleration of resettlement experience for the minority group is a requisite, focussing more on social belonging, cohesion and acceptance of the *in-betweeners* would be a significant addition in the right direction. Going by the phrase *in-betweeners*, I refer to those inhabiting the middle space of uncertainties and or what Bhabha (1994/2012) called *ambivalence*. The "culture's in-between" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 180) experience is consistent to that of a swinging pendulum that is neither up nor down, here nor there, now nor then spatial encounters. For instance, the participants in this study left their homes at a very tender age with two or more transits around Africa before arriving in Australia under humanitarian protection

visa. Thus, they may feel estranged, not being either an African nor able to face the herculean task of identifying as, or being identified as, Australians.

In response to this, "the government has a duty to create a favourable social context for successful integration" (Pittaway & Muli, 2009, p. 68). Besides, what the social context should look like and what should shape the approaches to how these Australians are constructed and understood defies the logic of the support that they receive and enjoy. Socially inclusive experience for the young former refugee groups in Australia conflicts with individual, social and cultural difference, a point of divergence perceived as negative to the advancement of Australia.

Consequently, individuals move between different social environments or contexts of different experiences such as relating with the norms, cultural dynamics and institutions while interacting with a mediated Australia. The African Australian in this situation manoeuvres between different socio-cultural contexts and so they experientially build and socially construct their belonging. Nevertheless, these constructions are not without tension between the explicit understanding of social situation of being portrayed as negative and living through changing situations. With the fluid nature of changing identity and subjectivities, the young people often grapple with difference in culture, values, beliefs and practices. Understanding difference serves as a catalyst through which the young people re-enact their own narratives.

Yuval-Davis argues that 'without this differentiation, there would be no possibility of struggle and resistance, and biology or belonging—would become destiny' (2006, p. 203). Significantly, this differentiation shapes the knowledge that *negotiation* is not constructed or built in a void but in 'intra-action'. The element of 'intra-action' gives this study a new sense of thinking about relationships and casts light on how the participants build and consolidate

their identities and subjectivity. This concept is further discussed in the theoretical framework section.

2.2.4   Misrepresentation and Current Social Realities

The characteristic feature of an individual's identity and/or that of a collective group such as former refugees and the 'misrecognition' that goes with that description thrusts them into different forms of categorisation (Keddie, 2012a; Windle & Miller, 2012). The classification of these groupings raises questions about where they belong. It is inextricably linked with such issues as tension around cultural practices, values, beliefs and national identity they will take up. The contextualising of this study also focused on the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's annual report of 2008-2015 (VEOHRC, 2008, 2014).

These reports suggest a point of reference in terms of how to engage and maximise the potential of young people from different backgrounds. Consistent with the title of the earlier report by the commission titled, *Rights of Passage* in 2008, is a question that seeks to investigate whether the passage is accessible for everyone including the Australians of African descent. The African Australians' struggles to coping with being different and stereotyped suggests what is known about young peoples' social identities in Australia (Harris, 2016). It is significant to note that the challenges are not only about the struggles, rather; of the borderline work of culture enfoldings, which requires a meeting point with unfamiliar "newness that is not part of … past and present" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 10). These tensions account for the anxieties of misrecognition but how the minority group relates with these misconceptions through negotiation of cultural identity to connect is crucial to this study.

Historically, the assault and the death of Liep Gony at Noble Park in 2007 epitomised the discourse surrounding African Australians not *fitting into* Australia. Kevin Andrews, the

erstwhile Immigration Minister for the Coalition government, responded with a critical assessment of the African community saying, "some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life" (Farouque, Petrie & Miletic, 2007, p. 2; VEOHRC, 2008, p. 5). The public spaces that these young Africans used for learning, social interaction, cultural exchanges and connectivity are strained with misconceptions, racial tensions and senses of withdrawal that leans towards discrimination (Keddie, 2012a; VEOHRC, 2014; VCOSS 2015).

Recently, there have been conflicting reports in the public space that refugees are both 'lazy' and taking up the available 'Australian jobs', a scathing remark that has enraged activists concerned about the government's attitude towards the refugees (Fletcher, 2015; Iltis, 2015; Smith, 2017). Activists have strongly criticised the government as playing a hide and seek game that is tantamount to criminality on the part of the government (Fletcher, 2015). Furthermore, disapproval of the government acting and operating in secrecy concerning the refugees tends to disenfranchise the group, infringing on their human rights, a possible act of criminality on the part of government. The inconsiderateness and criticism on the part of the coalition government against this minority group as an opportunist does not alleviate their concerns but rather; worsened their position (Bourke, 2016; Harris, 2016). This led to a process of seeking to depose Mr. Peter Dutton, the present Immigration Minister (Iltis, 2015; Smith, 2017).

Both the age of the people (young) and their race (African) are characteristics of experience that can increase the risk of falling-out with the societal institutions, which may otherwise lead to social exclusion (MacDonald, 2017). The combination of the two experiences does more harm than merely making difficult the young people's struggle to navigate and negotiate Australian ways of life; they also become frustrated, disillusioned young individuals.

Significantly, the African refugees are vulnerable and disadvantaged because of their history and background; they may be scarred by experiences through which they may have their human rights violated (VCOSS, 2015; VEOHRC, 2014). However, despite enhancements to Australia's human rights culture, racial vilification, discrimination in education and in the social domain remains subtle and understated. Systemic discrimination, which refers to a structural practice of limited representation in an industry or geographic area perpetuating disadvantage for racialised group, remains a sociological vacuum troubling the young people.

The 'misrepresentation' and 'misrecognition' of African Australians creates tensions around description that do not adequately embody what the group represents (Keddie, 2012a; Olagookun & White, 2017; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). The making of inferences that draw conclusions leads to categorisation, stereotyping, racialisation and justification for demonising the group. The impact of the media in misconceiving refugees and the meaning of multiculturalism in Australia also primes to a general identification of Africans as a difficult group to deal with culturally (Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011). Finding young people of African descent under the scrutiny of police watch, such as being 'constantly stopped' and a negative reporting of this young Australians by the media are common experience that has been likened to 'media terrorism' (Farnsworth & Wright, 2016; Wahlquist, 2018).

The reason for identifying the young people as a difficult group to deal with culturally is hinged on noticeable claim of social vices committed by a few of the disillusioned youth. Let me acknowledge that this is quite an intricate matter that can worsened already sensitive issue, which may culminate into "environmental conflict between refugee and the host communities" (Martin, 2005, p. 329). In the sense that not engaging with the minority group now or not developing a mechanism that addresses the mistrust between the young people and negotiation of Australia can only become more complicated if left unchecked.

The next section considers the presence of several distinct cultures, ethnic groups and communities within Australia. The section discusses to what extent multiculturalism can be said to be a success towards ensuring national identity, social cohesion and inclusion.

2.3   The Multicultural Realities of Australia

Multiculturalism as a public policy is a response to the increasing ethno-cultural diversity of the present-day Australian society (Markus & Dharmalingam, 2014). Multiculturalism plays significant roles in managing the consequences of ethnic and cultural diversity between individuals upholding different creeds within society at large.
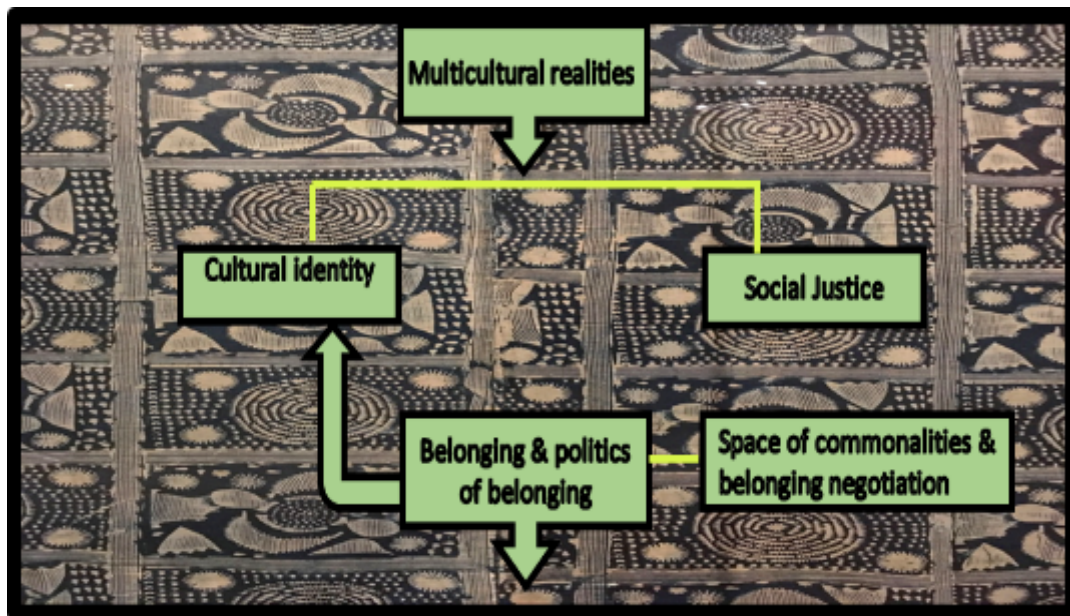
Fig. 6: *A chart showing multicultural realities and space of commonalities.*

Recently, the assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Zed Seselja, declared in a policy statement that multiculturalism in Australia is a success, but still acknowledged the very anti pattern to the whole idea of multiculturalism (Norman, 2017). The acknowledgment of attitudes to multiculturalism as very anti represents a negating factor that questions an individual's sense of belonging and connection to a place, such as Australia. Significantly, the suggestion by the assistant Minister that multiculturalism is a success contradicts the need for

critical interrogation (Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011). Evidently, not every Australian find it appealing to sign up for a multicultural Australia that allows difference to thrive.

As much as Australia could be disputably regarded as the quintessence of 'multicultural society' (Markus, 2013; Markus & Dharmalingam, 2014), there are still difficulties for African Australian to maximise their full potentials within Australia. If we understand *postcolonial* to mean 'new modes' of how difference is re-inscribed and enters private and public domains, then on-going identity negotiation becomes not just significant, but imperative because it aims at allowing possibilities of other cultural hybridities. Contrary to the argument of Markus (2013) and Markus and Dharmalingam (2014) about the cohesiveness of Australia, I argue that Australia is not yet an absolutely 'socially cohesive' nation. Minority groups in Australia continue to live in relentless psychological vacuums, craving for unconditional inclusion and yearning for acceptance. The existence of this 'vacuum' makes negotiating the dynamics of belonging and identity complex.

In this next section, I will focus on the three dimensions of the Australian Government policy: social justice, cultural identity and economic efficiency. However, I will focus on social justice and cultural identity because of their relevance to this study.

2.3.1 Social Justice

Social justice is one significant focus of the Australian Government that seeks to address issue around inequity that continue to plague Australia (Keddie, 2012a, 2012b; VEOHRC, 2014). There are still concerns around cultural factors within policies of the Australian Government meant to be directed at solving the problems of inequity. This is because the premise of social justice is contingent on the belief that all Australians regardless of their ethnic origin should not just have access to equality and opportunity (Keddie, 2012a; MacDonald, 2017; Sidhu &

Taylor, 2012), but also be entitled to a genuine sense of belonging and equality of treatment. If multiculturalism is supposed to open equal opportunity for every 'Australian', then broader social justice strategies are required to making it equitable and accessible to not a few, but all Australians.

Colic-Peisker and Farquharson suggest that contributing to the general understanding of multiculturalism occurs by questioning whether it is "out of favour" (2011, p. 579). Questioning how in favour multiculturalism may be is quite foggy because what is out of favour in a context could be in favour in another context. The rhetorical commitment of the opposition party and the Coalition to advancing the course of a multicultural Australia has yet to translate into a socially justified Australia (Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011; Norman, 2017).

With the consecutive and the recent changes of Government in 2013 and 2015 respectively, we can recognise a threat not only to 'Australian society', but also to minorities desiring a sense of belonging. In the case of young African Australians, this threat continues to expose the young people into a politically volatile fragment within Australia. It is into this challenging terrain and often dichotomising political and socio-cultural context that the young people in this study have been living and have had to negotiate their new lives. Discourse on the resettlement of the former refugees is just a segment of their ongoing story, exposing the permeable space through which the young people relate to Australia, a space where identity is shaped, and social belonging fostered, or not.

According to the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS, 2015) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC, 2014), a 'socially just' Australia focuses on:

- a fair distribution of economic resources;

- equal opportunity for participation;

- community life and unhindered decision-making;

- access to essential services such as education, housing and health care; and

- uninfringed rights in industrial, legal and civil affairs.

Significantly, participants in this study registered mixed feelings towards the idea of whether Australia's is an egalitarian society. In other words, Australia may have to go beyond multicultural policy to create and enforce a culturally responsive platform for all. This will assist and ascertain that every Australian enjoys evenly distributed opportunities without discrimination or fear of categorisation. Thus, society, schools and teachers will have to be more responsive to ever-changing cultural and societal practices to support a transformative curriculum.

2.3.2   Cultural Identity

Culture is not only complex (Clarke, 2008), but can also be multifaceted for individuals negotiating its challenging expressions. As imperceptible as culture may seem on the surface, it is all-encompassing and far-reaching, incorporating every aspect of an individual life such as custom, education, language, social relations, tradition, arts and even identity composition. Like any national culture, 'Australian culture' has changed in its expressions, and the change is on-going. However, the narratives of cultural identity found in the public domain are enclosed by archaic descriptions of integration and assimilation. In the present Australia, there is a need for a culture that can both synthesise the past and cater for the future, applying with hindsight and foresight what makes Australia a nation and its people unique.

Furthermore, because public discussion around cultural identity is fragmented (Lester, 2015), this study proposes a concept of *interstitial culture* as a possible response to the ongoing

question of cultural identity and difference. The composition of Australian society, with almost a third of the population being born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012), epitomises an ideal vantage position for Australia and suggests a picture of what a multicultural society should depict. However, the success of this representation, coupled with the enaction of advantageous multicultural practices, is also contingent upon the existence of clear sense of connection and identity. Any description of 'cultural identity' captured solely with hindsight from the past cannot accurately capture the reality of the Australia's cultural issues today.

Narratives debating cultural identity have remained the centrepiece to the construction of the nation and national belonging, and such discourses have continued to prove significant in the context of the multiculturalism and identity debate (Sonn, Quayle, Mackenzie & Law, 2014). Clark and Ashton in their support for balanced and honest history further raise the issue that Australia's history is fluid and far from being settled (2013, p. 14). The question of what it means to be Australian remains unsettled. This helps explain why the young people in this study are not *fitting in* and are positioned as outsiders. Hence, they miss out on certain privileges and continue to experience disconnection.

2.4 Belonging and the Politics of Belonging

The questions of belonging and the politics of belonging constitute

some of the most difficult issues that are confronting all of us these

days (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 1).

The term 'belonging' means the experience of being included in or associated with and connected to a discourse or practice. I have used this concept already, but depth of analysis is required. To avoid glossing over the term, this section is dedicated to exploring belonging and the politics of belonging.

On a personal level, 'to belong' means having a feeling of connection, which includes feeling safe, accepted, welcome, at ease somewhere. These feelings accumulate to form an emotional attachment and connection (Antonsich, 2010; Knott, 2017; May, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2016, 2011, 2006). The aim of this thesis, as pointed out in Chapter 1, is to investigate how individual negotiate and experience social belonging, and how certain socio-historical and discursive aspects (often referred to as the politics of belonging) are negotiated and articulated in Australia. This investigation does not pay much attention to the emotional attachment aspect of belonging from a psychological point of view; rather the focus is on individual lived experience of identity and belonging negotiation within the interstice.

In addition, because 'belonging' is a relative term, there is the need to open the discourse beyond belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Knott, 2017; May, 2011) to question and trouble the concepts of reconstruction and identity negotiation themselves. Therefore, it is not just about belonging discourse but the perpetuation of exclusion practices and "new hierarchies of belonging" (Back, Sinha & Bryan, 2012, p. 139). Back et al. argue that new hierarchies of belonging are a "situation where minority communities are positioned differently … by a racial reordering" (2012, p. 140). The positioning becomes an issue of concern for different groups of people claiming belonging for different reasons. It is the positioning and the claims accompanying it that culminate into not just border work but 'everyday bordering' (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy, 2017).

Betts and Birrell (2007) also differentiate between nationalistic tendencies and systematic connections of belonging to a nation. They argue that having a sense of connection includes devotion to laws and upholding systematic processes of a nation, which goes beyond a superficial title of 'patriotism and loyalty'. In their description, they see membership of a nation "not as sign of belonging to a distinct people with their own history memory … and sense of

facing common future" (2007, p. 50). This shows the notion of 'belonging' is complex because of its peculiarities. While it is possible for migrants or refugees with stupendous histories to have a sense of attachment and the nationalistic spirits of belonging, an Australian by birth might feel disorientation. This simply suggests that minorities such as African Australians may still be regarded as *personae non gratae* of Australian society.

Significantly, the concern here is about how new hierarchies of belonging are established as argued by Back et al. (2012), and the common discourse of who can belong and who does not (Anderson, 2005, 2006; Sonn et al, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011). The sociological imagination of 'belonging and the politics of belonging' may be self-explanatory on the surface but goes beyond the idea of feeling of 'attachment' into the experiential realms. Skrbis (2006) interrogated a discourse where "such differential treatment" between Australians (p. 178) is replicated but "often unintentionally". There is a fluctuation that goes with belonging, an experience that is never static but always in the process of becoming, always in the interstices, and thus allows different meanings and definitions.

Perhaps, beyond the differential treatment comes the challenge of thinking Australianness, which is regularly constructed and does suggest the pathway to belonging and citizenship. If the argument raised by Clark and Ashton is anything to go by, "Australia's history is far from settled" (2013, p. 14); thus, for the African Australian to connect in postcolonial Australia, boundaries may have to be reconstructed and altered. This is because "Australians are prone to continuously re-examine/[ing] their national identity" (Skrbis, 2006, p. 180) in terms of who they are and where they belong. The persistent continuity of traditional understandings of Australianness is evident at both ends of the spectrum of being a former refugee and Australian. For the participants, the reality remains in the in-between space or the middle ground between

the past and the present experiences. This is the point where difference resonates with the cultural other in Australia.

2.4.1   Belonging: A Space of Commonalities?

Belonging is shaped by different categories that intersect and overlap in different social locations, determining an individual's sense of attachment to a place. The construction of 'belonging' is based on political values and ethical issues, characterising a 'politics of belonging' and/or boundary maintenance (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011). While there is always a space of commonalities where sameness is the norm, or outside the boundaries for national/ethnic belonging, being outside any of these boundaries can lead to social isolation, alienation, threat and inarticulation.

I describe 'belonging' as a place of commonalities because experience is never static. African Australian experiences are far from being settled but keep changing based on cultural contexts and their variableness. As they gain more and more interactive and social experiences, reconfiguration takes place. This is a process through which individuals sought to make sense of these cultural complexities but are often misinterpreted and misrecognised. Because Yuval-Davis's (2006, 2011, 2016) analytical framework is recognised as one of the most wide-ranging analytical tools to study the "notion of belonging" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645), I draw on its constructs here.

To understand belonging as a place of commonalities allows for an expansive interpretation of what individuals have experienced and how they have negotiated these experiences. May (2011) explains belonging "as a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings" (2011, p. 368). However, "being at ease" may be a confusing explanation because it is a relative term that can be questioned. Within the same context, an individual could be "at ease" with an

experience and at the same time, feel unease with similar experiences in different contexts. For example, the African Australians savoring the experience of social night life may feel unease with racial profiling and law enforcement agents, who see them as a social threat in Australia (Farnsworth, 2016). Therefore, comments on experiences that speak of 'belonging' as recognising or misconstruing a sense of ease or unease are contingent upon understanding these fluctuations in terms of belonging as a *process* that may never materialise.

Seeing belonging as a *process,* then, helps this study in investigating further the crafting of new cultural space and the accompanying spatial dislocation in a less complicated way. I aim to achieve a more differentiated construction of 'belonging' that does not essentialise one culture over the other (Butcher & Dickens, 2016; Fraser & Voyageur, 2017). For instance, the home, school, community (neighborhood), social gatherings and the nation are all possible spaces of belonging, but these spaces are often strained with disconnections and the experiences of being ostracised. It is therefore significant to focus on how these young people negotiate the spaces of belonging and how they build a culture of articulation when they become 'entangled' (Barad, 2007) with difference of experiencing Australia. We need to realise that it is possible that to belong takes place in different ways and for different reasons because of its "dynamic process" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 12). However, negotiating identity may not always be spontaneous and experiencing connection may quite be ambiguous and if not, can be processual before an individual can be said to have a sense of *belonging* or *become* (Australian) if they ever can.

Significantly, there are principal issues in everyday bordering that still impede belonging. What may appear to be obstructing belonging is contingent on 'everyday bordering', which summits on the process of racialisation occasioned by different interfaces, encounters and dis/connections with members of the target group, organisation or nation. The concept of 'everyday bordering' affords focus on racism as discourses and practices, which construct

immutable boundaries between collectivities, "which [are] used to naturalize fixed hierarchical power relations" (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017, p. 1048) between the two boundaries of the young people and Australia. Furthermore, Yuval-Davis argues (2003, p. 4), "neither citizenship nor identity can encapsulate the notion of belonging." Belonging, she argues, is where the sociology of emotions interfaces with that of power, where identification and participation collude. Belonging is a space of aspiration and yearning. As a result, it is only when one's safe and stable connection to collectivity becomes threatened that identity negotiation becomes articulated.

2.4.2   Negotiating Belonging

> The struggles for recognition always also include an element of
> construction and it is for this reason that studying the relationships
> between positionalities, identities and political values is so important
> (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp. 201-202).

Considering Yuval-Davis's (2011) belonging framework, there are three facets to the negotiation of belonging:

1. social locations;

2. identification and emotional attachments and;

3. ethical and political values

I will briefly discuss each of these points and seek to clarify how these relate with identity negotiation and belonging in Australia.

The social location of belonging is a complex site of connection that is dependent on socio-historical moments (Yuval-Davis, 2011):

> Belonging is not just about social locations and [the] construction of
>
> individual and collective identities and attachments, but also about the ways
>
> these are assessed and valued by self and others (2016, p. 6).

The social location means site of diverse settings and is based on the different aspects or categories of identity an individual might hold, such as cultural background, ethnicity, race and gender.

In essence, what May (2011, p. 364) called the "relationship between self and society" foregrounds the everyday life experiences through which these social practices and experiences can both change and influence people to act or think in certain ways. It is within these settings that the social construction of connection changes: It is a fluid not a static platform. From this social location, individuals either feel the warmth of relating to different settings or they struggle with connection. Experiencing the warmth of acceptance simply turns the setting into an accessible cocoon for individuals.

Social locations differ depending on the nature of agency. Agency is the ability of individuals to exert individual authority on any subject matter that typically might have been difficult for them to exercise. In some social settings, categories are differentiated in terms of religion, class, race, ethnicity and gender, and one category could be more valuable than the other. Also, what shapes social location revolves around the hierarchical structure of belonging where social fields relate and intra-relate with each other. For instance, someone can be influential on the social gradient in one field such as their local community but perform relatively lowly in a

different field such as a school setting because of differences in the interplay of agency. Moreover, at different locations, social fields intersect with each other in various situations, influencing an individual's experience of belonging at that moment.

Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 7) argues that the discourses of race, gender and class possess their own ontological bases because "there is no separate concrete meaning of these social categories, but they are mutually constitutive in any historical moment." Similarly, Bhabha (2012) analyses the construction of the boundary locations of culture as not being where "something [such as culture] stops, but where [the cultural practice] begins its presencing" (p. 1). In addition, it is in the emergence of the interstices, the intersection and displacement of domains of difference, that social belonging is shaped, and/or cultural passages and values are negotiated. Therefore, the place where past experiences are reconstructed in light of the reshaping of present experiences is not merely a setting but also a location for shaping the future.

Thus, belonging is evaluated in different capacities by people from the same social location who might feel connected and belong to the same community (Yuval-Davis, 2011). However, with the prior social location, a descriptive title such as 'refugee' becomes a synonymous household name for the African Australians. This aspect of labelling points to a cultural conflict that continuously questions the status of the participants' legitimacy as contributing members of the Australian nation.

2.4.2.2   *Identification and Emotional Attachments*

The fulcrum of social belonging is all about warm acceptance of feeling 'at home', 'identification and attachment' an individual can experience both at a fundamental level to involving segments of everyday life (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011, 2016). Negotiating these affective experiences is precipitated upon sociocultural contexts of what

home is composed of, the host society, continuous reception and individuals building a structure of what works for their connection.

Feelings of 'homeliness' vary in terms of either having cultivation and refinement or not or being suited to a domestic life that is not pretentious. The meaning also differs from one individual's sense of connection and attachment to that of another. For instance, Hage, (2014) argues that for some Australians, Australia is home, or they see Australia as *their* home. On the contrary, for the African Australians, home does not mean "governmental belonging" (Griffiths, 2012, p. 417), or extreme belonging as identified by the participants in this study. For them, every encounter of connecting with Australia is a hard job where they must dig in and engage purposefully if they hope to achieve any meaningful outcome. Therefore, 'home' appears to be a small space they carve out or re/create within the Australian community coupled with their experiences that define them and probably served them in their initial connection to Australia.

The initiation of connection, however, does not necessarily mean individuals still experience belonging as does other Australian who enjoys governmental belonging. The African Australian struggles with different identities and may feel obliged to relate with everyone else in the absence of any *extreme belonging* experience. In addition, Antonsich (2010) argues that alienation or isolation from place-belonging such as Australia results in an individual feeling of being ostracised and disenfranchised. Negotiating identity and belonging in Australia can be complex because of the fluctuating status of belonging experience as a *process* and the emotional attachment of wanting to belong. The desire to belong is inspired by individual aspirations, which are not only based on the optimism of wanting to become Australian and which may never become reality, but the continuous reconstruction of individuals' identities and this seems to be ongoing.

2.4.2.3 *Ethical and Political Values*

The third section of the belonging framework focuses on the values placed on different social identities and social locations and how these values are judged. Yuval-Davis argues "specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/should be drawn" need to be drawn in less exclusionary ways (2006, p. 203). What happens in the interstitial space of creating art is a case in point. The young people in this study employ the instrumentality of building connections by placing value on drama, arts, songs, poetic reflections. The passageway from where these values are negotiated becomes permeable and functional for them, allowing socio-cultural flexibility while helping them make sense of how it enfolds.

Ideologies and values that are naturalised in Australia will usually have to be negotiated by the former refugees. This can prove problematic and awkward if the subjects are positioned as different, as the other. These can also be regarded as inclusion and exclusion boundaries shaping the social and political aspects of belonging or what Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011, 2016) called 'politics of belonging'. Specifically, 'politics of belonging' involves two opposing sides, which are the side that lays hold on belonging or the side that claims belonging and the side that has the agency of granting the status of belonging (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650). While one side possesses the agency of granting belonging, the other side does not, and this results in asymmetric experience. The hegemonic side that can bequeath belonging, however questionable, still defines the values that establish whether an individual can or has the desire to belong in that cultural space. Clearly, how an individual is perceived is still a function of categorisation and this indicates challenges around how boundaries are valued and judged.

Three key features are inseparable from social locations: the way these values are placed on different social identities; negotiation of space, and how these values are judged. There is little

or no agency for the minority to choose whether they will be able to develop a culture of connection or belonging based on the social reality. The values that underpin and shape boundaries often create tension between the outsider and insider. Beyond the division of outsider and insider, socio-historical values such as hierarchies of belonging or postcolonial hierarchies lie in the in-between space through which re/negotiation of cultural space can be re/constructed.

2.5   The Falling Apart of Social Belonging

Post-colonialism is preoccupied with the fixity of location and the history of colonisation, which can be identified in discourse. It firmly establishes the possibility of not only the literal descriptions and conditions of colonial societies, but also of *negotiating* such experience. The negotiation is not restricted to how the colonised subjects articulate their identities such as historical and economic factors but includes social connection and cultural factors. Specifically, it is in challenging the notion of 'fixity', the state of being unchanged, that this thesis considers African Australian's negotiation of cultural identity and belonging.

The fear that large numbers of immigrants who were categorised as 'different' in either their cultural and/or political affiliations purely because of their racial appearance naturally stirs a debate around who belongs and who does not. This concern raises an issue of being 'contaminated' or the dread of being 'swamped', and this could "undermine the [cultural practice of the] Commonwealth political systems" (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010, p. 307). These concerns are represented in stereotypical images which convey a notion of negativity about the minority through the media (MacDonald, 2017). In addition, with these fears, the exclusion and marginalisation of the 'other' (such as former African refugees) within Australian culture continues to rupture social educational and cultural inclusion (Miller, Ziaian & Esterman, 2017; Olagookun & White, 2017).

Furthermore, the notion of difference is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to tackle and accommodate because the experience can be isolating. It is conflictual to embrace and respect cultures that are not just different to one's own but it also tough to accept cultural practices that demonise one culture over the other. These tensions of seeing a culture as different or barbaric are played out on daily basis on the international stage as in the rejection of refugees in need of immediate resettlement but identified as 'terrorists' (Zunes, 2017). This phenomenon has its own mirrors in Australia: the 'One Nation Party' and 'right-wing populism'. Similar reflections are evident in America, Europe and around the world (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Wodak, Mral & KhosraviNik, 2013). These tensions are shaped through the media's version of constructing the minority in certain ways. Significantly, individuals relate to these tensions differently as in the case of Colin Kaepernick[10], who employs silent protest, an inner resistance tool to reconfigure an ongoing debate around social justice and nationalism in the United States (Coombs, Lambert, Cassilo & Humphries, 2017; Kane, Tiell & In, 2017).

In Australia, it is not strange to see how schools may intentionally misunderstand young people of colour, or erroneously misjudge Australian students of African heritage (Cook, 2017). This often happens in the form of misplaced priority and in situations where the school's fundamental practices contradict the cultural practices of the minority students. When black students are singled-out for the type of hair style they have, this can only signal the peak of discriminatory practice over cultural appropriation. Again, being black and/or being unconditionally different often comes with some form of negative stereotype and invisibility. For instance, *Invisible Man*[11] by Ralph Ellison is a *Bildungsroman* novel that explores the lived

---

[10] Colin Kaepernick, a professional NFL football player for San Francisco 49ers, back-up quarterback took the high road of a "silent protest" sitting while the National anthem of the "Star-Spangled banner" was sung. The decision later changed to taking a knee that the media blew out of proportion but an avenue through which Kaepernick felt empowered to articulate the social injustice in the United States.

[11] *Invisible Man* (Ellison, 2016) is a novel coinciding with the dawn of the United States Civil Rights movement. The novel is predicated on an unnamed protagonist-narrator who had been forged in the underground of

experience of a beleaguered young African-American man from the era of Booker T. Washington and WWII. It emphasises the struggles that an African-American goes through in negotiating identity and belonging. Despite the time that the novel was written, *Invisible Man* today remains a relevant social reality and epitomises the experience of wanting to belong.

The next section will focus on re-imagining integration notwithstanding the notion that integration is still overlaid with hitches and contradictions because of the complexities of what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable. This part focuses on the inadequacies of integration as a means of negotiating identities and belonging in Australia

2.6   Re-imagining integration within the interstice

In the collective mind of Australia, 'integration' is blurred with the emergence of ethno-specific controversy and cultural dissonance between the hegemonic culture and the other (DIAC, 2011b; Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Neumann, Gifford, Lems & Scherr, 2014). Also, integration is contentious because Australia is complex and divided along the cultural lines of what is appropriate or acceptable and unacceptable. Jakubowicz (2009) argues that the renewed interest around integration is a recent move based on an ideological position, in *opposition to* multiculturalism.

Despite the interest in refugee and migrant experience, integration is still shrouded in contention and remains difficult to comprehend (Haggis & Schech, 2010; Neumann et al, 2014). Fozdar and Hartley identify integration as one of the "key objectives of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program" (2013, p. 24) in Australia, and as such, goes beyond ideological positioning. While 'integration' may serve as a pedestal for belonging and enabling sense of

---

American experience and whose colour renders him invisible. The protagonist narrator reflects on different ways he has experienced social invisibility all through his life.

connection, it denies the resourcefulness of an individual and deprives them of agency. This does not mean that integration will still not link to aspects that might shape belonging or as an emergent process that reconstructs a feeling of belonging. This feeling, however, is still not belonging.

Studies by Berry (2005) and Sands and Berry (2009) focus on the concept of acculturation and emphasise integration and multiculturalism over assimilation. The issue of the extent to which African Australians should assimilate remains a concern. In the years before acculturation was foregrounded by Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) consideration had been accorded to identity development and adaptation among some immigrant youth. The concern pointed to opportunities for peer development among gender groups and focused on the socio-cultural strategies employed by the students to negotiate a sense of connection. It is important to mention the main acculturative tendencies that held to this assimilative path for those young people. According to Berry et al. (2006) and Nwosu and Barnes (2014) these tendencies are:

- the form that integrating orientation and identity takes;
- a national pattern in embracing an encompassing culture;
- an ethnic pattern focusing on the aspect of the native culture, and
- a diffuse pattern in which the student experiences the complications of living inter-culturally.

However, the unique set of challenges confronting the young people goes beyond identity development and acculturation to the domain of negotiating the interstitial threshold and accommodating individual cultural differences. From the enfolding of interstitial space negotiation arises the experience that seeks to reconstruct the African Australians' identity and sense of belonging. This focuses on influencing unfamiliar or foreign beliefs through which "newness' that is not part of … past and present" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 10), can be reconstructed.

Especially from being identified as scary, a terrorist, a political and socio-economic threat, or even as a refugee continually (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Majavu, 2017; Onsando & Billet, 2017; Zunes, 2017).

Integration has been argued to be a crucial conduit for successful settlement, whether it be economic integration or social integration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008., DIAC, 2011b, Neumann et al., 2014). Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2008) further argued that being black in Australia comes with a pre-conceived tension embedded in class and race issues that African refugees had to negotiate. The suggestion that 'integration' is critical is not only complex but disempowering, as individuals negotiating identity and belonging undergo repudiations and conflicts with their cultural identity. The construction and workings of integration and an individual's connection to it can be fraught with misconception.

Ideologically, integration can allude to cultural priorities or hierarchies, which some critics have positioned as a reaction to multiculturalism and cultural relativism (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Haggis & Schech, 2010; McPherson, 2010). McPherson (2010) explains how "integrationism", as a guiding ideology, positions the migrant, or refugee, as a problem that settlement education should "fix" (p. 565). The experience of having a voice but not having any interest from the host country placed 'integrationism' under the spotlight. Pittaway and Muli (2009, p. 28) show how integrationism has 'been overtaken by a more sinister concept'— indifference. Taking this one step further, departure from multiculturalism should not just indicate conformity by outsiders to social cohesion; it should also indicate the acceptance of the peculiarities that distinguish such individuals.

Jakubowicz explains how this ideology that stems from the 1950s and 1960s has returned to present-day settlement approaches:

Australia's integration future seems now to be firmly set on a course in which

cultural recognition of difference is subordinated to priorities of social cohesion,

as the current political and social elites perceive these (2009, p. 33).

It is within this ideology that the re-emergence of multiculturalism has taken place (Colic-Peisker & Farquharson, 2011). This discourse frames the platform from which African Australians had to negotiate. Multiculturalism seemed to be an upgrade on the *status quo*—integration—but cultural recognition of difference remains an ideological discourse that challenges multicultural reality. In opposition to the discourse of multiculturalism, integration focuses not on the celebration, but rather on the *erasure* of all differences between one culture over the other, expecting a kind of assimilation. While integration prioritises sameness, African Australians in this category emphasise difference. In addition, negotiating this difference compresses individual or collective identity into a single quest to seek an alternative route by which cultural expression can build a home and social cohesiveness in Australia.

The next section will consider what I called the 'wh'-questions around the belonging, identity construction and subjectivity of young people from an African background. Exploring the issues of identity articulation and the connectedness of young people within the space, this section will raise questions of difference around the experiences of belonging.

2.7   Social Belonging Questions for African Australians

Fig. 7: *The wh-questions of social belonging chart.*

In this section, I consider the construction of questions of identity, which, in 'generative grammar' (Chomsky, 2014), are a type of question formed with an interrogative phrase. To be clear, the interrogative words considered here are those beginning with a *'wh'* such as, *who*, *where* and *when*. In considering the concept of identity and belonging dynamics, I saw a relatively close connection between the two concepts but not without a striking difference. For instance, it is possible to have a government policy that stresses multiculturalism and/or inclusion without necessarily attending to the nuances of identity and their subtler workings.

For the marginalised pushing against the tide of exclusion, the middle ground of difference continues to re-categorise the group as social parasites. Negotiating the minefield of stereotypical categorisation, as already discussed, we find African Australians identified as unwanted invaders, criminals, violent people, underperformer and lacking in confidence. These terms suggest the ubiquity of fixity and exclusion.

These experiences of re-categorisation corroborate the young people's concerns of being surplus to requirements. Experience that either questions their capacity to engage, interrogates their sense of entitlement or complicates their already polarised world necessitates the operation of the interstice. The interstice becomes a blessing in disguise from the complicated questions that either seek to validate or disapprove young people's responses to social standing and belonging in Australia. Also, because the manifestations of identity and belonging negotiation within the interstice place the inclusivity of the African Australian under the spotlight of discrimination and categorisation, the concern becomes more intricate. Specifically, from where individual status is influenced by *Who is in*? and *Who is out*? (Slee, 2013; Sonn et al, 2014), a different kind of relationship emerges. Such relationships are not only rooted in cold-shouldering but become a barometer and a recipe for exclusion.

Individuals' experience of inclusion varies because identity and belonging can be questioned, re-worked or reconstructed. This might also change based on the individual's ability to relate their experience, which differs from one person to the other, yet an individual's sense of belonging is still subject to scrutiny and evaluation. It is appropriate to say that belonging and associated questions remains a complex phenomenon that is not always static but changing. This is particularly true when considering aspects of cultural diversity that are different from these young people. These experiences are dependent on different social situations, particularly for young people operating through the *permeable space*.

2.7.1   The 'Who?' Question and Belonging

In my reflective journal, there remained the recurring question of subjectivity raised by the young people in this study. The question 'Who am I?' (hooks, 2009) holds the key to unravelling the ambiguities associated with social belonging. This revolves around the concept of 'self'— a general term used to refer to how someone evaluates, assesses or think about who they are while developing awareness of themselves.

Identity and belonging negotiation are connected to individuals' sense of self-worth. They also link to their sociocultural exchanges and intercultural attunement, their professional development in identity formation and their participation in action-based identity congruent and incongruent situations (Mackay, 2017; Oyserman, 2015; Ting-Toomey, 2015). This led me to question what it is that makes the totality of individual self that is so complex to unpack? Every individual, including the African Australians who are the focus of this study, undoubtedly have their own capacities, talents, sensitivities and of course unique points of view on the world. Coupled with negotiating the paradoxical mode of representation, these peculiarities are the basis of character formation and resilience is built in the process. Although,

the mode of representation and identity dynamics of the young people play a significant role in shaping their identity.

The young people in this study are supposed to be Australian, but they still experience moments of spontaneous and natural response to different situations, especially their experience of subtle ostracism, yet *within.* In addition, as much as these students yearn for unrestricted expression, functioning within the interstice comes with a price tag—difference and questioning being regarded as a social parasite that takes undue advantage of Australia. For African Australians, one question that resonates with Hall and Du Gay (1996) is "who needs identity?" In my data, this is re-lived on stage: everyone does need identity. Misrecognising the young people not only creates an ongoing socio-cultural disaster, but also makes such young people remain 'at risk' of being out of touch and disorientated.

2.7.2   The 'Where?' Question and Belonging

Earlier in this chapter, I considered the framework for belonging. This focuses on social location, identification, emotional attachments, and ethical and political values. In discussing the 'wh'- questions and social belonging, I see the space of cultural signification and social location as intertwined. It is somewhat impossible to talk about the question of 'where' and belonging without necessarily talking about social location. This question of 'where' puts individuals inhabiting the 'place' (such as Australia) under the spotlight of cultural adjustment. It is here that the young people still struggle but have to negotiate both identity and belonging.

The African Australians turn to a plethora of embedded cultural practices, passions and interests to enable the reconstruction of their individual space. However, social locations changed the nature of belonging because different communities are organised by categorisation and stereotype. The 'where' question of belonging has reshaped young peoples' confidence

and revealed an intercultural landscape where their interests can have expression. This space, the stage, becomes enhanced due to individuals' remarkable vision of de-escalating what is often viewed as an esoteric practice for the uncivilised and other social outcasts.

The term 'social location', which answers the question of 'where', has resonance in everyday encounters. Yet the construct of a place—let alone places—tends to be more exclusive in nature. What constitutes a place in this situation can vary from one factor to the other. This can be an accessible space in which people of diverse cultures can gather without restrictions. Anderson (2006) describes public spaces comprising a gathering of people who understand themselves being within *imagined communities*. This implies that individuals who see themselves as part of a place, which may be bounded by audiences or by geographical setting, operate in places that often interconnect and overlap.

2.7.3   The 'When?' Question and Challenge of Belonging

This idea of time and space directly links with the young people at the heart of this thesis. The 'when' question of belonging raises challenges rooted in Australia's long history of racial and social inequality as well as its noticeable economic variability. The explanation of these challenges is complex because the concept of space and time requires the sacrifice of the other. As time passes, demands on the subject shape their sense of belonging. The question of 'when' in belonging suggests the metaphor of time as prize for belonging, acceptance and connection.

The question of 'when?' is one aspect that makes these Australian students who they are, though it is belonging that links them. The question then is whether the former refugee students ever 'belong' in Australia, bearing in mind that the concepts of time and space are infinite. Social belonging goes beyond being merely instrumental; it is a social lifeline that enhances individuals in sustaining cultures within cultures across those dimensions of time and space.

The complexity surrounding the young people focuses on exactly *when* are they accepted as belonging and *where* will this occur? Will they belong in some spaces and not others? Answering these questions may be difficult bearing in mind the nature of negotiation as *processual*, and the question of belonging may not be addressed in the present or near future.

The young people who came into Australia as humanitarian entrants many not only have experienced discrimination; they may also have been forced to consolidate their experience (MacDonald, 2017, White, 2017; Majavu, 2017). For them, moments of encounter occur when they either feel they do not identify *as an Australian*, or they do not have 'a sense of belonging', even though they are legalised citizens of Australia. If belonging is merely *feeling* 'at home' (Yuval-Davis, 2016, 2011), then the individuals may have to navigate another pathway to social belonging. Despite the increasing discourse on 'belonging', it remains a descriptive buzzword rather than an experiential social resource. In negotiating identity and belonging, time and space are factors influencing the building and maintenance of cultural practices. The affective state of the individual can either aid positive social relationships and *becoming* or dissuade African Australians.

In addition, between *belonging* and *not belonging* is a discriminatory space that is activated by time. In this space we ask the question when would they belong or be accepted as part of Australian society? Impediments to belonging may no longer be far-fetched (Yuval-Davis, 2011). The perceived craving for social belonging opens a space where people can identify and harass others in a very demeaning way, which in turn reinforces social division, leaving individual trying to make sense of any pejorative inferences. Specifically, how the individual continues to negotiate identity and belonging in Australia reveals the construction of subjectivity as ongoing and fluid, and the degree of fluidity determines sense of connection.

2.8　　　Belonging through the Interstices

Anderson (2006) coined the phrase 'imagined community' in analysing the concept of nationalism. Anderson described a nation as "an imagined political community" in which members of the community *black or white, gay or straight, refugees or asylum seekers* will never get to know, meet their fellow-members and experience belonging. However, through the interstice (a small opening between structures), it becomes possible to renegotiate the idea of fitting in or living 'feeling-included'. *The feeling of belonging* is not the same as belonging itself. In light of Anderson (2006), belonging surpasses imaginative connections which often occur in the subconscious and the subliminal compared to feeling of belonging, which is questionable, emotionally-driven and may never be actualised. For instance, in this study, the subjects' thought process of negotiating belonging become absorbed in creativity from the pool of past experiences to making sense of the moment. Theatrical space opens windows of possibility. It is within this space, although a contested social and cultural setting, that this minority group builds a common front of reconstructing their sense of belonging in Australia.

There is a sharp contrast involved in the geographical descriptive boundaries of the nation as it is both naturally 'limited and sovereign'. It is 'limited' in the sense that it does not extend to include "the multiple trajectories of people (from different backgrounds), objects, texts and ideas that intersect in various ways" across Australia (Bongiorno & Eklund, 2014, p. 39). For instance, Anderson (2006) sees a disconnection of imagined communities as a relation between *limited* and *sovereign* powers, because they have control over the imaginative boundaries that citizens take up or conceive. However, I argue that even with the hegemonic influence of the sovereign powers, restriction sets in within African Australian territory. For example, there are such restrictions as individual exposure, lived experiences and cultural sophistication playing

pivotal roles in amplifying and re/constructing belonging and hence serving to articulate their cultural identity.

Understanding the contention that nationhood may be 'imagined' does not necessarily mean that such nation is a fabrication or an idealisation. For this thesis, I am suggesting that just as a nation is a collection of multiple trajectories, so is the multiple experience of African Australians, envisaged on an oppositional spectrum where we see the in-between and individual lived experiences. Therefore, belonging and identity negotiation are conceived as expressions of relation to nationhood in a shifting interstitial space. This goes beyond a sense of sharing formulas of commonalities and/or connections: relating to nationhood is not prescriptive and there is no recipe. However, it involves affective similitude and the negotiation of disparities, and these actions represent the strength and articulatory power for any nation and individual.

Bhabha (2013) argues that a nation's construction of difference projects 'foundational fictions' as roots of 'a national tradition' that "turn out to be as much [about] acts of affiliation and establishment [as] with moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion and cultural contestation" (p. 5). With these cultural contestations, locality and certainty of historicity changes, because a more complex form of living shapes the community into a more symbolic and ideological one. To grasp this idea more constructively, in contemporary overlapping happenings around the world, space(s) has become increasingly contested as people struggle for space and place. This has also changed the progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion to one questioning the totality and commitment of political rationality and the accompanying deadlock of cultural significance that can prevent social belonging.

Generally, the subjects are confronted with the task of making their voices heard particularly when it comes to sense of belonging in any given context (Matthews, 2008; Olagookun &

White, 2017). The recognition that "refugees are a particularly marginalised group in society, who face...barriers to...social inclusion" (Mestan, 2008, p. v) points to the unique set of overwhelming challenges confronting the students. In addition to the notion of marginalisation is the idea of belonging to already 'contested national space' (Andreasson, 2016).

The concern here is not just about the controversial space, but how the former refugee negotiates the challenges of questioning identity within Australia. For instance, O'Neill and Hubbard appeal for the relational and collective attributes of being-in-place by tracing imaginary and actual journey connecting the 'now' and 'then' of refugees (2010, p. 46). Besides the evocative study of O'Neil and Hubbard, is the unexplored question of 'ontological security', encompassing emotional well-being, belonging and emplacement (Noble, 2005; Rishbeth & Finney, 2006). To me, this gap necessitates the investigation of African Australian subjectivity construction and their negotiation of cultural practices within *interstitial spaces* in Australia.

2.9   Summary

In this section, I have reviewed the literature on identity negotiation of the African Australians after arriving in Australia. Discussion focused on their present experience and how the categorisation of racial slur, being regarded as 'criminal', 'other', 'violent' and 'inferior' or even as refugees, continues to shape their construction. For the young people in this study, resettlement is just another aspect of their lived-experiences. Other significant concerns and issues revolves principally around the reality of racial tensions, discrimination and sense of not belonging that long predates the rise of neo-colonialism. The emergence of racial tensions and discrimination occasioned a space of despair, hopelessness and isolation. Thus, the social and psychological question of place of origin and their removal from it heightens the pressure of being neither Australians nor being fully able to identify with the title 'African Australian'.

Furthermore, we must acknowledge that perception of differences between cultures may throw up contradictions in relation to one's original culture. Negotiation of cultural understanding occurs in interstices. In a nutshell, overlaps of identity negotiation within the interstice account for the experience of not-yet 'African Australians' having to negotiate their subjectivity.

Section Two

Title: The Mid-Section and Methodological Justification
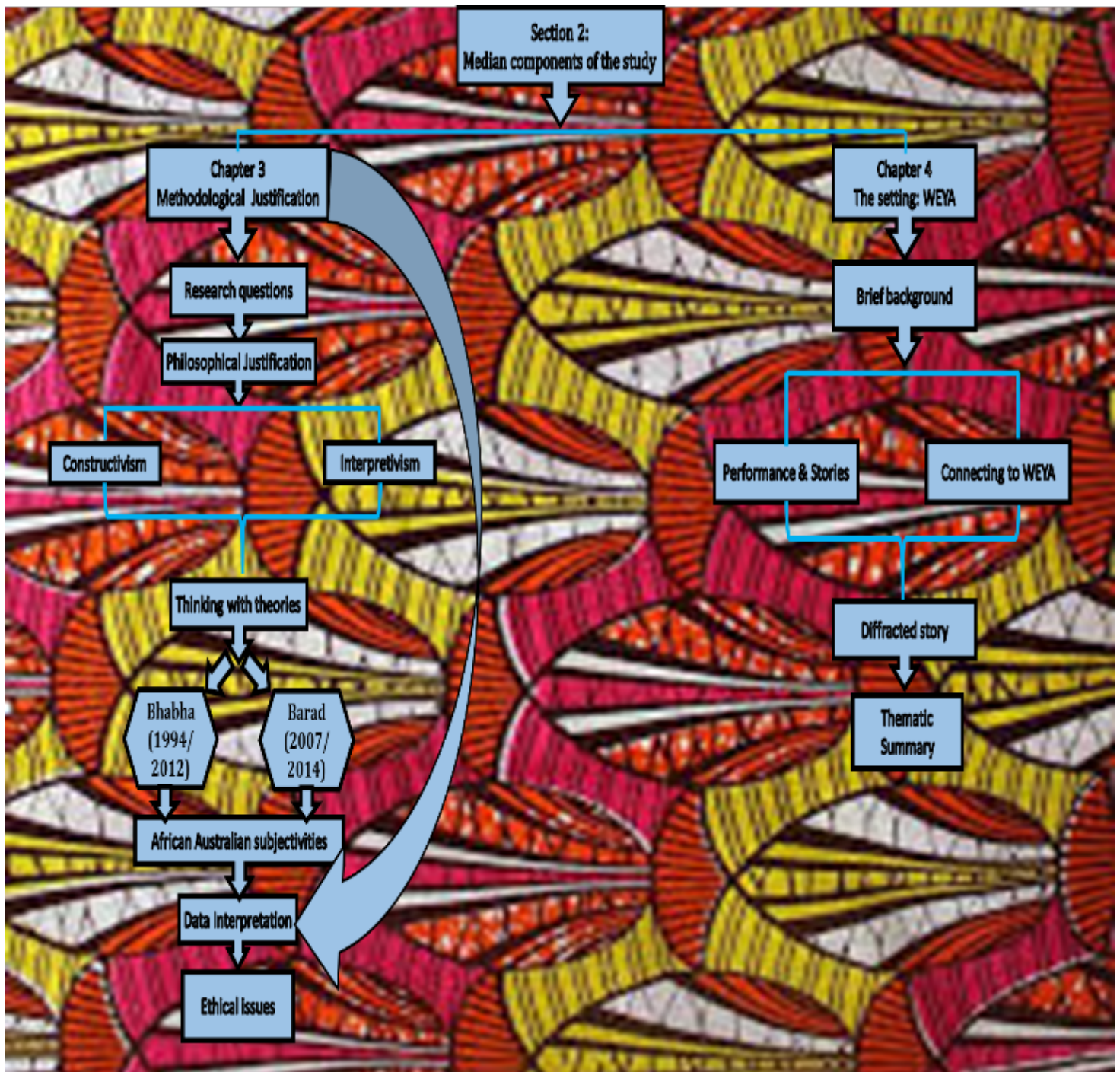
Fig. 8: *The second section is the median constituents of the study comprising of chapters three and four.*

Chapter 3: Research Methods

> Whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs
> and philosophical assumptions to our research (Creswell, 2013,
> p. 15).

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed at investigating African Australians' lived experiences of identity negotiation and belonging. It intended to address the gaps in the study identified above, by exploring experiences of the participants in that middle ground of difference, the space of interstitial experience, where belonging and identity are individually and collectively negotiated. This section began with my philosophical assumptions, using a social constructivist worldview and interpretive framework. In addition, this chapter will address the methodology of *thinking with theories,* African Australian subjectivities, the research ontological construct and the method of data collection.

3.1.1 Making Sense of the Research Question

In exploring the research question, consideration was accorded to how my theoretical framework and philosophical assumption informs my practice. I found the reoccurrence of the research question: "How do young people who are of African Australian heritage negotiate belonging in Australia?" shaping how the study is framed. The question brought forward the intricacies around interstitial space, entanglements, and hybridity. Bhabha argued for the need to "rethink the logics of causality and determinacy through which we recognise the 'political'… to social transformation" (2012, pp. 33–34). Hence, I have chosen to rethink the logics of

interstitial space (experience) and how it is negotiated. This is because there is always an oppositional relationship between a dominant and acquiescent culture.

In addition, the forces in operation here might be inconspicuous and surreptitious but still have a considerable influence over how the participants negotiate their lives in any context. The thought that experience can be overwhelming, concealing and impelling because it speaks of the composition of social formation also reflects on the subjectivity of this group. Thus, the principal research question of this study is: "How do young people who are of African Australian heritage negotiate belonging in Australia?"

3.2   Methodology: Philosophical Assumptions; Interpretive Framework
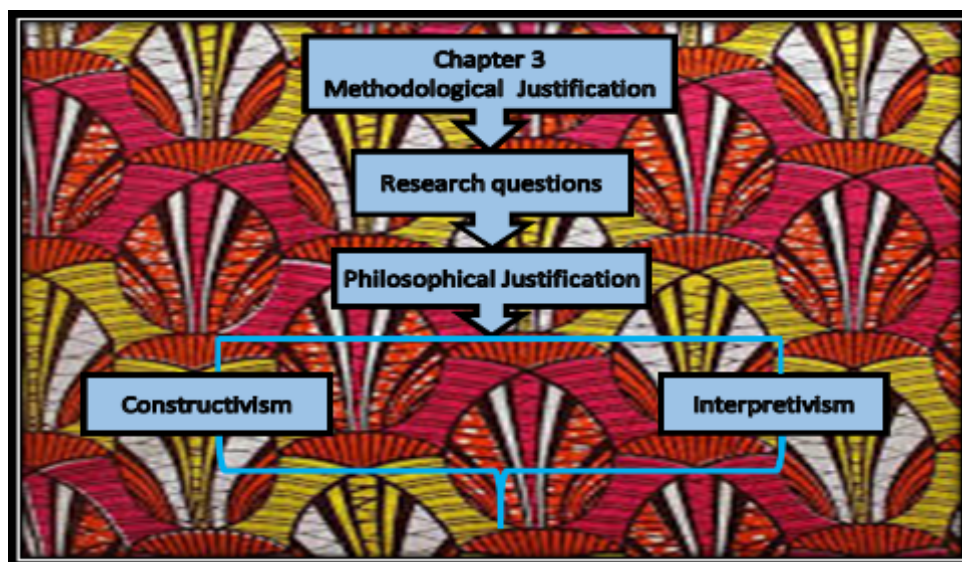
Fig. 9: *A chart showing the order of justified beliefs and methodological assumptions.*

The beliefs and philosophical assumptions that accompany this study are based on the ubiquity of exclusion and the social problems affecting African Australians' identity negotiation. The ideas, worldviews and assumptions in this study suggests that racism, discrimination, stereotypical construction and exclusion still pose dangers to minority groups. Reference to my personal experience shared in the introductory section of this study and descriptions of experience in scholarly articles revealed the endemic nature of the social problem (Harris,

2010; Uptin et al, 2013; Werbner & Modood, 2015; White, 2017). The notion that realities exist in the form of diverse perceptible constructions, which may be socially and experientially based, simply expands the study of what exists, the nature of what exists and the group that are directly affected.

3.2.1 Social Constructivism and Interpretivism

Research process tend to be constructed in a specific theoretical paradigms and workable methodological practices. Ontologically, this study is situated in social constructivism and epistemologically this study is an interpretivist one. From these two interconnected approaches, responsible meaning-making about social reality is fashioned from the negotiated, perceptible interpretations, and consequent actions of social subjects, the participants together with the contextual artefacts of their world and those of this study. Significantly, this is the framework within which the questions that guided this study were formulated, the data collected and partly analysed.

In social constructivism, knowledge emerges out of individuals' developing a subjective meaning of their experiences in such a way that fresh meanings emerge from their certain experiences (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2017). These meanings can be varied and complex, and thus they shape this study's consideration of social spectacles and happenings in social contexts. Therefore, adopting a constructionist ontology demands that the social spectacles, occurrences and their meanings are taken into consideration. This is because there is an on-going intersubjectivity that is evolving, changing and continually being negotiated, constructed and reconstructed from the individual perceptible interpretations and/or practices. Social constructivism acknowledges how a specific interpretation concerning a social reality such as racism cannot be regarded as conclusive or unbiased. However, "making sense of the meaning" participants bring to these social

occurrences is appropriate to responding to the practical interpretive questions that guided the study (Lincoln et al, 2011 p. 102).

In terms of goals, reliance on the participants' views and their experiencing of exclusion, discrimination and racism defines the parameters of this study. These subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. These meanings are engraved on individuals and formed through interaction, through their life histories, and through the cultural norms that operate in their lives. The participants' stories help in extracting the meanings that were forged in discussion and interaction.

3.2.2   Epistemology: Interpretivism

Epistemologically, this study upholds the assumption that the participants and the inquirer are inseparable and that findings are apparently a function of interaction created between the two parties (Creswell, 2013, Lincoln et al, 2011, p. 103). The branch of metaphysics that focuses on the theory of knowledge and the process of thinking strongly identifies with epistemology. It is preoccupied with the relationship between what is known and what we see, especially the truth we seek and believe as investigator (Lincoln et al, 2011). In seeking to comprehend the experiences of identity reconstruction, negotiation and social belonging for African Australians, this study employed a constructionist viewpoint. This perspective suggests that experience and knowledge are constructed out of a dialectal unity between objectivity and subjectivity (Lincoln et al, 2011; Cassirer, 2017). This viewpoint was instrumental for investigating young people of African heritage's experiences because it considers both the social construction and material reality of identity negotiation and social belonging in Australia (Barad, 2007; Haggis & Schech, 2010).

The interpretative process is interested in investigating and identifying the ways individuals participate in reconstructing their identities, their meaning-making practices and how these are negotiated. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) posit that people construct their own understanding of reality and meaning based on interaction with their surroundings. This remains one of the major assumptions that this study is built around. Thus, while the study is empirically "intersubjective and process-oriented, it establishes that we are studying ourselves studying ourselves and others" (Preissle, 2006, p. 691). In addition, this study is shaped by the individuals' lived experiences and it can be said that these assumptions emerged and guided the knowledge generated from this study through the lens of the participants.

Investigating and talking about identity negotiation cannot be directly accessed through narration but by seeing the world as "intra-activity in its differential matterings" (Barad, 2007, p. 141). There are always multiple, conflicting, competing stories about negotiating belonging but not all stories are accorded equal attention (Van Maanen, 2011). This is because each story is dependent on the subject position of the storyteller or the interviewee. Specifically, the politics of identity construction, incorporating such elements as identity, race, gender, and ethnicity, together with the changing positioning of the African Australians based on their stories about identity reconstruction, are often either not recognised or else misrepresented.

Therefore, the epistemological bearing of this study suggests that African Australians articulate their experiences of identity negotiation and social belongingness within the contexts of dominant narratives that are often told but taken-for-granted (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Whitburn et al, 2017). In addition, as a *hybridised-inquirer*, I create findings through the process of interaction. This epistemological position assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. However, who we are and the scaffolding of our understanding of the

world is a focal part of not only how we understand ourselves (Lincoln et al, 2011. p. 104), but the African Australians in this context and the world.

Before going into the detail, let me briefly acknowledge that terms such as 'race', 'whiteness', 'minority groups', 'African Australians' and so on are problematic and complicated terms to deconstruct. Nevertheless, such terms take a wide range of differing experiences and combine them into one category. As such, these terms are used mindfully, and reference the fact that it is because of such stereotypes of exclusive racial identification and belonging, and through the existence of binaries between 'self' and 'other' that identity negotiation and social belonging takes place.

3.3 The Methodology of Thinking with Theories
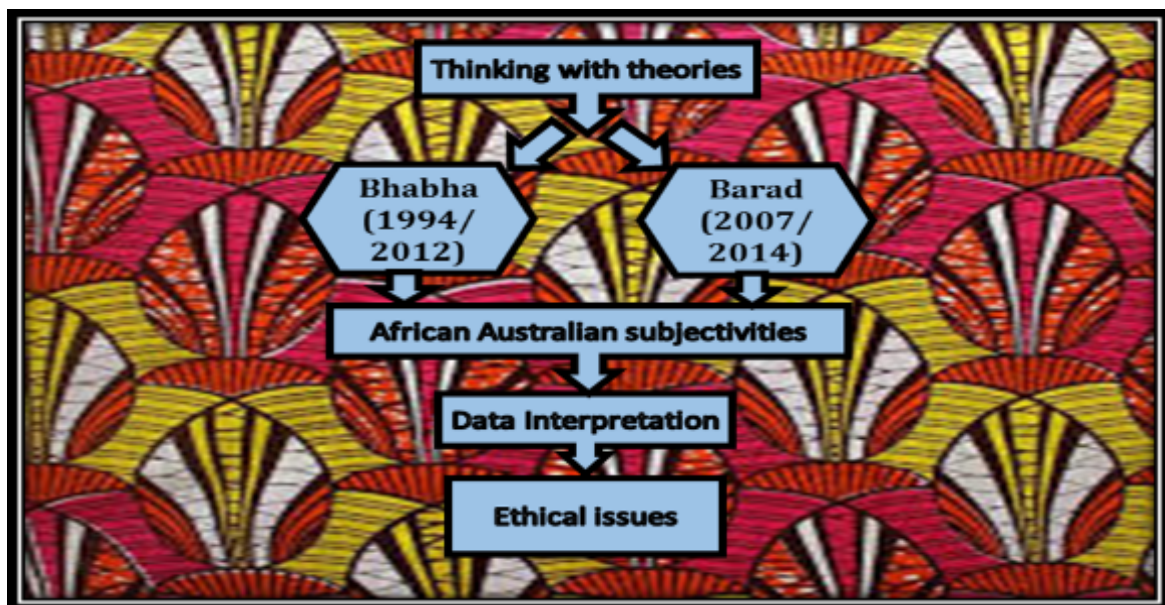
Fig. 10: *Structural pattern of how thinking with theories informs data interpretation*

The fundamental question that this study is built on is the idea of thinking with theories to making sense of the participants' lived experiences. Thinking with Bhabha's concept of *hybridity* and *interstitial space* assist in the understanding of fixity and ideological construction of otherness. Similarly, using Barad's theory of *entanglement of matter and meaning* helps to

consolidate and establish African Australians entangled experiences through intra-relating with time and space. Much of this thinking is inundated with theoretical lenses and concepts. Using theoretical lenses and concepts from Bhabha and Barad, there is likelihood of subjective and prejudiced analysis. This is because thought could be misleading due to the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). Nevertheless, since the quality of what we produce hinges on the value of our thought process, it then requires us to challenge the nature of reality.

To think with theories in this study, then, focuses me on identifying the purposes and the questions at issue, as well as its information, assumptions, implications, main concepts and, perhaps, point of view. *Thinking with theory* shows how to employ different philosophical concepts in practices of inquiry, effectively "opening" the process of data analysis in qualitative research (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. i). The study further raises questions and seeks to address the problems by formulating them in a clear but careful analysis of theories and likely judgement.

In addition, it pushes research data and theory to its limits to produce knowledge differently through "the richness in the interpretation of empirical materials" being conducted on an on-going basis in different phases of the research process (Alvesson, 2010, p. 46). The significance of thinking with theories is contingent upon de-emphasising simplistic forms of data analysis such as coding to offering an alternative account of interpretation. Fundamentally, this study employs theories created by Bhabha and Barad to analyse identity negotiation and belonging without relying on the traditional methods.

Therefore, with the "particularities and situatedness of each" (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 5) of these concepts, the study explores the meaning-making constructions of both the sweet and sour lived stories/experiences of the participants. This includes the story of inclusion,

exclusion, stereotypical constructions or labelling of the participants and the peculiarities of negotiating identities and socio-cultural experiences in Australia. This was arrived at with a concept that is believed can trouble and at the same time intervene in the research process— a diffractive method (Barad, 2007). This method aims at deflecting or bending the reading of an overlapping data when they encounter obstruction other than a reflective thought process, which can advance complex and interconnecting thinking.

3.3.1   Diffraction as a Method of Analysing Identity Negotiation

Diffraction is a physical phenomenon that focuses on significant workings and discussions in physics and the philosophy of physics. In a way, it functions as a kaleidoscopic metaphor for describing and analysing data while responding to the details and mysteries of "difference, specificities of relation and how they matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 71). Diffraction makes parallels with the theory of multifaceted analysis to highlight significant difficulties that are not attuned to differences; differences that are capable of re-orientating us as to the effects of our knowledge of the world.

Using diffraction as a methodology that primarily comes from the new materialist theories of Harraway (1997) and Barad (2007, 2014), then establishes a pathway to figuring difference as a critical difference within. In this study, diffraction is not just a heterogeneous historical profiling of individuals, but an analytical tool for making significant meanings through which "knowledge-making practices" change the effects they have on the world (Barad, 2007, p. 72). Consequently, diffraction becomes an image of changing scene and an analytical tool with which emanating analyses involved considering a lens and reconsidering it in another.

If, according to Barad (2007), a diffractive methodology is a significant practice for making a difference in the world, it, therefore, becomes an apparatus for a change in movement. Put

differently, diffraction is a commitment to comprehending which differences matter, especially *how* the difference matters and particularly *for whom.* Thus, this becomes a critical practice of engagement in the form of cutting apart and a piecing together (Barad, 2014). In addition, "diffraction apparatuses measure the effects of difference, even more profoundly they highlight, exhibit, and make evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing" (Barad, 2007, p. 73). The performativity of diffractive readings on data by educational scholars is now becoming an acceptable norm to engaging with data analysis more effectively (e.g. Bodén, 2015; Davies, 2014; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Lanas et al., 2017; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013; Phillips & Larson, 2012; Ulmer, 2016).

3.4   African Australians' Subjectivities

The concepts of *identities, subjectivities* or *subjects,* which are sometimes used interchangeably are significant to this study. Participants were highly informed, sophisticated, coherent, stable; possessing agency, and independently capable of producing context and meaning.   The significance accorded to "human" in Western political thought and philosophical analysis reveals the nuances of conventional human qualitative research. In a situation where humanism is characterised by exclusive properties such as culture, practices, beliefs and language, post-humanism underscores that humans are continually produced through biological, technological phenomenon (Braidotti, 2016; Ginn, 2015), and other advanced forces. These forces are never working in isolation.

Subjectivity is said to be fluid, fragmented; socially constructed in an ongoing process of formation often produced by language, discourses and systems of meaning through historical and cultural contexts. The participants in this study are constituted and reconstituted out of culturally and historically specific repetitive intra-actions of bodily production of identity

negotiation. If, according to Barad, "boundaries do not sit still," (2007, p. 171) but are always in motion, it suggests that the understanding of (human subject) African Australians in this sense is transformative and still complicated. It is appropriate to establish that the young people in this study are not objects with embedded boundaries and properties.

Understanding identity negotiation of a minority group suggests that their subjectivity influences not just their social functioning but their inclusion and social relationships. The subjectivity and identity of an individual is conceived to be the fluid movement of different and competing discourses, emphasising the unstable, changeable and fragmented nature of the contemporary self (Hall, 1996). Other factors that shape how subjectivities alter the social functioning and social relationships includes but is not limited to understanding of social situations and or rules of engagement, (mis)representations of others' states of minds and attitudes towards other people.

Identity reconstruction and practice can be resistive to stereotypical description and/or categorisation of the others' cultural identity in social and educational contexts. In the current wave of identity negotiation and belonging, the construction of difference and its consequence for social belonging are being reworked. With the reworkings of social belonging, the 'posts' as St. Pierre (2013) called them, require not just a reflection, but a reconsideration of "possible worlds in which we might live" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 654). Therefore, I assume that it is possible to describe the physical and social world of the African Australians in a way that advances the not-so-conspicuous and the not-so-audible aspect of their culture and lived experiences.

3.4.1   Research Ontological Construct

One of the principal aims of post-humanism is to deconstruct the binary distinctions that define humanism, specifically the binary between culture and nature. While humanism is distinguished by language tool-use, post-humanism advances the ways human participants are

produced through material forces, discursive regimes and non-human agencies (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). In re*thinking* the *ontologi*cal movement between entities beyond representationalism (Lather, 2016), there are likely taken-for-granted elements that constitute subjectivities and how these are negotiated in different situations.

As humans, we inhabit a world that is not only "radically hybridised, contaminated and integrated" (Snaza, Appelbaum, Bayne, Carlson et al. 2014, p. 43), but also profoundly influenced along culturally divided boundaries. The notion of whether we live and negotiate in the possible present—posthuman time—cannot be said to be one of reproduction. However, living and negotiating the present forces me as an individual to recognise my position in the world as *hybridised-inquirer*, and such enquirers focus on the dynamic processes of becoming.

As a hybridised-inquirer, I see myself as an individual, yet an investigator of African heritage seeking to explore a phenomenon of cultural connection of young African-Australian in Australia, which can suggest new possibilities. The act of grasping human subjectivities as ontological beings in a process of knowledge production shows that "man is an invention of recent date" (Foucault, 1994, p. 387). Therefore, man being an invention of recent date can only place a premium on the significance of exploring these new inventions and other possibilities of such subjectivities.

The next section discusses the methods used in investigating the participants from observations, field notes and attending presentations; conducting in-depth interviews informed by contemporary ethnography, and reflective journaling, chronicling lived experiences.

3.5   Data Collection

This section focuses on locating the site, gaining access and making rapport. It describes, too, the actual types of data collected and the procedures for gathering them. The interview was

conducted once for each participant over the four-month period. To ensure reliability and rigour, a multiple approach to data collection was chosen so that the frame of this study is strengthened and complements the ethics of validity. The study makes use of participants' authentic stories of connection, belonging, transgression and ethical relationships to confirm the workings of externalities on difference (Creswell, 2013, p. 245; Lincoln et al, 2011). The significance is geared towards representing the views of the young people appropriately and in the process raising awareness about the in-between space experiences. This section opens with the location of site, Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA). Content that follows outlines the reason for connecting the organisation, the method of inquiry, the justification, and the use of observation and reflective essays.

3.5.1 The Study Site and Connection with Participants

I first met with the Western Edge Youth Art group in 2015 when I began my observations during one of their public performances at Geelong, a small city near Melbourne. Prior to this meeting, one of my supervisors, who is also the artistic director of the WEYA organisation, had initiated a meeting that would help facilitate and enhance the connection to participants in this study. The study enjoys this privilege because of the trust the participants place in their artistic director. Despite coming from the African content and despite not being a performer, I was still continuously introduced to the participants by the artistic directors at every rehearsal. This act of introduction and reintroduction played a pivotal role in easing off possible anxieties and tensions. Therefore, I did not have difficulties in accessing participants who were willing to share their personal stories of triumph, conflicts, entanglement, (under)achievement, negotiation of identity and belonging.

The first public theatre-art presentation I attended was held at Geelong and titled *Longing to Belong*. The presentation coupled with musical, dancing and instrumental expression captured

much cultural and historical signification. The title *Longing to Belong* appears to be suggestive indicator. Watching the participants' enthusiasm and creativity relived on stage with the theme threading through their performance consolidated my resolve to investigate the young peoples' sense of belonging. The drama presentation that the African Australians enacted on stage showed their struggle, resilience and navigation of experiencing exclusion and often being constructed as a social problem in Australia. Apart from the major themes that underscored the drama presentation, reconstruction of identity through negotiating racism, discrimination and fixity foregrounded the participants' compelling stories.

In the presentation, the participants endeavoured to reconcile their past experiences, connection and recognition in Africa prior to arriving in Australia. To achieve this, they employed the popular African American actor, Eddie Murphy's 1988 romantic comedy film of *Coming to America*[12]. The young people adapted a subsection of this film's plot ingeniously and deconstructed the experience of an individual who was a prominent chief in a land called Zamunda[13] but became not just an ordinary citizen, but a refugee when he arrived in Australia. The negotiation of these stereotypical constructions allowed these young people, through WEYA, to reshape the public opinion of misrepresentation while questioning the pervasiveness of exclusion. Thus, I began my observations in every participant meeting, also attending consultations and presentations that were art-oriented.

---

[12] *Coming to America* is a romantic comedy created by Eddie Murphy who also took a leading role in the film. Eddie Murphy in this film plays the role of a prince (Akeem) from a fictional African nation of *Zamunda*, who comes to United States in the hope of finding someone to marry.

[13] Zamunda is a fictional African nation created in the film *Coming to America* and the land where Akeem came from before arriving in the United States.

3.5.2   The Justification of Connecting WEYA

The focus on investigating the identity negotiation and belonging as experienced by the African Australians in this setting was deliberate from the beginning. First, the participants at WEYA have first-hand experience when it comes to educational, social, cultural and values-related issues. Secondly, the group's repeated rehearsal of their subject matter both made them vibrant and allowed them to continually explore the subject matter under investigation in their drama presentations. Thus, the young people are unquestionably knowledgeable about the ideas of belonging, having a sense of belonging and/ or exclusion: Their art embodied these themes.

As I learned about the details of these young peoples' experiences, the multifaceted interaction and entanglements of factors contributing to the participants' sense of belonging and identity negotiation became apparent. These stories of lived experiences told of the difficulties and complexities, harmonies, anxieties and tensions of having to negotiate a culture different from theirs. Furthermore, the amazing experiences were contextualised within the chosen theoretical lenses through which the interpretations and analyses were framed. This idea is discussed further in Chapter Four, which considers the contexts and the participants' stories.

Reflecting on the participants sampled in this study, I found that they were more accessible because of the organisational structure of WEYA and, they were willing to lend their voices to the social milieu of identity negotiation and racial profiling. All the participants had stories to share about their lived experiences, often reflecting the idea that former refugee African Australians are stereotyped. The young people, who consented to participate and provide insightful information about their identity negotiations, were very amenable. They were also a suitable minority population for the study even though there are ethical sensitivities around studying the nature of former refugees' challenges in Australia. Nevertheless, connecting with

this group of young people informed my understanding of cultural difference and belonging in Australia.

3.5.3   In-depth Interview as a Method of Inquiry

This type of inquiry goes beyond a mere narration of story but extends a platform of interest in everyday life encounters. The shaping of distinguishing experience is a function

> …of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2011, p. 421).

This method offers the privilege to access first-hand, rich, descriptive data about the participant's lived experiences, perceptions and attitudes, and unfolding complex processes. The young people in this study, enjoyed the freedom of articulating their life histories in a more guided question-and-answer session.

Many researchers have employed the in-depth interview as a technique of collecting data (Cohen et al., 2013; Johnson, 2002; Lucas, 2014). With respect to the nature of the data required, this study employed in-depth interviews to seek *"deep* information and knowledge" (Johnson, 2002, p. 104). However, beyond seeking "deep information and knowledge" is the critiquing of possible glossed-over or taken-for-granted knowledge. In addition, the in-depth interview is designed to elicit comprehensive information and a clear picture of the participants' perspectives on how they negotiate identity and belonging in Australia.

For instance, connections between the narratives of four participants—Alexander, Rothania, Marina and Dwayne—reveal a strong cultural undertone, connections influential to the study because the recurrence indicated something deeply important. Gubrium and Holstein (2009) identify such relationships as a *reflexive interplay*—individual's narrative practices that

influence through a process of consolidating experiences within particular environments. This means that the sharing of the participants' views on the subject matter cannot be viewed in isolation; rather; a dual process that pays attention to both the participants' practices and what they shared is needed. In addition, this study employed an "ethnographic sensibility"— a strategy of communication and interaction, which I employed as an African to build a structure of rapport that can easily shape and influence the level of participants' responses to raised questions (Chase, 2011, p. 422).

Deeper exposure to ethnographic sensibility requires an understanding of the *reflexive interplay* of participants' past and present socio-cultural contexts through interactional circumstances between the interviewer and the interviewee. In line with the ethnographic sensibility, I adopted the relationship code conversationally raising issues they may probably familiar with in Africa such as "Ubuntu"—*I am because we are,* a heroic praise song of Patrice Lumumba—a Congolese independence leader and the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Congo. The understanding of these environments afforded the researcher the ability to describe participants' narrative environment in relation to their individual narrative nuances. Therefore, working closely with the participants created an avenue for a narrative meaning that is "… adequate in the circumstances, functioning to smoothly facilitate casual yet consequential interaction" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 201).

Using the code 'Ubuntu', which means being open and available to share with others emerged from being part of a course greater than both the interviewer and the interviewee. This philosophical underpinning might have influenced the willingness of the participants to lend their voices to the topic under scrutiny.

3.5.3.1 The Location of Interview Segments

The venue of the interview sections with participants was a community house within the suburb where most of the participants lived. The community house served the substantial role of promoting cultural connections, equity and access. Significantly, the centre ran services ranging from resettling former refugees to making them feel welcome in the region. The venue is very important to them because it promotes access, equity, settlement services, youth services, community programs, volunteering and training and education for newly arrived refugees and the resettled refugees in Australia. Moreover, the centre focuses on providing innovative and high-quality responses to the changing needs of a culturally diverse community.

3.5.3.2 In-depth Interview Structure

The in-depth interviews were generally between 40 to 50 minutes in length. The interviews took place at a community centre during the participants' deliberation meetings and rehearsals. I worked closely with the artistic director who was also one of my supervisors. All the interviews and some of the observations took place in this community centre that supports and promotes access and equity. More importantly, the participants make use of this centre in their cross-cutting theoretical spaces of deliberations and theatrical preparations. Participants gave consent to audio-tape interviews and in addition to the audio-recording, summary notes and field notes supported the nature of data collected.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured to get the participants to talk about their personal feelings, opinions and experiences, thus gaining appropriate insights into how the young people interpreted and ordered the worlds around them. In addition, as much as I did not want to bore the participants with a rigid style of inquiry, I had prepared some other related questions that centred on exploring the focus of the study. This was intended to help pilot the direction of the

study to consolidate the conversational style used. These techniques afforded participants the opportunities to share their experiences as much as they wanted. The following questions were among other ones prepared:

- How long did you go to school here in Melbourne?

- What was the best thing about school?

- What was the worst thing about school?

- Tell me a bit more about school in Australia?

- How did you fit in?

- Have you changed since you come to Australia?

- How do you handle the pressure of your culture and Australian culture?

- Do you have a sense of belonging in Australia?

Another approach employed during dialogue was the use of affirmative statements to stimulate more interesting stories from participants. For example, expressions like *you really value your family, that was an incredible resilience and courage, education is important to you, you must be very proud of that achievement, that must have been very difficult for you to negotiate.* These expressions also served to reflect empathy.

Let me quickly say that for better understanding and follow up of the conversation in this thesis, I applied the use of punctuations where necessary in the body of the participants' analytic responses. Significantly, to maintain and focus on the main matter in the participants' responses, this study removed the overuse of mannerisms that accompanied the discourses of the participants. The mannerisms such as 'you know' and 'like' and others were removed to retain the flow and fluency of individual analytic response.

3.5.4   Justification for the Data Collection

The in-depth interview followed a conversational and dialogic style and occurred within a period of four months on two different occasion. Due to the level of intimacy built up, there was a rapport that is valuable for mutual self-disclosure because "it involves a greater level of expression of the interviewer's self as well as personal commitment" on the part of participants and it spans different encounters and sections (Johnson, 2002, p. 103). In addition, people, society and culture are unusually inextricable. The totality of what constitutes human identity is complex and always in flux and the same is true for identity negotiation.

Looking at in-depth interview and its intricacies, the method perfectly suits the nature of this study because as a social form of inquiry, it involves a certain style of social and interpersonal interaction. Therefore, in this study, the use of in-depth interviews as a method of collecting data goes beyond the data by seeking for "deep" information and knowledge (Johnson, 2002, p. 104; O'Reilly, 2009, p. 126) about the subjects— young people of African Australian backgrounds. In-depth interviewing shapes the understanding of ambivalences and contradictions. For example, two of the participants said they belonged and they had not experienced racism, but later went on to describe experiences that could be understood as racism and exclusion.

In addition, the historical account given by the participants is a remembered reconstruction of the traditional elements or instruments from narrative and incorporates the student's perspectives, the chronological build-up of events characteristic of storying, the use of voice, division into episodes and other learned narrative conventions. That is why in many cases, the use of in-depth interviewing is appropriate to examine theories through naturalistic observation to assist in exploring meanings from the refugee student's position and to foreground their perspectives on how they negotiate belonging within Australian setting.

3.5.5   Observations

I undertook to investigate African Australians' everyday lives in the context of identity negotiation and social belonging. However, my involvement in this study, which includes building relationships with participants and attending the young people's rehearsals and meetings, was minimal. The observations were conducted by the African Australians. My involvement included but was not limited to attending the rehearsals, drama presentation, deliberation and reflection at any of their meeting venue. This observation took place within formal and informal setting, everyday lives and in the context of organised activities often before, during and after presentations or rehearsal. I attended four formal drama presentations, six rehearsal sections and four meetings and deliberations during rehearsals. Some of the participants interviewed engaged in elaborate conversations; others gave some brief responses but were better able to articulate their concerns.

The participants' observation goes beyond just "watching what happens, listening to what is said and asking questions" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 3), entering the realms of how individual participants responded to entanglement and the use of drama as an instrument of reproducing identity re-negotiation. They recorded quotes accurately for inclusion in field notes. Observation is appropriate for studies with young people who are vulnerable, and this has been undertaken in "settings where potential participants already feel some sense of belonging, security and trust" (Gifford, Bakopanos, Kaplan, & Correa-Velez, 2007, p. 419). Nevertheless, using all these measures does not necessarily guarantee optimal findings. The key advantage of ethnographic-informed studies is that they conceptualise the extent of "participation as a continuum" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 151). This leads to a tendency in the observer to observe for theoretical, ethical and practical reasons (Spradley, 2016). Although, participating in some aspect of the rehearsals, a few of the drama meetings and deliberations, I never became a full

member or insider. Thus, participation here does not imply or refer to participatory action research rather, employing an ethnographic sensibility and participating to some extent, in the everyday encounters of the African Australians in Melbourne. Moreover, participants' observations and written field notes, which are more akin to reflective journaling, provided a better understanding of each context and served in a process of validating the research questions that guided the study.

3.5.6   Recording information and Field Issues

This study systematically recorded information gained from the participants in a standardised format to help the study keep track of developments as they unfolded. From what the young people told me, I formed a foundation for monitoring the different themes that emerged out of the dialogue. Process and thematic outcomes were clearly documented to ensure transparency and followed up where necessary. This is further discussed in Chapter Four exploring the contexts and stories of the participants.

The information is recorded with the aid of audio-tape and the reflective journals which also served effectively as my field notes. Sometimes, my thought flow appears cumbersome so the study employs the use of flow charts and spread sheets to decongest such challenges. Priority was accorded to individual participants' thought processes, opinions and interpretations related to identity negotiation and belonging. Data were transcribed and categorised in themes because it helped in the discussion of the collective views of the participants. During the transcription of the interviews, there are some constructions by the participants that I could not logically decipher. Furthermore, cross-checking such constructions with my field notes suggested discrepancies but I opted not to follow-up on the section of the conversation. The transcriptions are all safely secured in a password-protected computer and at Victoria University data base.

One of the field issues that arose in the context of this study revolves around a participant, Marina, who complained of toothache. Marina's interview was the shortest because of the unbearable pain she had to undergo during the question and answer segment. I suggested another day for the interview, but Marina's mind appeared to be made up to share her experience of in-between space although she spoke slowly and gently.

3.6   Ethical issues and Consideration

One of the issues confronted as a fellow African investigating the negotiated identities of fellow African Australians involves seeing the interviewer as an insider or part of 'them'. Perhaps, this endeared the participants to willingly share their story with me or, seeing the interviewer as one of them to make it look like it is 'us' versus 'them'. In managing this, I took up a hybridised-inquirer status, which could also mean an 'insider-outsider: To be or not to be' (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 57). In managing this, I recognised that my insider knowledge is insignificant compared to what the participants are going to share with me. Thus, I did not allow personal knowledge or prejudiced thought to influence my interpretation. As claimed in the methodological chapter, my approach to the question and answer segment was that of neutrality with a "broader way of knowing and ways of being" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 445). Hence, a hybridised-inquirer status was adopted to negotiate the space between. This may have affected the willingness on the part of the participants to share more with me.

Significantly, the artistic director[14] of WEYA organisation granted me the needed access to the emerging artists. The ethical concern here revolves around the artistic director who was also

---

[14] The artistic director introduced me formally to the participants during one of the WEYA group rehearsals. The potential impact this might have had on the research could have included a feeling of compulsion for individuals to participate in the study. However, from the information provided to the young people (verbally and in writing), it was very clearly communicated that participation in the study is completely voluntary and that each participant could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

one of my supervisors and who served as a link or gatekeeper between the participants and the investigator. Going through the gatekeeper and having the unalloyed support of my supervisor afforded me the opportunity to build rapport, trust and connection which in turn facilitated access to the organisation (Brooks, Te Riele, & Maguire, 2014). The rapport and trust connection were reposed in their artistic director. Through my privileged access, I built constructive relationships for this study. However, I acknowledged and foresaw the possible tensions of the in-between roles of gatekeeper, providing access to the participants; artistic director and supervisor.

In managing this conflict of interest, I organised two consecutive meetings with the artistic director explaining the terms and method of approaching the participants formally. The terms and conditions were predicated upon dealing with the triple relationships. Through these terms, I reached a consensus with the artistic director to have very minimal access to the raw data from the field. From the outset, the participants were informed verbally and through the information sheet that participating in this study would not add or subtract any advantage or disadvantage from the services they received from WEYA. This was to avoid a dilemma whereby participants may feel coerced into participating in the study (Block, Riggs, & Haslam, 2013). Considering the nature of this study; the sensitivity and social risks, pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the actual identity of all the participants, which is consistent with good ethical[15] conduct.

In addition to addressing the unequal relationship status, the artistic director was excluded from the formal meeting/information session with the participants so as to achieve voluntary consent. I took other measures on board ensuring that deliberate agreement was not compromised while

---

[15] The ethical issues were thoroughly addressed prior to the commencement of the study and the fieldwork by the Victoria University Human Research and Ethics Committee (VUHREC). The committee scrutinised the planned process for this research before granting approval for its commencement. The Application ID for this study is: HRE16-255.

building the relationship on a dependable platform of trust, mutual understanding and respect. However, because this study is about former refugees and involves a small community, there are possible psychological risks, but the emerging artists were undeterred in sharing their stories of distresses. For instance, Alexander reminisced about his experience within the passageway between Congo and Rwanda;

Oh! [the experience was] very hard. Like when I moved from Congo, I was 4 years old. So, I lived in Rwanda for 6 to 7 years. And our experience there? We were refugees, it was the UNHCR that was giving us food, clothing and shelter every month.

In managing this risk, I refocused the direction of Alexander's story with a follow-up question to avoid discussing sensitive issue that may harm or trigger unpleasant memories.

3.6.1   Dealing with Confidentiality

The participants were enthusiastic about sharing their lived experiences and lending their voice to issues revolving around identity and subjectivity. Marina jumped at the discussion despite her predicament of having toothache. In Marina's response about identity and belonging connection she says: *"Yeah! Identity has a connection because I did this in year 12. In fact, we wrote a couple of essays on this topic"*.

All participants except one (Xhaka) seemed to be ready to go ahead with the interview without carefully going through the Information sheet. Four of the emerging artists were highly passionate and prepared to participate in the interview. However, I had other ethical concerns regarding the confidentiality of this study. This is because other people may recognise and identify with the participants in question despite the use of pseudonyms or even the possibility of anonymising responses. Thus, it was necessary to go through the information sheet

especially the section outlining the possible social risk associated with participating in the study.

I explained to the young people that confidentiality was an integral part of the study process and it is their right not a privilege. The participants are made to recognise their exposure to social risk and so the study clearly identified risks and emphasised the voluntary nature of participation. What I observed after discussing the identified risks with the participants was the enlightenment of the socially embedded nature of individual decision making. This type of decision making is based on the assumption that people should be free to decide for themselves the best option of whether to participate in a research process or not. In minimising this risk, all the names of the participants in this study remain anonymous. In addition to using a pseudonym, the participants agreed that any information that might identify them would not be published. I took up the responsibility of explaining this in order not to jeopardise the emotional wellbeing and safety of my participants.

In narrating the African Australian stories, I offer reconstructions and co-constructions of stories built on trust, respect, dependability and understanding for optimal representation (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). This construction was built with the participants across individual in-depth interviews while situating the stories in the context of narrative performances from the context of inquiry. Whether the performance of these stories read differently reveals the pattern of expression and metaphor contained in those self-narratives, which in themselves are inexhaustible.

3.7   Summary

This section has identified the philosophical assumptions that underscores this study. It focuses on the social constructivist worldview and interpretive framework in the investigation of the

African Australians' lived experiences of identity negotiation and belonging. This study employed the methodology of thinking with theories to challenge the quality of what is produced, which itself depends on the value of my thought process and the particularities and the situatedness of each idea. In addition, because subjectivity is fluid and socially constructed in an ongoing process of formation via language, the subjectivities of the participants are considered. The consideration of their subjectivity advanced the not-so-audible aspects of their culture and lived experience. Finally, this section has discussed the data collection parameters beginning with locating the site of the study, the pathway for gaining access to the organisation, the building of relationships, and the actual types of data collected. The discussion encompassed the method of inquiry, the justification and the use of observation and the reflective media. The significance of this is geared towards representing views of the participants and, in the process, raise awareness about their in-between space experiences.

Chapter 4: Contexts and Stories

> Fieldwork [is] biographically and contextually varied … a
> technique of coming to understand the kind of responses others
> display (and withhold) in social situations (Van Maanen, 2011,
> p. 151).

4.1   Introduction

This section focuses on the young African Australians' stories, descriptions and explanations of identity negotiation and social belonging using the diffractive method. This data was collected through participants' observations, in-depth interviews informed by contemporary ethnography, and theatrical presentations. In addition, the data used in this study are the participants' constructions of what they are up to at certain times, and in certain places. This section opens with the setting, Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA], and the chronicling of the setting. WEYA is where the young people employ art in negotiating their identity. Following this are the individual participant's stories.
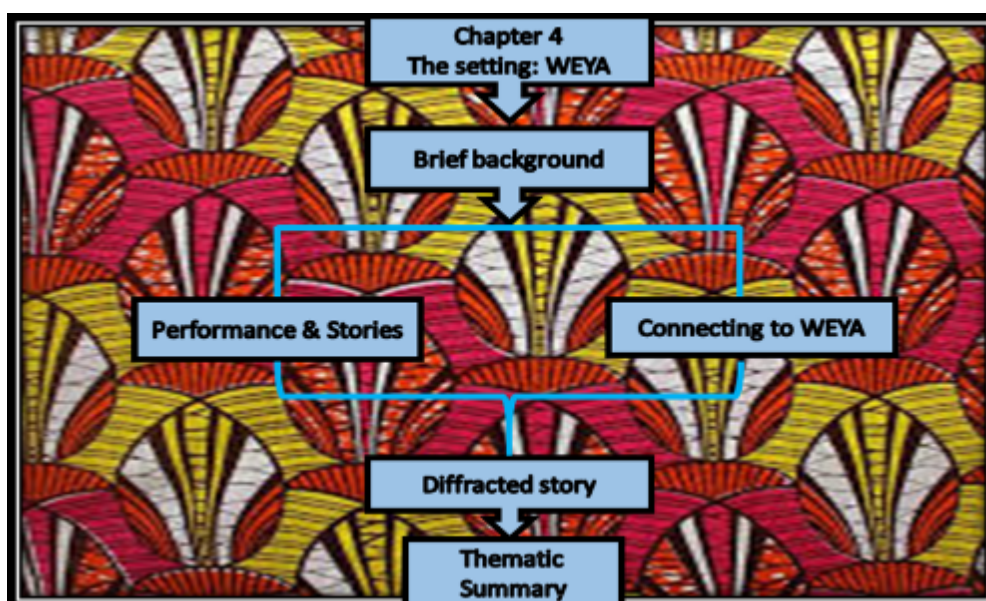
Fig. 11: *A chart showing the construction of the study contexts and the participants' stories*.

4.2   The Setting: Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA]

The analysis of the narrative reality of participants in this study stems from individual lived experiences using the framework built for the study (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The history of Western Edge Youth Arts spans over two decades across culturally diverse communities in Western Melbourne and regional Victoria. The artistic vision and purpose of WEYA involves employing the diverse stories of young people to touch the hearts and minds of communities and Australians at large while making sense of the world they live in through the instrumentation of art. The organisation employs different mechanisms in art through which the young make boundary-pushing contemporary performances in communities and schools. With the aid of a professional artistic director, the young people blend complicated subject matters of everyday encounter with high artistic standards through the collaboration of social and community networks.

Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) is a non-profit, registered charity, which was established to provide positive arts and education experiences to culturally diverse young people living in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and the western region of Victoria. Their mission includes empowering young people, particularly those facing social, economic or cultural disadvantage, through access to quality arts experiences and the creation of artistic works that have a genuine adolescent and youth voice between the ages of 14-26 years.

Consequently, the organisation carved a niche where young people can make socially engaging art through applied theatre. Furthermore, beyond the socially and educationally instructive art through which the young people re-orientate the audience and construct meaning, WEYA remains a lively and trusted avenue for the young peoples' identity re/negotiation and social belonging within already polarised communities in Australia. The organisation constitutes an on-going revolutionary processing chamber to becoming accomplished and professional artists.

In other words, WEYA appears as a familiar territory or *empire* for young people to *write back* for the hegemonic Australians (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2003, 2013). The organisation refines and enhances constructive responses to some of the social issues affecting the young people, thereby emboldening new social possibilities while raising discourses around new perspective that are often taken-for-granted such as race, ethnicities, cultural identities, racism and stereotypes.

The young people who have been part of WEYA are not just culturally diverse, but artistically incisive and articulate on practically any societal issue that directly or indirectly (un)motivates them to engage. In engaging with a wider audience, all the theatrical presentations are grounded in theory, incorporating learning on: creating dialogue and resistance, mimesis and narrative, mythology and process drama (Kelman, 2008, 2011; Kelman & Rafe, 2014). In addition to its theoretical underpinnings, WEYA is an incandescent light that young people shine into the community. Significantly, the organisation does not only encourage young, vibrant but vulnerable groups but pushes beyond limits the sort of creative and meticulous thinking that participants can carry into daily life. Thus, the combination of the young people, their burning passion for cultural outreach, a motive for identity reconstruction and a drive for socio-cultural re/orientation via performance simply becomes a necessity and a way of life.

For this study, I contacted only the young African Australians at WEYA, the group who have already explored issues of identity, belonging and connection in their theatre work and public performances. The thematic concern of the organisation focuses on racism, cultural identity and belonging presented in form of drama to explore the experiences of young peoples' identity reconstruction from diverse cultural backgrounds living in Victoria. In-between the presentation of the crew, there is a dramatic monologue and a rhetorical aside by each of the participants to reflect on the concept under consideration. The crew members elicit

comprehensive audience feedback after every theatrical performance to enhance the processes of performativity, which is a beacon for this study. The hallmark of WEYA's theatrical presentations is the combination of serious themes mixed with humour, presenting complex drama woven into socio-reality, addressing socio-political landscapes of identity and belonging (Westernedge Youth Arts, 2017).

4.3   Brief Background Stories of Participants

A table outlining brief information about the participants in this study is provided below

Name	Native Country	Refugee-in-transit country	Gender	Age	No. of years in camp	No. of years in Australia
Alexander	Congo DRC	Rwanda, Kenya	M	18	7-8 years	6-7 years
Rothania	Congo DRC	Tanzania	F	19	5 years	7-8 years
Dwayne	Congo DRC	Kenya	M	20	11-12 years	6 years
Marina	Congo DRC	Kenya	F	18	7-8 years	6-7 years
Xhaka	Zimbabwe	nil	M	20	nil	3-4 years

Fig. 12: *African Australians of former refugee backgrounds interviewed.* (*Pseudonyms* *have been employed for all participants*).

The table above showed that the participants in this study are from different backgrounds but do have similar encounters in terms of identity negotiation. That is not to say that biographically and contextually they are not varied as discussed below. Individual young African Australians have a story to share, and this determines the extent of their identity negotiation and structures of social belongings the young people had to navigate. The short biographies of each of the participants suggest that stories abound but may not necessarily be

similar. We will find they are unique in their modification because the development of identity negotiation takes place within the interstice or the *permeable space*.

The next section briefly discusses the young African Australian participants in this study beginning with Alexander.

4.3.1 Alexander (Male from Democratic Republic of Congo)

Alexander is a young man of 18 years old, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and living there for three years with his parents. Alexander moved with his parents to another neighbouring country inside an overcrowded truck to escape the lynching from the rebel group after the civil unrest in Congo DR. Finally, Alexander and his parents arrived in Kenya to restart a new life but did not choose to go to the refugee camp. Alexander's parents were assisted by the official of the United Nation Humanitarian Commission Resettlement to apply for refugee status in Australia (UNHCR).

Alexander with his parents spent 7 to 8 years as a refugee in Kenya. Alexander was close to 12 years old when he and his parents arrived in Australia as resettled refugees and have spent 6 years in the High School. Alexander is hardworking, always willing to try a new thing and appreciate feedback from any quarter, especially feedback related to his personal development. Alexander discussed his experiences at school enthusiastically, describing his vision, aspiration and guiding principle. At the time of this interview, he has just concluded his Year 12.

4.3.2 Dwayne (Male from Democratic Republic of Congo)

Dwayne, 20 years old was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo during one of the nation's trying periods. Dwayne was 4 years old when the parents moved out of DRC due to the ethnic crisis that culminated into war. Dwayne did not know much about DRC but grew up in Kenya

with his siblings and parents. Dwayne and the family lived for over 11 years in Kenya. The family were meant to go to Kakuma refugee camp to be looked after but chose not to go. The family displayed a strong faith and developed a maxim that kept them through the hard times: "If we are able to make it out of war, we could make it out of any country". This maxim absolutely kept Dwayne's family through the difficult terrain of refugee crisis and status. Dwayne's parents are quite supportive towards helping him and other siblings not to miss out completely academically. Despite this resolve, an interrupted schooling experience still had adverse effects on their academic life.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a Francophonie country with its current population 82,006,648 as of June 2017, based on the latest United Nations estimates. With French language as a *lingua franca,* Dwayne and other from DRC went through the difficult experience trying to learn a new language (English). Dwayne's parents were visionary and saw ahead the need to learn another language even before making effort to apply into any developed first world Anglophone country such as Australia, United Kingdom, Canada or United States of America. Dwayne was a happy young man, embraced Australia and was quite appreciative of Australian Humanitarian Program. Dwayne and his family arrived in Australia in 2011 when he was 14 years old and have been here for over 5 years. Coping with academic rigours to succeed was not an easy task for Dwayne who started high school at Year 9 in Australia.

4.3.3   Rothania (Female from Democratic Republic of Congo)

Rothania, 19 years old, was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo but left after the outbreak of civil war. Rothania escaped with her family to Tanzania when she was 8 years old. Rothania lived with her family in Tanzania for 5 years as a refugee at the refugee camp. Rothania and her parents got into Australia in 2010 and studied from year 6 until year 12, which she completed last year. Living as a refugee at the refugee camp was very difficult and

dehumanising for Rothania as she went through competing interests while searching for meaning in her life. Negotiating school for Rothania was not easy at all "…oh my God! It was really hard. Everything around Rothania read "impossible", as she did not know what she was going to say, the language or where to approach the academic severity. However, interestingly, Rothania got assistance and support from willing teachers and some social workers who taught and advised her on how to deal with other people, get to school, shop and use public transport.

4.3.4 Xhaka (Male from Zimbabwe)

Xhaka, 20 years old, grew up in Zimbabwe until he was 17 years old before. He came to Australia in 2014. In the case of Xhaka, he experienced much displacement growing up as an adolescent with protracted family crises. The mother was separated from the father when he was 8 to 9 months old and growing up, it was a struggle for him choosing between either living with the father or the mother. Because of the hardship of economic realities, his father ended up fleeing the community, leaving him at the mercies of negotiating his way around through begging. Xhaka had a hostile childhood, choosing to live with the grandmother and a brother, a distant one, who helped him endure. His mother arranged for him to start school in greater city of Geelong. Xhaka joined WEYA about three months after the group had a presentation on 'racism', dealing with the scourge. The presentation by WEYA crew impressed Xhaka with several improvisational plays and the engagement of the students. After the performance, Xhaka found willingness to be committed to the organisation while applying the knowledge from WEYA in his academic pursuits.

4.3.5 Marina (Female from Democratic Republic of Congo)

Marina, 18 years old, is a young former refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Marina escaped to Kenya before getting the opportunity to be resettled in Australia. Marina

became interested in theatre art. After some hesitation, she decided to join Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) where her passion is meaningfully translating into her dream fulfilment. Marina is now a University student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree because she liked Performing Arts and enjoys teaching as well. Marina got involved in WEYA in Year 10 after a short performance that endeared her to helping others like herself through theatre arts. Marina likes learning new things, especially new aspects of culture, by getting involved and getting knowledge from other peoples' biographies. It is through the assemblage of biographies that Marina and other crew members collect information that is re-enacted on stage.

The next section discusses the stories incorporated in recent performance by the African Australians and the extract themes that hold across connectivity.

4.4   The Story of a Recent Performance

Beginning with *The Longing to Belong* performance, the theatrical presentation reveals a group of disillusioned young Australians who, despite the effort put in place to build a culture of connection with Australia, are continually frustrated and portrayed in a negative light. In the performance, different cast members describe the excruciating pain of being an Australian, living in Australia and yet being subjected to stereotypical descriptions by seemingly undergoing what I regarded as being *visibly-invisible*[16], and not accepted. All the young people performing in the theatre arrived in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program Visa (SHP) from being a refugee to full citizenship status. However, with the accompany privilege

---

[16] The phrase "visibly-invisible" was coined out of the narration of the participants, which suggests that it is not as if the African Australian in this context are elusive but the deliberate refusal of the White Australians to recognise them. In addition, when it seemed as if they are recognised, they are either being misrepresented and/or misrecognised.

of citizenship, the African Australians still struggle with negotiating their identity and social belonging causing some people becoming at-risk of losing longing to belong.

Following the above presentation, a performance of *Longing to Belong* appeared in 2016 and recently, *GPAC 6 Hours in Geelong* in 2017 was staged, an overwhelming theatrical performance that attracted large audiences around Victoria. I focus on these last two presentations because they suggest a point of reference to the interview responses. For instance, the second theatrical performance summarises the comprehensive commitment of WEYA consolidating three years of successive contribution to migrant and refugee communities in Victoria at large. The presentation builds on the diversity of communities and is geared towards representing the dynamic and changing face of Victoria that is processual and fluid.

The play follows a series of encounters that take place among a group of friends from diverse cultural backgrounds on one night out in Victoria during which they negotiate their culture, friendship, love affairs and values. It is noteworthy to acknowledge the creative mix and ingenuity of the ensemble as all the cast build fiction and reality into one single entity, drawing largely from their individual experiences. All the scenes and most of the material of the show is predicated on actual events that crew members at one time or the other have had to negotiate. The outcome of *Six Hours in Geelong* is a complex process that took place over a period of nine to ten months and the work represents an authentic community voice. However, more important than the ensemble representing the community voice, is the re/negotiation that goes into their theatrical performance.

4.5   Consolidating the Stories of Connecting to WEYA

Following my initial encounters in the field, I have been frequenting WEYA on numerous occasions through the help of one of my supervisors, who has also been instrumental in

accessing the group of participants in this study. I have followed a series of the organisations' presentations and outreaches within communities, in schools around Melbourne and Victoria. The organisation's goals revolve around cultivating and implanting highly didactic teachings through art for young people in the schools.

The impartation of knowledge and moral codes of ethical behaviour through theatre and dramatic monologue further endeared me to WEYA. The organisation focuses more on educative grooming, not merely complex racial relations, but also deals with sexual orientation, tolerance, pushback against bullying, face off against sexual innuendos and other healthy practices. I became enmeshed in the crusade of the organisation through observation and sometimes direct and indirect participation for over two years during which this study is completed.

The artistic director of the organisation who also doubled as one of my supervisors lessened the burden and the complexities around gaining access to the young people in this study. Significantly, the African Australians who participated in this study did so voluntarily but transferred the trust anchored in their artistic director to the interviewer. In addition to the privilege of connecting to the young people through the artistic director, I attended 4 major presentations by the WEYA group and a series of drama and theatrical rehearsals within and outside Melbourne. Following this path gave room to form close relationships and develop understanding of not just their *modus operandi* in the field of dramatic styles but also, investigate individual artists in their natural settings. Altogether, eleven members of the crew were observed. However, five of them are African Australians closely investigated and interviewed about identity negotiation and the impacting of enlivening the script for performance on stage instructively and satirically.

The next section discusses the use of diffraction as a variegated metaphor and as a means of analysing the responses from the participants' stories in the order in which they conversed.

4.6   Diffraction in the African Australian Stories

Diffraction is a physical phenomenon that focuses on significant workings and discussions in physics and the philosophy of physics. In a way, it functions as a kaleidoscopic metaphor for describing and analysing each data set while responding to the details and mysteries of "difference, specificities of relation and how they matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 71). Although diffraction makes parallels with the theory of multifaceted analysis to highlight significant difficulties that are not attuned to differences; differences that re-orient us about the effects of our knowledge of the world.

The participants' descriptions of identity negotiation and belonging sometimes focused on their struggles in general or referred to how they inhabited the in-between space and their individual stories. The participants said that, although they experienced racism and discrimination in Victoria, they generally felt safe and belonged. However, when the participants endeavoured to explain further, their sense of feeling safe and belonging was masked in contention about whether they belonged or not. The participants spoke about their being entangled and living in the in-between space, and this evokes the concepts of being visibly-invisible and stereotyped.

While diffraction functions as a kaleidoscopic metaphor for describing the participants' experiences, it tends to explicate further the details and mysteries of "difference, specificities of relation and how they matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 71). Diffraction make a parallel with the theory of multifaceted analysis to highlight significant difficulties that are not attuned to differences and hence can e-orient us to the effects of our knowledge of the world. For example, the African Australians negotiating entanglement within the in-between spaces reveal the

nature of not just "difference within", but difference in the space they occupied and their adapting to it. Therefore, creating significant meanings through which "knowledge-making practices" effect and changes one's understanding of the participant's world becomes inevitable (Barad, 2007, p. 72).

The most significant recurring metaphor drawn from all the participants' story focused on mutual respect and belonging. The participants did not shy away from continually responding to a better and meaningful relationship with Australia despite their being misrecognised and or misrepresented. For instance, Alexander strongly believes that responding to the details and the mysteries of difference revolves around genuineness and willingness. Alexander maintained:

> '... they can learn from us, Africa as well as we learn from them and they can
> see how Africa is not different to Australia'

Notably, diffraction does not just make parallel that are capable of re-orienting and shaping our knowledge of the world. Drawing from Alexander's story of seeing the world differently resonated with the philosophy of diffraction, which is geared towards producing a new way of thinking about the nature of difference and of space, time, matter, agency and other variables.

Diffraction is a commitment to comprehending which differences matter, especially how the difference matters and for whom. In analysing the data from the participants, this study used critical practice of engagement to cut apart the data, then "piecing it together" (Barad, 2014). In addition, the analysis sought out the effects of difference, even more profoundly as it highlights, exhibits, and makes evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing (Barad, 2007, p. 73; Bodén, 2015; Davies, 2014; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Lanas et al., 2017; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013; Phillips & Larson, 2012; Ulmer, 2016).

Let me conclude by saying that the data from in-depth interview informed by contemporary ethnography study of young African Australians negotiated identities was not anticipated in the initial plan of this study. However, as I engaged "piecing it (data) together" with the findings that emerged from 'the wonder of data' (Barad, 2014; MacLure, 2013), which allows for not just discernment of order and pattern but knowing where the wonder resides. The data became both material manifesting in bodies; inseparably attached to the materiality and the single entity object, which is a 'matter of potentialities and thresholds' (MacLure, 2013).

4.7 The Summary of the Themes

All the participants acknowledged that they felt safe in Australia. This was constructed in the absence of connection and interaction with the immediate environment where they resided. Nevertheless, the African Australians' description of negotiating identity and belonging hinged largely on the pervasive nature of racism, which was explained in terms of their being misrepresented, misrecognised, stereotyped by the wider community. It is a bit difficult to talk about racism and not make mention of discrimination.

The reference to their being discriminated against is also subsumed under racism but one of the participants focused on the idea of discrimination. Their description also focused on the intervention of art through WEYA and the transformation the organisation brought into their lives. The participants emphasised the idea of being categorised as refugees, discussed their entangling experiences, resilience, determination, the cultural pressure of trying to fit in and exclusion.

4.7.1 Racism: "You should go back to your country…"

When the young people were asked about their experiences of identity negotiation, conversations usually turned to racism. They constructed racism as a form of unfriendliness

and disorientation. For example, Rothania said experiencing racism is like disorientation of not knowing what to do or where to say one belongs: "personally, I felt like No! I don't think I belong here". Talking about one of her ordeals, she recounted one of her cultural day experiences in school.

The cultural day was meant to celebrate cultural diversity but in her year 9, the celebration turned sour as what was meant to be celebrated turned to successive introspective questions. There were some White Australians disapproving and disparaging a girl [classmate] who came from one of the Western African bloc. The criticism of the girl was culturally oriented as the White Australians were being racist to her, saying "why is she here? Why did she dress like that? Why is she talking in that language? We don't even understand …". The response from Rothania was she does not believe she belonged in this place.

4.7.2 The "ups and downs" of Discrimination and Exclusion

Alexander saw this scourge differently from Rothania. Alexander called racism "ups and downs that he went through in life". In Alexander's statement, something bad had happened to him and people he knew such as some those being racist to him or those assuming he did something bad merely because of his complexion [as black]. Alexander maintained that "because they [some Australians] just like to compare the colour that you are not from this country' therefore a clamour by [some Australians] always revolve around the expression: 'You should go back to your country'". Negotiating this caused most of the participants to look inwards and reflect on how they could relate to different people without causing problems or initiating a culture war. The pervasiveness of racism shaped Alexander's sense of interaction on "how to relate with these kinds of people and that kind of people without creating a mess".

In addition, Alexander reported that African Australians even after legally becoming Australians were still identified as 'refugees' and that racism was, therefore, to be expected. He reflected on his fresh personal experience of being in a car that day with one of his colleagues at work and an argument ensued, and just in a moment, the friend called him "refugee!" First, Alexander took it mildly but later fought back when the friend kept calling him a refugee by replying: "I am not a refugee". It took a lot of expended energy on the part of the young people in this study to set the record straight about their misconstrued identity. The participants perceived that African Australians may not necessarily experience inclusion because of their societal disposition about African Australians.

The young people spoke about their being underestimated and some Australians saw them as inferior and social menaces. Xhaka specifically talked about not being free to chart the course of his life without the interference of stereotypical construction. In his words: "the look that you get when you are in public space you don't feel as if you are comfortable, I am saying this as individual". This statement was not only suggestive but emphatic. Xhaka said this as an individual that had been the object of a contemptuous look of disapproval. For example, the particularities of this was exemplified when he referred to the discrimination that occurs during job hiring. Xhaka said:

> *for example, I want to be an astronaut. I know I will be competing with other people*
>
> *who have grown up here and would like to be the managers and the people* [Human
>
> resources] *are gonna hire them. But as soon as they see my name, they cannot even*
>
> *pronounce it for example name like* [Ebiwarisuwotei], *that I know, I will not be*
>
> *winning the battle.*

During the dialogue, other discussion points that hinged on politics and the political culture of Africa were raised by Dwayne and Xhaka. These two participants lay emphasis on their

political views and what they were going to do if they were to be in power following the triumph of Donald Trump with the slogan "Make America Great Again". One of the participants, Dwayne, had his own version of that slogan: "Make Africa Great Again".

Dwayne maintained:

Home is home and [for me], *Africa is the only place I will call home. If I was to make somewhere great again, I will look towards the direction of Africa. I would not look here* [because] *I have left everything there and that is the place I will like to make great again. If only I have one wish to make a country great again, I will go back to Africa.*

For a section of the interview, Dwayne's emotions about his African roots and his connectivity appears is nostalgic and poignant. It was evident that from Dwayne's position, the experience of exclusion and being discriminated against aroused the feeling of rethinking his African connectivity.

4.8   Summary

This section had discussed the setting of this study beginning with the organisation which inspired participants to develop fascinating ideas and hence assist in addressing belonging and exclusion for my study. The participants' stories, descriptions and explanations of identity negotiation and social belonging were all important to defining the different contexts of individual and collective stories prior to arriving in Australia and after arrival. The use of diffraction as a method of analysis from the above thematic extracts focuses on describing each data set while responding to the mysteries of difference and specificities. Thus, diffraction becomes an image of changing scenes from the participants' experience of racism to reconsidering it in another, which is the ups and downs of discrimination and exclusion. For

the participants, these differences matter to them. Especially, in negotiating the entanglement of in-between spaces, which is not just about the difference within but difference in the spaces they occupied. This data was collected through observation, historical and biographical stories, in-depth interviews informed by contemporary ethnography, and theatrical presentations. In addition, the data used in this study are the participants' constructions of their actions in certain places. This section began with the setting, Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA], and the chronicling of that setting.

Section Three

Title: Thinking, Analysis, Climax and Conclusion
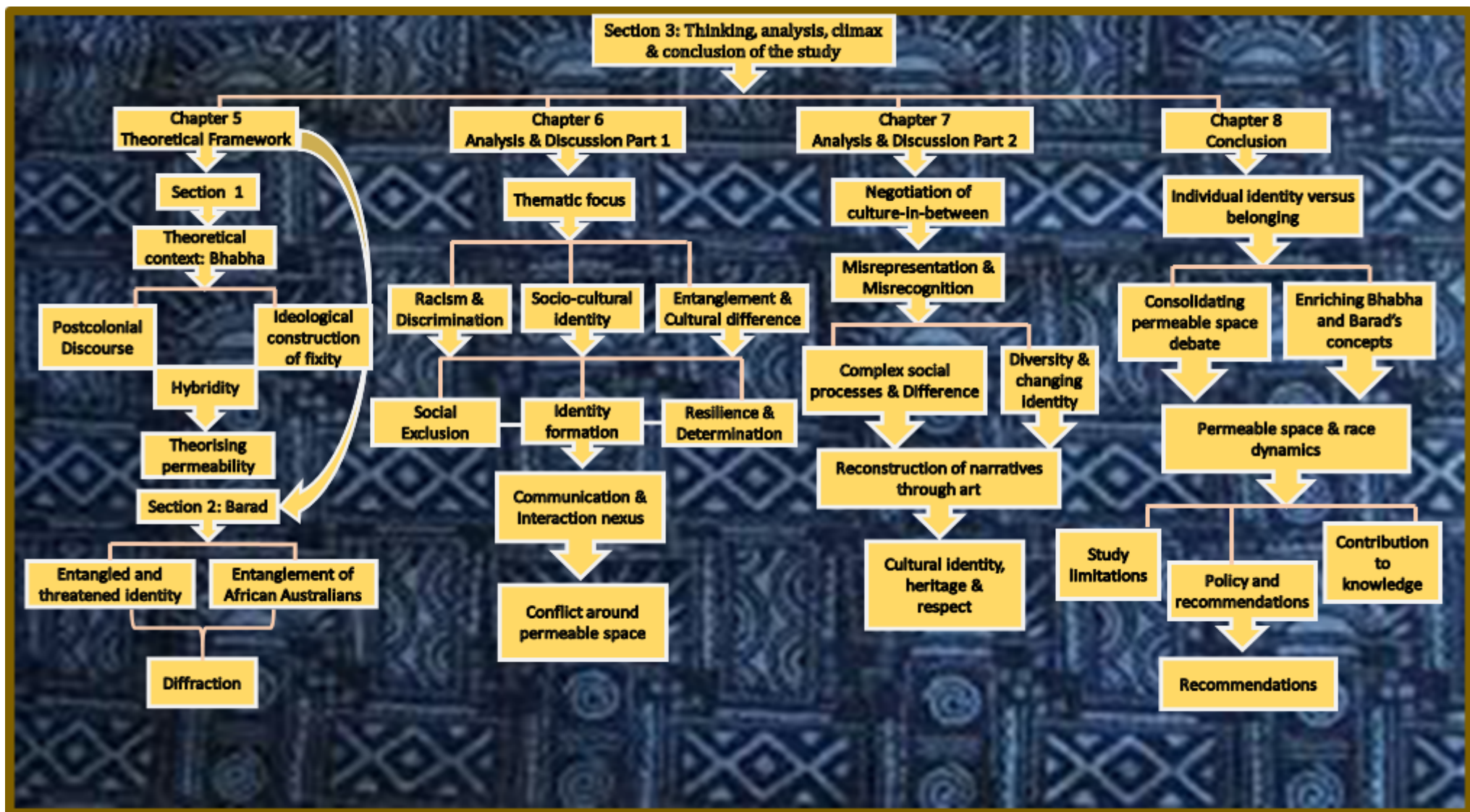
Fig. 13: *The graphical description of the third section comprising the theoretical framework, analysis and conclusion of the study.*

This page was left blank intentionally

Chapter 5:   Theoretical Framework

'An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness' (Bhabha, 2012, p. 94).

5.1   Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts and it provides an outline of the theoretical and conceptual framework of colonial subjects and their negotiating experiences. The first section focuses on the troubled identity of the colonised; the current xenophobic rhetoric, and the socio-political pushback against liberalism. I unpack all these using Bhabha's (1994) concept of 'hybridity' and the manifestation of third space to creating an 'interstitial space[17]' experience or what I theorised as *permeability*[18] to investigate how the African Australians negotiate cultural difference in Australia. The second section focuses on the entangling experience of the African Australians such as what happens in terms of interaction between African Australians and White Australians. The section uses Barad's (2007) concept of the 'entanglement' of matter and meaning to suggest that the African Australians are entangled through intra-relating with time and space.

---

[17] Interstitial space is the overlap and the displacement of domains of difference such as collective experience of 'nationness', community interests or where cultural values are negotiated while combining the past and present experience to recreate the future.

[18] Permeable space is a term I coined from biochemistry's 'Osmosis', a process by which solvent molecules move from a region of higher concentration to a lower concentration through a semi-permeable membrane. The idea was adapted in the form of an in-between space through which time and space creates a permeating passage or loop for identity negotiation and belonging.
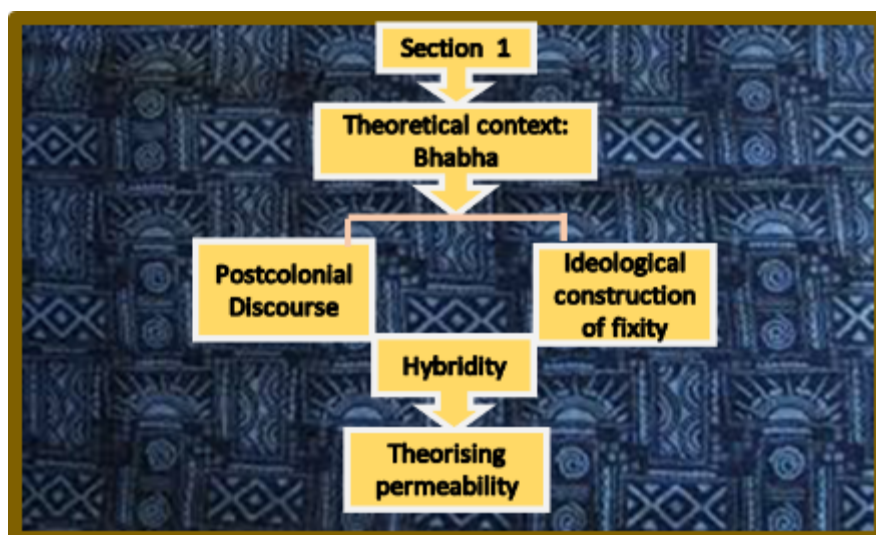
Fig. 14: *A chart showing contextualisation and theorisation of the first theoretical framework.*

5.2   Section 1: Theoretical Contexts – Bhabha

In conceptualising this study, postcolonial theory was not just appealing to investigate the construction of the other but was appropriate in the influential movement of postcolonial criticism (Bhabha, 2012; Fanon, 1952; Hall & Du Gay, 1996; Said, 1978, 1995). In using postcolonial theory, I acknowledged that connections and tensions overlap and exist between colonialism, discrimination, racism and stereotypical discourse as it relates to African refugees in Australia. Bhabha explains that the systemic construction of the colonised comes through exertion of "colonial power through discourse, which however demands an articulation of forms of difference" (2012, p. 96). Significantly, it is the premise of articulation of difference where both negotiation and the differential construction of social and cultural identity bringing about newness takes place.

Previous studies have suggested that the historical otherness African Australians experience as being marginalised leads to continued experiences of discrimination (Kim & Noh, 2016; MacDonald, 2017; Majavu, 2017; Uptin et al, 2013). However, what becomes paramount is the focus on how the African Australians have been represented and by extension the

reconstruction that goes with that. The re-conception and the re-thinking of the terms that accompany questions of identity such as: *hybridity, ambivalence, social liminality, mimicry, difference* and *interstitial space* have all assisted in the reading and critiquing of African Australians' postcolonial experience.

All these concepts do not only explain ways through which colonised people reject or resist the power of the coloniser, but also express how the colonised fashion out a pathway in response to the colonised influence, resulting in agency. What is more compelling about this framework is that it revolves around how the minority reflect on this and respond. Individual responses differ but possess similar undertones of bringing about possibilities from what might appear hopeless to creating *newness*.

5.3   Post-colonialism of the Past and Now: A Discourse

Colonial discourse is a collection of narratives and beliefs that deal with how colonised people are represented or perceived. It employs theoretical work on cultural identity to investigate the eclecticism of post-colonialism. Identity negotiation, tension and re/construction underscores the literary field of post-colonialism. This is a subject of an ongoing debate because the notion of human identity is never static but a fluid and always in a dynamic process of becoming (Alvarez, Canagarajah, Lee, Lee & Rabbi, 2017; Lozano-Verduzco, 2015).

Similarly, colonised peoples' identity does not end with colonialism, but extends to colonised nations, the peoples' identity and representation. However, the misrepresentation of an individual's identity and/or collective group such as former refugees' misrecognition (Keddie, 2012a) thrusts them into different forms of categorisation. The classification of these groupings raises questions about where they belong, such as tensions around cultural practices, nationality and "imagined communities" (Anderson & Taylor, 2005; Anderson, 2006; Bhabha 2012),

institutionalised racism (Correa-Velez, Gifford, McMichael & Sampson, 2017; Forrest & Dunn, 2013; Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016), and civilisations destroyed in cultural conflicts.

In the literary work, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Ashcroft et al, (2003) describe all cultures troubled by the process of colonialism from the beginning of colonisation to the present. What is striking, however, about their description reveals that the past is never concluded, and the present is never a new beginning for the colonised as their past continues to overlap with the present. For instance, to show that the past has a way of troubling the present is evident in the proceedings of countries in Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia (Anglophone), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ivory Coast and Senegal (Francophone) were formerly occupied by British and French colonists. These nations continue to be affected by their history of colonisation and the colonised keep suffering the consequences of such history, even after their independence.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe (1971) described the colonised experience as a history denied of adequate representation. Achebe extracted the title of his novel from the first stanza of the Irish poet, William Yeats (1920) *The Second Coming*[19]:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
>
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer.
>
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.
>
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

---

[19] *The Second Coming* alludes to a future where the controls that bind humanity together lose its foothold, which thus require the force of a new impulse and direction to solve the impasse. The poem was written in 1919 in the post-World War I.

This quotation does not only suggest what happens when a society becomes fragmented, but also when an individual is trapped within a different cultural practice.

For instance, *Okonkwo*[20], the protagonist and the tragic hero of *Things Fall Apart* was caught on the wrong side of history and lamented the coming of the European missionaries to the village of Umuofia. Okonkwo became apprehensive and abrasive towards the missionary, Enoch, who unmasks an *egwugwu,*[21] an act of grievous sacrilege, which he cast upon the missionaries coming to Umuofia village, causing a cultural desecration. This type of cultural conflict is not uncommon with people relating and negotiating difference in cultural space.

In defining 'post-colonialism' through the lens of colonial discourse, Loomba notes,

> the prefix 'post' …. implies an 'aftermath' in two senses– temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism (2015, p. 28).

This implies that colonialism, which is of the past does, have a way of interrupting the present such that its ideology still influences the rationality and thinking of the colonised. Loomba (2015) further argues that it is possible for a country to be both postcolonial (or be declared independent) and neo-colonial in terms of remaining culturally dependent on the coloniser at the same time.

---

[20] Okonkwo is the protagonist of the novel *Things Fall Apart*. In the novel, Okonkwo grew up resenting his father weakness but devote all his time in proving his masculinity. At an early age, he became a champion and key cultural figure of Umuofia Village, but the coming of the missionaries and his sentencing to seven years in exile for killing a boy at a funeral caused a cultural gap between him and his clan and the missionaries.

[21] The *egwugwu* in Africa are not just masquerades but a symbolic of cultural practice and celebration in an African community, which are sacred and seen as ancestral gods. Although, they are masked and serve as both respected judges of African society and the intermediaries between the ancestral and the physical world. See also Wole Soyinka's (1975), *Death and the King's Horseman.* London: Eyre Methuen Ltd.

5.3.1 Postcolonial Australia

Moreton-Robinson (2003, 2006) questions the use of the term 'postcolonial' to describe the Australian situation, since, she argues, the indigenous people never got back what was taken from them and this foreground any other interplay of dominance and power relations. At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that the term 'post-colonialism' is rooted in the colonial practice of imperialism. Under the discourse of post-colonialism in the past and now, I maintained that the colonial experience indicated not just a 'beyond' (Ashcroft et al, 2003, 2013; Loomba, 2015), but a different mode after the colonial experience. Nevertheless, I am acknowledging Moreton-Robinson's 2003 argument upholding the position that the "indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because our relation to land…is omnipresent." (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, p. 24). Hence, the term 'postcolonial' might be understood in a different way by one group compared to another such as indigenous Australians. For Moreton-Robinson, this makes the term 'postcolonial' as contentious as the experience of integration of the African Australians in this study.

A postcolonial lens can, then, be helpful in understanding and clarifying how the old colonial ways are maintained in new disguises. In other words, such a lens can show how the colonial past still shapes and influences the present (Huddart, 2007). Blatant racism nowadays is usually unacceptable socially in the so-called developed countries, even though rhetoric and xenophobic animosity against the other continues to rise. The moral standards of common human civility are under the spotlight of erasure and have not only retrogressed but appear to be nosediving. Social stratifications or gradients are still maintained as a manifestation of the justifications of the dominant or hegemonic group. These justifications are, of course, socially constructed and based on the recognition of one as *insiders* and the other as *outsiders*.

Williams (1991) wrote that, significantly, Marx and Engels described the ideological concept of 'superstructure' which can further assist the quest to unravel the mystery of class dominance in cultural production. For classical Marxism, the ruling class somewhat dictate the *modus operandi* for the subjugated or the ruled by employing reasoning, intellectuals and "cultural production to produce ideas that glorify the dominant" constellations of institution of power (Williams, 2006, pp. xiii-xiv). In today's societies, culture comprises a series of stories, songs, images, values, beliefs, practices and norms from where meaning is generally deduced. However, the key culturally material force of a society hinges on its ruling *intellectual force*. In other words, those who lack the wherewithal of understanding the realities of cultural processes and its practices are naturally subject to it.

Probyn (1996) uses a different focus to explore the dichotomies of *Outside Belonging*. Probyn examines surface belonging, the "everyday belonging", and it is here she argues that the postcolonial experience is located. In some ways, this is like what Bhabha considers in *The Location of Culture*, namely the everyday aspects of life (Bhabha, 1994/2012). Probyn writes, "we negotiate our desire for belonging as through a maze of club rules" (1996, p. 24). However, if the club rules are written by the colonisers (or any dominant group in society), it might not be a club that will easily accept others, and, as Probyn (1996) comments, it might not be a 'club' all people wish to be a member of. Here the postcolonial situation is shaping and influencing belonging on the surface; for example, with cultural practices constructing barriers for those who might challenge the homogeneity of such entanglements. However, the constructive barrier challenging homogeneity is also a source for resistance and rejection by those who do not wish to be members of the 'club'.

In addition, Huijser (2014) raises an important contribution about post-colonialism and its operation. He writes that "postcolonial studies should ask itself: what is the most effective form

of resistance in the face of homogenising forces that are gathering in strength?" (2014, p. 141).

One way to find out is to ask those who have the least perceived agency, and the previous chapter supported the claim that forced migrants, such as refugees and asylum seekers, are potentially at high risk of being socially excluded. Perhaps, it is among these groups that the likelihood of finding fissures and the "contestation of what it means to be Australian" (Huijser, 2014, p. 135) becomes foregrounded. Any acts of placing emphasis on any "foundational fiction" (Bhabha, 2013, p. 5) of one culture or people over the minority threaten belonging and this threat may perpetuate social divisions or hierarchies for the young people.

Coming from a postcolonial perspective suggests "circumvent[ion] of imperial and colonial habits of mind" (Huijser, 2014, p. 141) because those colonised are often normalised in structures and society. The challenge is that they might privilege specific dominant groups who might be less inclined to change those habits, and so these become self-perpetuating habits. Bhabha argues that to challenge hegemonic constructs we need to "provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 178). It was in relation to this that Hall and Du Gay (1996) argued that the colonised should be given agency through their cultural identity.

Consequently, Bhabha (1994) proposes that the process of renegotiating nationalities, ethnicities and identities is dialogic, indeterminate and characterised by hybridity. For Bhabha (1994), 'hybridity' is something that is new, neither the one nor the other" that emanates from the amalgamation and possible cracks within the crevices. The emergence of this hybridity from the interstitial space is about reinforcing "this fluid sense of nationality and identity" (p. 178), in which he employs a construction of oriented terminology such as *dialogic, translation, negotiation, in-between, cross-reference* and *ambivalence.*

Bhabha (2012) argues for the need to re-articulate the narratives we use to think about ourselves and the Other, but to stay away from dialectics and essentialist arguments when one thinks about culture, class, identity and belonging, because they are changeable. Thus, social explanation of identity negotiation tends to force awareness and recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries to shaping an individual's experience of belonging, the feeling of belonging or not belong.

5.3.2   The Contexts of Race

Bhabha articulates Fanon's (2008) idea of being constrained by time and the experience of "blackness", which make the question of ontology appropriate for black identity (Bhabha, 2012, p. 339). Fanon argued that colonialism appear to be superimposed, and it is a sense of false and degrading existence on the colonised that they have simply imbibed and internalised. The thought that those who have been colonised were not regarded as ideal human beings by those who colonised them: "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 340), further complicates the legitimacy of a black man, and in this context, the African Australians.

However, within the construction of black man illegitimacy an 'in-between space' and *permeation* emerge through which African Australians negotiate the ontology of the white world that constructs the white as appropriate but against what the black does not represent. This *permeable space* is then metamorphosed into a space of being that is shaped from the interruptive tragic experience of blackness, of discrimination, of despair. To paraphrase Bhabha, 2012 (p. 341), the apprehension of the social and psychological question of "origin" – and its erasure – that draws its worth from an almost substantive absoluteness.

In a world that is fraught with contradictory combinations of black/white, self/other, us/them especially in terms of constructing cultural connection, there is an anxiety between difference and sameness (Bhabha, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2011). There continues to be a growing concern around the culture of a place regarding how identity is constructed and negotiated in relation with human and cultural network. Perhaps, if the colonised and in this context, the Australians of African background, are quite knowledgeable about where their identity ends, and the rest of the world begins, it can be easy to identify that world as other, different, inferior, and what could be threatening to their identity and interests. For the individuals in this category, it is more than just identifying a world different from theirs as other but negotiating and building a culture of connecting to it, which falls within the context of broader social and cultural relations.

The history of the past refreshes our understanding of how peoples' culture and history continues to overlap in a way that interrupts their present way of life, postcolonial. In addition, beyond the interruption of the present situation about people experiencing displacement, there is a demand for individual and collective transformation of cross-cultural understanding. However, in cross-cultural understanding, factors such as race and ethnicity remain significant identity markers in any society (Ashcroft et al, 2003; 2013). This means that elimination or eradication of racism and discrimination cannot be absolute. As such, to reconstruct African-Australian identity that is based on shared values with Australian cultural-ethos may very well be far from being realistic, which thus raises the question of difference.

Furthermore, Bhabha placed emphasis on the active agency of the colonised by showing a form of cultural resistance. The active agency of the colonised is the ability of individuals to stamp their authority on issues such as race, ethnicity, religion and culture that typically might have been difficult for them to exert such informed choices. Similarly, rethinking the present socio-

political and global occurrences becomes more significant in the investigation of how a people develop a culture of connection. In building connection, there is a form of construction through the instrumentality of *negotiation* that takes place especially when the colonised re-imagine cultural identity and meaning. Accordingly, it is on the premise of negotiation that this thesis deconstructs ideological discourse of the other in negotiating a more complex world and understanding the moment, which is neither *here* nor *there*, *up* nor *down* and *past* nor *future*.

In this thesis, the notion of race is both understood as culturally and socially constructed. The idea of race is employed to differentiate people based on categories, often in connection to individual physical features, through which attribution of meaning and interpretation can be accorded to such features. Beyond the idea of biological particularities, race is a social construct that is spatially and temporally hinged on categorisation of racial hierarchy (Wilson, 2013). The construction of race is reconstructed based on the hierarchical structure of a given context or the societal practice that does not only questions but threatens how the society is structured. Therefore, race become an instrument through which a form of control is exerted in establishing and producing not only sameness and difference (Ndhlovu & Willoughby, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2009), but objectified view of other groups.

The concepts of race, ethnicity and cultural practices are often employed to explain the cause of why a group of people experience difficulties in connecting to mainstream culture (Due, 2008; Gale & Parker, 2013; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Windle & Miller, 2012). From the above explanation, the racial stereotyping leads to the trap of the binary that creates a positive sense of self and demonises the other group as problematic, lacking the skill and exposure to initiate and maintain cultural connection. Africa is often associated with 'disconnection', 'backward', 'tribal', and 'problematic' a construction of negativity often in conflict to the position of the participants (Berthold et al, 2014; Blair et al, 2017; Windle &

Miller, 2012). Individuals who do not normally share these status and values are classified as other, outsiders or strangers and by that reason excluded (Nunn, 2010; White, 2017). However, explaining identity connection just in terms of regarding the other as strangers or outsiders while ignoring other identities negotiation and contextual factors can be complicated.

The next section, focuses on the ideological construction of fixity, which suggests an alternative approach towards the subjectivity of the young Australians of African heritage.

5.4 The Ideological Construction of 'Fixity'

> The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of difference – racial and sexual (Bhabha, 2012, p. 96).

Fixity designates the symbolic within the historical, cultural and racial discourses of colonialism (Bhabha, 2012). It is also a contradictory mode of representation that signifies rigidity, state of being unchanged, disorder and misrecognition. Stereotype is the main discursive strategy of fixity, and it is a form of knowledge that hesitates between what is often in place or already known and what must be repeated.

Focusing on colonial discourse is, then, principally a strategic process of subjectification that seeks to unearth the ambivalence of socially shared beliefs about members of a social category such as the former African refugees (Bhabha, 2012). However, the focus is not only on stereotypical discourse, but how its significance hinges on the notion of 'fixity', particularly in the socio-political and ideological construction of otherness. The unchanging description or title of an individual such as the former refugees characterises the notion of fixity, and this is

evident within the socio-historical, cultural and racial description of their otherness such as an African-Australian being continually labelled a 'refugee'.

Said (1995) suggests that there is a construction that accompanies the notion of fixity by demonstrating the social relations between a form of identity and the other to make it an acknowledged suppressed group. This is of significant interest in Bhabha's work, *The Location of Culture*, as the African Australians acknowledged their fragmented structures and a prevailing sense of a loss of cultural authority. Similarly, Said (1995) emphasised how the expansive construction of the other (such as the African Australians and former refugees) "subtends the exclusionary process upon which European (or Australian identity) is predicated" (1995, p. 1) and alienates any direct access to pre-given ethnic or cultural traits. Therefore, the construction of African Australians as the other tend to isolate and cause an exasperation in navigating communities while also upholding spaces for intimacy and connection.

What remains paramount to this project is not in the passive fact of occurrences or happenings around the renegotiation of their identity; it is in the understanding that different ideas, traditions of thought, imagery and vocabulary of the African Australian do possess the capacity of re/constructing a brand new cultural awareness. Thus, the notion of the 'other' is used to underscore how postcolonial identities are contested because of different manifestations of social identities. The manifestations of these social identities thrust the participants in this thesis within the ambit of ideological misconceptions, repression and of transgressing the boundaries of possible limits. This all comes from the space of their being othered.

Despite the shift in socio-cultural and political objectives, particularly towards the end of the 20th and in the 21st century, there remains a restraining traditional reliance on the stereotype of the minority. Nevertheless, identity remains a troubled point either of connection or disconnection, but does have a "unitary notion of suture" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 100), which is

crucial to the argument of the interstice formation and operationalisation. Paradoxically, within this immovable joint or suture between individuals and cultural practices is the previous and immediate experience that often produces something different and possibly new altogether. The fact that such experience of difference goes beyond bearing witness to the inequality of cultural representation suggests that individuals contest and scramble for social, cultural connection and recognition within a world of changing identity. With these struggles, the cultural potentials of different histories push the boundary, the trajectory and the discourses of minorities further within "the interstitial fissure" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 245).

5.4.1   Historical Shifts and Cultural Awareness

Hall and Du Gay (1996) see the potential of cultural [identity] as a reproduction of ideological meanings that agree with the main culture, its values, beliefs and what it stands for as against what it does not. The aim of conceptualising the question of identity discourse is both theoretical and historical. Significantly, beyond its historicity, is the emphasis on explaining historical shifts between a culture such as the African Australians on one hand, and the Australian culture on the other. This historical shift foregrounds the notion of opposites, connection and difference traceable to cultural identity. However, between the ideological expression of historicity and cultural awareness of the young people lies the middle ground of difference that this study seeks to investigate. It explains partly how the students negotiate the permeable space and of course, the differential experiences within the crevices.

In addition, these Australians of African descents also struggle with "tribal stigma"[22] in form of identity ascription. Both van Heelsum and Koomen (2016) see identity ascription as

---

[22] Tribal stigma is a behaviour, which is socially discrediting in a way and causes individual to be perceived as undesirable, rejected and stereotyped rather than accepted as normal.

perception of negative opinion going as far as challenging the associative tendency or connection to a social group. Other studies around identity ascription consider the strain in the associative inclination and relationship as being like "reactive ethnicity" (Jenkins, 2014). To further clarify the recurrent challenge of labelling, this study takes into consideration how identity ascription interferes with a participant's sense of the context in which they are operating. The participants in this study do so to navigate the social situation they encountered, such as manifestation of reactive ethnicity arising from likely apparent experience of:

> threats, persecution, discrimination and exclusion. It is one mode of ethnic identity
>
> formation that highlights the role of a hostile context of reception in accounting for
>
> the rise rather than the erosion of ethnicity (Rumbaut, 2008, p. 110).

The articulation of difference may suggest a type of agency for individuals, yet the attempt to understand the identification processes of every articulation is perceived as a threat by the mainstream Australians. At the beginning of this chapter, I emphasised one of the important features of colonial discourse, which is its reliance on the "concept of fixity" (Bhabha, 2012, pp. 94-96). This explains the possible conflict between the unacceptance of the African Australians as so-called true Australians, while continually being perceived as refugees, a stereotypical construction dispossessing them of where they may be forever linked.

Bhabha (1994/2012) argues that the familiar alliance between the coloniser and the colonial subjects is troubled by a brief silence of disconnecting experiences and mixed-reaction. However, the traditional grounds of identity are isolated and silenced, especially whenever they are within the boundaries of the host culture. One major aspect of colonialism that Bhabha considers painstakingly is the ideological construction of the minorities and the discourse of stereotypes, which regarded the colonised subjects as inferior or "the problem" (2012, p. 101). Being regarded as a "problem" or inferior connotes negativity that can interfere with an

individual's self-esteem. In chapter one of this thesis, I started with my personal story of being stereotyped and constructed as a 'Fei zhou' (undesirable/uncivilised) in P. R. China, a construction that wound my self-worth.

Reflecting on my experience, reveals that the ideological construction of stereotyping others is predicated upon the state of an individual description being fixed. For instance, being a black man from Africa means a negative fixation for an average Chinese based on prior knowledge and historical (mis)recognition or misgivings of African heterogeneity. These categorisations appear to stick with the other especially if the platform on which imperialism and domination bases its influence questions the ingenuity of such groups.

5.4.2   The International Context of Fixity

In the past, the cultural backlash of validating the status of populism is usually in the form of challenging political correctness, which may be accompanied by a subtle revolution or a social movement (Wodak et al, 2013). However, in the most recent past, the cultural backlash against multiculturalism and neoliberalism is no longer subtle but raucous as there was a radical shift towards the far right. For instance, there was a movement in the United Kingdom known as the 'Brexit[23]'. Brexit became a hypothetical decision through which the UK pulled out of the European Union (EU). The decision for departing the European bloc came in the twilight of Britain being sceptical of the European Union policies, specifically as it affects issues around immigration and economic stimulus for defaulting members throughout the continent.

---

[23] The phrase 'Brexit' is a term coined out of two words, which means 'Britain' + 'Exit' = Brexit. The Brexit saga demonstrates the importance of invisible differences between groups in which values, beliefs and cultural practices became the motivating factors on how the Brexiteers voted. See Kaufmann, E. (2016). It's NOT the economy, stupid: Brexit as a story of personal values. *British Politics and Policy at LSE* Research Online.

It is appropriate, then, to acknowledge that the Brexit saga (international), or the domestic Australia's One Nation Party rhetoric against refugees and Muslims, are contributory factors to the tensions and disruptions to many other Western societies. The rising support of populism and its crusaders have not only created a cultural backlash (Inglehart & Norris, 2016), but also pitch a cultural opposition and practice of "us" versus "them", which has necessitated an in-built wall of cultural resistance. For example, the 2016 presidential election campaign in the United States replicated the populism ideology through which a political neophyte like Donald Trump would not just clinch the party nomination but go as far as becoming the president of the United States.

This movement created a heated culture wars between the young and the old, the mainstream culture and the minority while disrupting the long-established sequence of political party competition. For instance, the instrumentation of peddling xenophobic rhetoric (against refugees as terrorists), instigating fear of the others (against Muslims and Mexicans as terrorists and criminal), isolationism of putting America first can only suggest the construction of the other is precipitated upon ideology of fixity and conspiracy theory. This concept of fixity thrives more through the media depiction of the minority in a negative light, a platform where broader audiences can access and share the potential visibility.

The next section considers the stage theory of identity development and identity formation beyond the binary opposition of 'us' versus 'them'.

5.4.3 Beyond the Dichotomous Notion of 'us' versus 'them'

Individuals appearing to be at one stage or phase of identity development often experience a swinging mode of identity construction and it is often in an inconsistent way either at an early stage or later points in time (Oyserman et al., 2012). In addition, the theory also focuses on one

important aspect that reconfigures the experimentation of the *interstitial space*. For instance, the significance of the stage theories comes into limelight with studies on racial, discrimination and ethnic identity with an everyday question of whether young people move from exploration to commitment (Oyserman et al., 2012).

In negotiating identity fixation and ascription, the African Australians tend to come up with individuation that projects a sense of uniqueness underscoring their strength. The formation of this type of identities hinges on the axis of dis/connection and attachment because identity provides us as people with a form of stability. Hall and Du Gay (1996, pp. 17-18) argue that identity possesses the "capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render *outside, abjected*". They maintain that "every identity has at its 'margin', an excess, something more" (1996, p. 18). Of interest here is the premise of exclusionary experiences being deconstructed and regarded as "something more".

Investigating identity formation, then, opens the understanding about what happens when an individual's operationalisation "falls somewhere in the in-between" spaces (Daskalaki, Butler, & Petrovic, 2016, p. 184). From these in-between spaces, socio-spatial and temporary crystallizations of bodily experiences are not just disrupted but reconfigured by differentially embodying displacements and emplacements across space–time. By using this approach and working through the empirical material, the analysis also points to possible ways to think the notion of *transitory spaces*.

This is a meeting point between the ideological discourses which explain we are social subjects, and the psychological or psychical processes which produce us as subjects that can be spoken (Hall, 2000). Clearly, existing political, social, economic, ethnic and individual structures can immerse people in adopted cultures, and, by extension, this explains the status such an individual can take up while negotiating their own identity. The notion that the formation of

identity remains fragmented within the production of symbolic closure overlays the question of race and cultural difference via the process of alterity.

This implies that there is tension between "narrative address of the nation [and] reference to a 'people'" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 209). This tension constitutes the return of changing identity of the subject in such a way that questions "the realm of otherness and the social – where *we identify ourselves with the other…*" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 265). This often occurs especially at the place where the individuality of the subject is unparalleled, at a point that goes beyond similitude or closeness.

Hall argues that "where Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly speaking and endlessly speaking us" (Kamali, 2016, p. 8). The binary of 'us' versus 'them' remains a cryptic dichotomising concern, where 'us' signifies the European interests validating the imperial powers or the hegemonic influence on what is 'appropriate' and what remains outside or perceived as 'different'. This discourse around colonial powers puts the subject outside discourses of power and separates them from the large populations through space rupturing, colonialism, forced migration and slavery (Ashcroft et al, 2013; Kamali, 2016; Loomba, 2015). Therefore, the binary construction of difference goes beyond the concept of 'us' versus 'them' that positions those who are different from the dominant system. It positions them as always, a subject-in-the-making and inferior. In exploring this further, this project considers how the former refugee is perceived as different not just in the binary opposition 'us' versus 'them' but also what goes on in the middle or neutral spaces and making sense of it.

Bhabha (1994/2012) questions the idea of 'difference' as not just a concept of binaries but consider it as other-than the idea of 'us' vs 'them'. Of interest to this thesis is the theorisation of identity as multiple and being in the light of the unconscious process of formation that is "subject to the ongoing critiquing notion of *difference"* (Ang & Louis, 2005, p. 293). I critique

the notion of *difference* to investigate sites of inequity such as discourses of social inclusion and what makes culture (Keddie, 2012a; Pugh et al, 2012). By extension, the thesis categorises 'difference' as complicated agency[24] inscribing how the negotiation and articulation of difference is played out, especially within the ambivalences of contradictions in Australia. Complicated agency refers to a convolution or interconnecting parts or elements challenging an individual or collective agency of being in action or of exerting power and influence on issues that either directly or indirectly affect them.

In the next section, I consider *hybridity* and what this means for African Australians in negotiating their cultural identity and or the new adopted culture.

5.5 What is Hybridity?

Hybridity is the process by which the coloniser undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised. Hybridity is not just a mixture between two separate culture or races but also deals with connections and contentions between people through which newness comes into the world. This emphasises Bhabha's terms of cultural engagement that exist in the development of the interstices. In their space, the "overlap" within the area of difference that the individual and collective experiences of having connection to a nation, social, cultural interests and values, is negotiated (Bhabha, 2012, p. 2).

For African Australians, the claim for hybridity reflects an uncontrollable discontinuity that emerges because of the global movement of people through immigration, re/settlement, and displacement experience. Because of these experiences, hybridity works with and within the

---

[24] Complicated agency refers to a convolution or interconnecting parts or elements challenging an individual or collective agency of being in action or of exerting power and influence on issues that either directly or indirectly affect them.

cultural design of the present and the past. It simply assists to reshape one's understanding of how the young people of colour are situated somewhere between two extremes or categories such as negotiating their native culture and the cultural practice of Australia (Werbner & Modood, 2015). This happens in the form of joining social and psychological culture, which links signs of cultural sameness or closeness with developing signs of another alternative that may be closely related. For instance, what makes up the subject of hybridity seemed to be composed of *processual*[25] segments of identity such as temporal, political, racial, sexual, social or economic aspects. By 'processual', I mean these experiences are not static but keep changing based on cultural context and variableness.

With these ongoing experiences, reconfiguration takes place, a process through which individuals seek to make sense of these cultural complexities but are often misinterpreted and misrecognised. In hybridity discourse, 'third space' became a theoretical tool with which to study the way cultural practices are unavoidably hybridised. If hybridity results into a 'third space', then the components of such hybrid experience cannot be a product of just cultural intersection (Yuval-Davis, 2016; Huddart, 2007), but of other *processual* factors within the space such as beliefs, values and practice. Thus, proposing what I called a *permeable-passageway* theory of cultural hybridity, which seeks to effect a real change, namely freedom of expression and emancipatory experience for the African Australians. The interstitial space is an area of connection and displacement of difference, a middle ground between an individual's past and present experience through which the future or newness can emerge or be reconstructed.

---

[25] Processual identity refers to experiences that are not static but keep changing based on cultural context and variableness.

While there may be different experiences of cultural mixings and constructions, it is possible for cultural hybridity to effect not just a real change, but a liberating experience of negotiating cultural identity capable of defending the minorities. Negotiating difference in a polarised world raise concerns that seem most compelling in relation to the social and cultural factors responding to the present realities. Currently, however, the place and meaning of cultural hybridity is undermined by the current political shift towards populism (Wodak et al, 2013), global uncertainties, xenophobic rhetoric, discrimination and racial slurring.

What stems out of this mixed-ness and interlocking of cultures then accounts for different cultural orientations. This is at the point where the other relates with cultural fragmentation, as the subject seeks social inclusion and quest to fit into the culture of a place (Cresswell, 2014), even when the culture of such place may deny their acceptability and recognition. As a result, some of these young people unquestionably experience the crisis of agency and identity questions working in conflict with where they belong.

The colonial authority seeks to convert the other within a singular universal framework. However, failing to accomplish the conversion, the colonised tends to produce something that is closely related. This results in something altogether new, which in turn results in a 'third space' and other positions to emerge. With the emergence of this new position, new transcultural dynamics are created and these not of binaries but other uncertainties. To identify and understand the nature of these uncertainties calls for investigation of *the in-between* in terms of how a participant's identity perpetually works within the border that Hodge and O'Carroll (2006) call 'schismogenesis'[26].

---

[26] 'Schismogenesis' means a process of progressive and ongoing differential norm of individual identity reconstruction or renegotiation, which often occurs because of connection between individuals or groups of individuals.

When it comes to national belonging in Australia, hybridisation has always taken place, even though it not always articulated as something that is ongoing. The reasons seem to be that often hybridisation is understood as a transnational identification, such as when people are called 'Chinese-Australian', or 'Lebanese-Australian' or even 'African-Australian'. Even though transnational identities have an opportunity to challenge essentialist notions concerning national belonging, they can be perceived as two separate national identities (Grabska, 2010) not as a hybrid amalgamation that Bhabha argues should be the aim. Such hybrid amalgamations are what Hodge and O'Carroll (2006) argues all 'Australians' are, even those who think they are 'just Australians'.

The pathway forward for individuals should be to understand and search for the hybrid identities, or hybrid belonging and this can be difficult. In the debate around cultural hybridity, there is a contradictory platform where hybrid belonging and identity overlap. This is the interstitial space which I discuss further in this chapter. In other words, cultural hybridity and identity implicitly acknowledge that identity undergoes not just fluctuation, but also a day-to-day process (Werbner & Modood, 2015), which, in turn, shape the aspirational construct of the future or the supposed newness. The overlapping nature of this experience makes cultural hybridity appear without beginning, middle or end, but individuals clearly attempt to create boundaries of specific distinctions through which negotiation and connection can be readily accessible and practicable.

However, in this study, the aim is to investigate how identity and belonging shape what is yet new or unknown but carries the totality of what constitutes culture, and by extension the in-between experience. Perhaps, this might expose barriers that divide or categorise people and enhance and celebrate the distinctions of cultural difference, opening a transitional pathway towards revolutionising the in-between. If hybridity focuses more on what happens when

people meet and mingle, such that something new comes out (whether consciously or not) then it signifies that change can only be constant when accorded the atmosphere to flourish. It is this new that sparks from the junction of the two (or more) that is of interest to this investigation. This could be seen as relevant to the now (the ideal multicultural reality in Australia) or could be the trajectory to a (possible) future.

Belonging is inherently connected to a range of identity factors such as race, specific cultures, habits, ways of being, religion and dress codes and speech and cultural identity is also linked to sporting interests and other surface factors (Kennan, Lloyd, Qayyum & Thompson, 2011; Macdonald, 2017). How these are experienced, and whether they shape a sense of belonging, is something that continues to challenge the possibility of social inclusive practice within Australia's national boundary. The point here, is that selective categories can prevent a hybrid (and inclusive) imaginary community, as people's continued use of stereotypes to understand others allows only an essentialist perspective. It limits categories for belonging, revealing essentialist beliefs that Bhabha calls 'the uncanny', that hybrid cultural construction changes our perception of the subject.

In considering cultural identities, hybridity shows that no culture is self-sufficient because they are not working in isolation; rather, they are always in contact with one another. It is from this connection and interaction of culture within a space that the idea of combining one culture with the other leads to cultural "mixed-ness" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 97). Many literary and non-literary writers, anthropologists and sociologists have explored this important concept in expressing hybrid cultural forms and identities while also resisting the influence to conserve the sovereign subject as exemplified by Gayatri Spivak and Salman Rushdie. The writings of both Spivak[27]

---

[27] Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" questions the Western "subject" and provides instance of the limits to the Western discourse to interact with disparate cultures.

and Rushdie[28] emphasise hybridity by laying claim to the fact that no culture, cultural identity or form is self-reliant, authentic or can be said to be absolute.

For Bhabha (2012), emphasis is on *hybridisation*, which is hybridity's ongoing process that is geared towards understanding cultural differences focussing on what happens on the borderlines of cultures. Building a network of sustainable social connection becomes the imperative of this study. It is important to ask these questions because discursive debate around construction of identity abound in the literature yet, identity remains an issue operating under erasure. However, in this context, I see identity negotiation as a complex issue yet it remains a significant factor shaping how someone connects or disconnects. One phrase that stands out as directing metaphor in this thesis is 'negotiation', a term focussing on how young people of African heritage respond to the *interference* and *entanglement* within Australia. I will discuss these two italicised words further in discussing Barad's (2007) application of the concept of quantum physics to explain the entanglement of matter and meaning.

Former African refugees negotiate their lives through changing histories, border and cultural identities. While borders, cultural identities and changing histories could mean different things to the young people, the idea of an individual journey suggests that time and space interlock to produce complicated structures of identity and difference. Bhabha argues there is a disturbance of direction, in the "beyond" (2012, p. 2), because the "beyond" is neither a new status nor old experience that abandons the past completely.

The changeableness of experience consolidates how individuals live their lives especially, in this era of subtle "rejection and *exclusion*" (Slee, 2013, p. 3). In addition, an awareness of

---

[28] Salman Rushdie sees hybridity in three ways. First, as a critique of representation as practiced within the postcolonial culture, secondly, as a critique of subjectivity by providing through his texts a de-centred and vulnerable subject who undergo a long process of self-discovery. Thirdly, Rushdie maintains that hybridity is not free from ideological motivations.

subject positions such as ethnic, religion, nationhood and gender becomes significant in defining the survival mode of operating on the borderlines. In other to understand the contention around how they live their lives, I focused on thinking beyond narratives, which also can be formed in the way the young people of former African refugee heritage articulate their cultural differences.

The next section uses the concept of *permeability* to build a theoretical principle through which the idea of interstitial space and its negotiation can be explained more elaborately.

5.6   Permeability – The Interstitial Space

Thinking with this biological concept focuses on movement, changing position and penetrability. It is the movement of water molecules passing through tiny holes or small particles moving through a synthetic material that has a passage in it. Furthermore, a semi-permeable membrane only allows certain types of particles to move through it under certain conditions. For instance, particles can move fast, slowly or even remain static on each side of the membrane depending on concentration, pressure and temperature at any given time (Lopes, Ibaseta & Guichardon, 2016; Waugh & Grant, 2010). When particles or water molecules move from a region of higher concentration to a lower concentration through a semi-permeable membrane, osmosis takes place. When particles move from a region of higher to lower concentration and continue until the substance becomes uniform, then diffusion is said to have taken place.

Fig. 15: *Diagram showing cell membrane[29] and permeability*
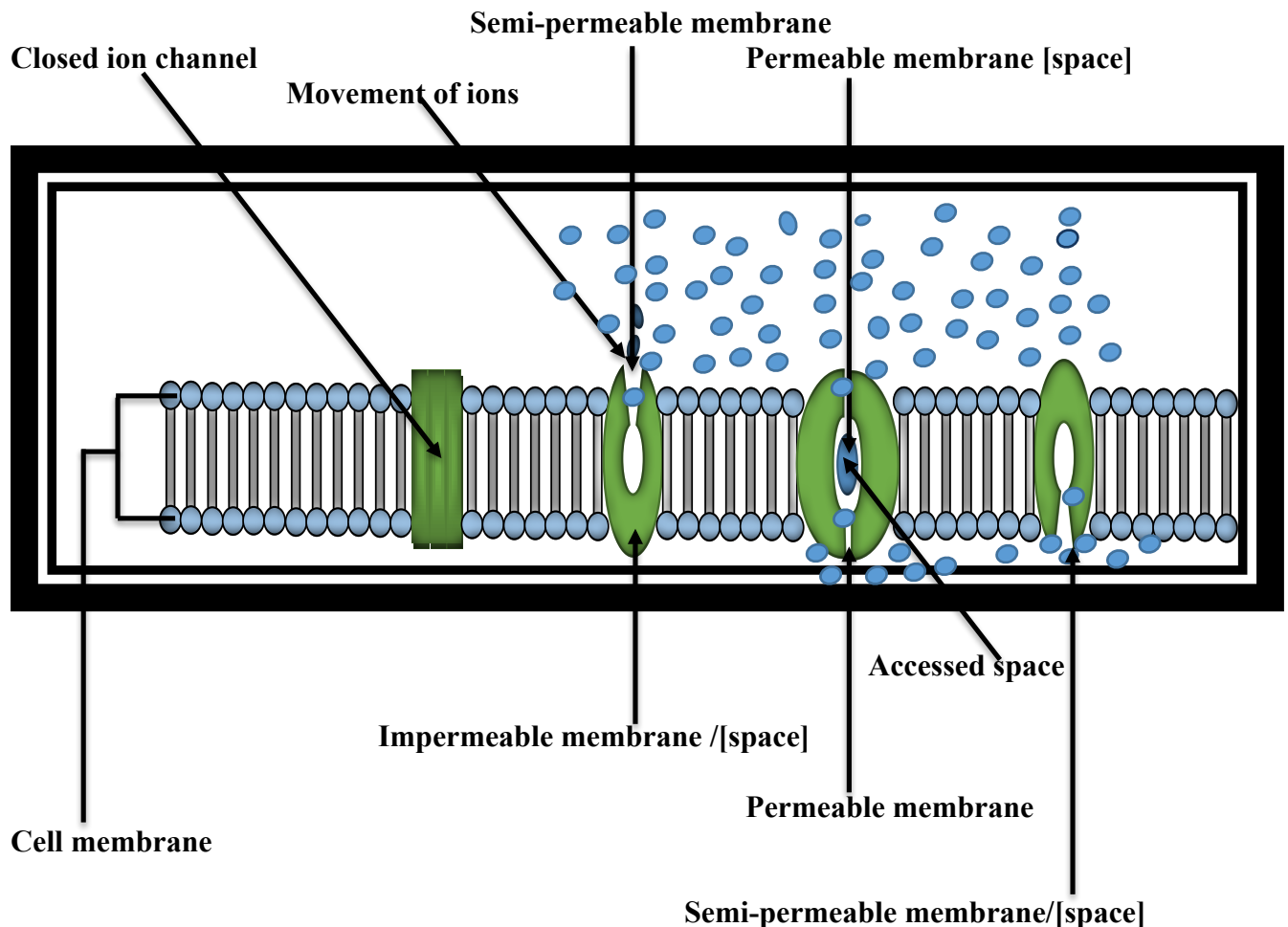
To understand how African Australians, negotiate identity and belonging within contested spaces such as Australia, this study explores the role of an excitable cell membrane in generating signals. Cell[30], the smallest organic unit of life employed charged particles or molecules in building a passage across the cell membrane. Ion or particle channels are pores [space] that allow certain charged particles to cross the membrane. However, to cross the cell

---

[29] The cell membrane is a thin flexible layer around the cells of all living things [including plant and animal cell]. It is sometime referred to plasma membrane or cytoplasmic membrane. The basic job is to separate the inside of cells from the outside. The diagram in Fig 15 is my idea but built on Waugh, A., & Grant, A. (2010). *Ross & Wilson* a*natomy and physiology in health and illness E-Book*. Churchill Livingstone: Elsevier.

[30] Cell in Biology is the basic and smallest structural, functional and biological unit of all living organisms. As infinitesimal as cell could be, they can replicate independently, and they are often called the "building blocks of life" (Waugh & Grant, 2010).

membrane, different orientations occur whenever the cell membrane regulates what can cross the membrane and what stays on only one side, making it a selectively permeable membrane.

In a situation where the ions interact, the side chain in the pore [space] will have been charged, and this is called *electrochemical exclusion*, indicating that the channel pore is charge-specific. There is another situation called *size exclusion*, which is a principle of selectively allowing ions or charged particle through a channel based on their relative size and orientation. Some charged particles cannot pass through the pore [space] without assistance, while other charged particles can go through unaided because they possess active transport pumps with action potential. In addition, the electrical state of the cell membrane can have several variations called *membrane potential*. A potential is a distribution of charge across the cell membrane, which can be measured in millivolts (mV). However, a [slight] difference in charge occurs right at the membrane surface, both internally and externally. It is the difference in this very limited region that has all the power in neurons and muscle cells to generate electrical signals including action potentials.

In this analogy, the ions or particles could represent the African Australians. The diagram above simply represents the possible experience of the participants. The Australian society is largely fraught by division and acceptance under certain conditions, a situation which either permit un/restricted movement and expression from the young people. The diagram showing permeability of ions in cell membrane could account for the condition through which the young people negotiate their identities and impermeable space that is hinged on the notion of exclusion. Furthermore, just as some charged ions/particles cannot pass through the pore without assistance, so are some of the participants in need of aid to access and negotiate their identity and belonging in Australia.

Interstitial space is an in-between space that re-introduces new cultural possibilities. From this in-between space, individual experience metamorphoses, through a combination of past and present experience, into hybrid identity. It is through the hybrid identity or "mixed-ness" that individual such as former African refugees reconstruct their identity, establish connection and introduce newness into the fragmented world. Little is known about the action potentials of African Australian who fall within this interstice.

Bhabha (2012) took this concept further and argued that it is in the emergence of the interstices, which is otherwise known as the overlap and zone of displacement that the articulation of cultural differences takes place. In other words, through the articulation of cultural differences, individuals' institutional location and collective experiences of nationness, (nationality), community interest, and cultural value are negotiated. For building a connection through culture in virtual space, I turned to André Malraux, a French art historian, philosopher and cultural politician who believes that the transformation of a work of art changes based on the meaning given to it in a museum, and that inclusive notion of art comes with everyday issues or experiences.

In raising this idea, it becomes irresistible to consider practical issues such as liminal space, the workings of the interstitial space (a space between the past and present), ambivalence and entanglement of matter and meaning. For instance, Malraux suggests that the diverse nature of artistic practices, works and styles are without limits of meaning once exhibited in a museum (Battro, 2010), such that it is difficult to put every single artistic work into a single museum. Thus, Malraux came up with a dialogue of art history to take place within the *musée imaginaire, the imaginary museum or* 'the museum without walls'. Focusing on this terminology, it means if ideal dialogue or conversation about cultural connection must take place between the society,

such as Australia and the participants of this study, then it must take place within and beyond the *musée imaginaire,* an ideal compilation of lived experiences.

The concept of third space emanates from hybridity theory, which refers to combination or mixture. The idea of this third space establishes that individual draws on numerous resources of identifiable cultural viewpoints to make a meaning of their world, a concept that constitutes their identity. Bhabha's (2012) writings about hybridity offer some possible avenues to disrupt essentialist thinking regarding national imaginings and national narratives, but also points to a way that can explain, or articulate, multicultural amalgamation. The "social articulation of difference by the minority [African Australian] is … complex" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 3). So, too, is the re/construction and negotiation of cultural practices within the *interstice*, seeking to sanction and authenticate cultural hybridities that take place during historical transformations.

It is within the *interstitial space* that historical transformation of cultural hybridities takes place, especially the articulation of such culture and the act of negotiating the emerging difference. Bhabha argues that these differences "can be re-inscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend to the lives…" (2012, p. 3) of the former refugees or through questioning the national *habitus*. The re-inscription of these differences by the African Australians is an alley through which negotiation of identity and sense of belonging in Australia is evaluated.

In other word, just as "*habitus* is an enigmatic concept" (Maton, 2014, p. 48), which is neither a result of free will, nor predetermined experience that is decided by structures, so is the *interstitial space*. It is created by some form of interaction between the two ideological position of the past and present experiences, and it is envisioned to go beyond binaries that shape ways of experiencing and living the social world. This means that each encountered experience is both revelatory and inexplicable for the young people. But remains a sociological scaffolding

on which the subsequent experience can be built. Significantly, this experience is an on-going encounter, and one that never resolve the ways of seeing the social world.

The lived experience and process of getting to Australia assists in understanding how these students are shaped and what this means for educational success. This is because, arguably, these students inhabit three spaces. The first of these is the domestic field that includes the family and community. Second is the field of public engagement including school and other forms of public participation such as sporting groups or clubs. Finally, a third space the young people occupy that is a hybridised one. This investigation will bring to fore cultural identity issues for these students. Bhabha's idea of 'border-line', which could be argued as the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, the doubts, and concern that often accompanies, is explained by the conception of the 'third space'. This will assist in the knowledge of how cultural complexities influence the identity construction or formation and the re-negotiation that accompany such complexity.

Walder (2011) expounded on the postcolonial identities that are entangled and appear threatened. Residual colonial anxieties continue to shape and question individual personalities involved in the conflict associated with the global movements of people (refugees) and it results in a ripple effect. Critically, I recalibrated the question put forward by Hall and Du Gay (1996), which underscores the significance of the essay, which explores questions of cultural identity. There has been a discursive eruption in recent years around the concept of "identity and/or belonging" because it has been subjected to a searching critique. The question generated is whether these concerns puts identity under erasure or not.

The question "who am I?" assisted this study in constructively and audibly describing cultural identity and its contexts. The early 21st century saw a paradigm shift in the struggle for identity and recognition with the challenge of the hegemonic socio-economic politics of greed, leading

to increased injustice while the inequality gap remained the status quo. However, beyond the status quo and for the microcosm of this thesis, I will dwell on how the forces of the outside shape the inside, because the experience of the emerging artists is a prototype of conflictual relationship, always in the middle ground of difference.

In conclusion, this section has employed Bhabha's concepts and theory to investigate the eclectic nature of the young peoples' cultural identity within the interstices. In their negotiation of cultural difference, reconstruction of identity by making connection to the nation (Australia) emerged as an indispensable pathway to establishing *newness*. The connection, however, occurs through an *interstitial space* or what I called a *permeable space* and it is from such spaces that the African Australians negotiate cultural difference.

5.7   Section 2: Theoretical Contexts - Barad

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as
>
> in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-
>
> contained existence (Barad, 2007, p. i).

This section suggests that the African Australian does not just emerge through their entangled intra-relating experience according to the dictates of external occurrences or happenings. However, time and space come into existence and are often reconfigured through each intra-action. The subjects involved in identity negotiation and social belonging appeared to be trapped within the ecosystems of cultural identity. How these young people build a culture of connection and negotiation within multiple layers of community differentiation, culture and identity suggests there is more to the critique of taken-for-granted knowledge of subjectivity and possible entanglement. My position as a Baradian feminist is clear: *hybridised inquirer*

thinking provides a new ontology, a re-construction of subjects' entanglement in the intra-acting of their embodied and embedded locations.

Barad (2007) explained that to be entangled goes beyond the superficial layer of being tied to something or a group, such as in the case of these young people from different backgrounds of Africa, but for someone to be without power in wielding and shaping their life. However, I argue that, despite the entangled nature of connections and threatened identity, diffraction could serve as a tool to rethinking how individuals produce knowledge and how they gain and wild power and agency in relation to their identity negotiation and social belonging. The entanglements of the young people with non-human catalysts of demonstrates how the ontology of belonging and cultural identity is not only that of 'transition' (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013), but also manifestations of theoretical processes.
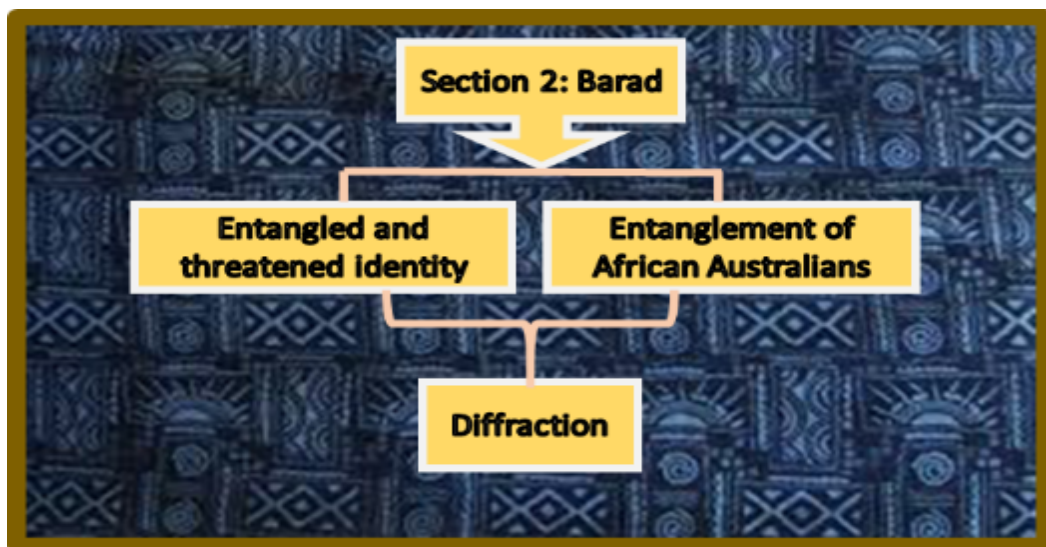
Fig. 16: *A chart showing contextualisation and theorisation of the second theoretical framework.*

One of the assumption that everyday thought process and lived experiences share with the social world is the radical distinction between unique individuality and collective identities (Jenkins, 2014). This differentiation is often underpinned by an ontological presupposition: that one is more "substantial or real" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 40), and takes precedence over the

other. By implication, it means that individual and collective identities are often entangled with each other and come into existence within interaction. The major contrast between individual African Australian and Australians may be that the former at some point prioritise difference over similarity. However, the significance of this priority emerges out of the interchange of similarity and difference during interaction.

5.7.1　　　Barad: The Neologism of "Intra-action"

It is pertinent to explain Barad's use of the of the phrase 'intra-action' in the place of interaction. The common explanation around interaction hinges on the notion that the individual exists independently and pre-exists their acting upon one another. However, Barad (2007, p. i) warns, "existence is not an individual affair", and because individual existence cannot be isolated from their interactions, then individuals emerging through such experiences become part of their entangled intra-relating.

Therefore, intra-action is the mutual constitution or the mingling of people and things possessing the ability to act. While the prefix *inter* means 'among or amid', the prefix *intra* means '(from) within'. When two bodies such as Australian and African Australian interact, each of the group maintain a level of independence because each entity is already existing even before encountering one another. However, individuals materialise through intra-action and the ability to act emerges from within the on-going relationship not outside of it. Barad's concept of intra-action (2007) posits that both human and non-human agents are involved in different forms of processes. Barad's concept is important for understanding the functionality of entangling agencies and in exploring the identity negotiation of African Australians via their intra-actions.

5.7.2 The Entanglement of African Australians

Entanglement is a theoretical prediction that comes from the equation of quantum mechanics (Barad, 2007, 2013). It is contingent on an assumption that two indivisible objects can become entangled provided they are close together and their properties become linked. Significantly, quantum mechanics further suggested that even if you separate the two entities sending them in opposite direction they can remain entangled, even inextricably inseparable.

Human beings plunged into the unknown, especially from the standpoint of interaction, emerge as a result "of their entangled intra-relating" (Barad, 2007, p. ix). This means that for the African Australians in this study, they did not just emerge, but inter-related across time and space through such overlapping sites as schools, playgroups, sports centres, and the community.

Consequently, the entanglements become an in-between experience in the world of "dynamic presencing", where "this" and "that", "here" and "now" (Barad, 2007, p. 396), change based on happenings and/or disturbances with each meeting and encounter that requires negotiating social processes of difference. While it is not logically possible to negotiate what is unidentifiable, this study seeks to identify these social processes of difference. Barad emphasises "a way to figure 'difference' as a critical difference 'within' and not as special taxonomic marks grounding difference as apartheid" (Barad, 2007, p. 72).

Barad's argument assists in problematising not just the notion of difference, but the difference within that matters while attending to and responding to the effects of difference. The African Australians operating from this situational context experience "cultural distance" (Hebbani, Obijiofor, & Bristed, 2010, p. 37). In addition to the "cultural distance" the young people

exchanged, they encountered a swing of neither being 'here' nor 'there', upward nor downward connection in their trajectory of cultural adaptation.

To put this into some perspectives, this study sees culture as a template that gets completed in ways that are compatible with local discourses of negotiating identity. The specific discourses provide the lenses through which we view the layering of culture on nature and the full texture of social, or whether it is partially obliterated or distorted in the process of reconstruction. As explained in section 5.6 on theorising 'permeability', *exclusion* of some sort takes place in a situation where the ions interact to generate a charge-specific condition. The other situation, referred to as *size exclusion*, which is a principle of selectively allowing ions or charged particle through a channel based on their relative size and orientation is relatively like the experiences of some African Australians. It is important to note that some of these young people cannot deal with the Australian space without necessarily being assisted. At the same time, other African Australians can go through unaided because they possess cultural dynamism and adaptability with action potential. An action potential is a distribution of charge across the cell membrane, which can be measured in millivolts (mV). However, a [slight] difference in charge occurs right at the membrane surface, both internally and externally.

5.7.3 Entangled and Threatened Identity

To be entangled is to be interwoven so that the knitted experience remains inseparable. Entangled identity can be tricky to explain but, in a way, it is an indeterminate condition of existence. This condition, however, calls into question the logic of symbolic boundaries operating across difference, especially of difference that is both within and/or remaining outside. The same is the status of the African people of the sub-Saharan of Africa who sometimes spin outside-of-time. In old and contemporary societies, the penchant for humans creating nature stories is irresistible (Dussart & Poirier, 2017). These stories can either

underscore, ignore or totally deny the past period's complex entanglement, but the present is glaring for everyone to fathom such as the case of African Australian in this study.

To be an African and at the same time an Australian is to be entangled – with a past that is iteratively produced or reconfigured in intra-action with other apparatuses, and a present. This implies that the African Australians did not function without being subject to later conditioning, their very existence born of acknowledged contexts. In addition, human agency plays a significant role because it can always be exercised to change our thinking and, importantly, our environments. While the participants in this study did not make these choices independently, stepping outside the realm of the past conditioning and/or present circumstances guarantees an in-between space for the participants through which a re-construction process takes place. Entanglement in its entirety is not necessarily negative as if one is caught, bound or constrained in the search for liberation. While it could mean that in some instances, it also means that through the shades of such sociocultural entanglements the enrichment of cultural advancement could enhance human beings.

'Threatened identity', on the other hand, is an offshoot of entangled identity because individuals from a minority group become hesitant of the effect of stereotype and apprehensive of their social group (Yip, 2016). The complexity of threatened identity is contingent on the entanglement that lies in manifold social relationships, meanings, and values the participants involved attached to the relationships and to whatever is exchanged or acted upon. In other words, African Australians feel threatened when they are reminded of the negative aspect of the social group to which they are forever linked — 'refugees.' The inescapability of this negative act of defining causes friction and distancing between themselves and such stereotyped groups. To better understand the workings of interaction between African Australian and white Australian worlds, ontologies have to be taken into consideration. In cases

where different ontologies are involved, the theoretical and sociocultural construct of difference becomes even more significant to how identities are negotiated and the entanglement of the processes of social changes.

In this study, I use 'identity negotiation' to refer to the overlapping theme, the point of cultural identity junction and possible 'closure' (Hall, 1996). Such closures construct us as subjects which can be spoken as an entity of a discourse. The discourse of postcolonial experience, for example, carries an undertone of identity construction through metaphoric expression that is not only based on analogies or poetic rhetoric but also on the everyday entangling experiences which the young people in this study had to negotiate. Thus, the unions that identities established remained constructed within the ambit of an interference pattern, which falls in line with a new future simply by erasing the past. The notion that the West has displayed a systematic control, a show of hegemonic agency over the countries and the people they have colonised, constantly places the identity of the minority under interference. Barad (2007, p. 315) argued:

> The point is that the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is
> not simply what will unfold; the "past" and the "future" are iteratively reworked
> and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetimemattering … and the
> subsequent erasure of which-slit information.

The concept of 'entanglement' as *sous rature* or *under erasure* extensively signifying that lived experience is interlocked 'inadequate yet necessary'; indicating that a specific signifier may not necessarily represent the concepts it stands for (Barad, 2007). Here, I used Barad's notion of "spacetimemattering" (2007, p.315) to capture the nuances of identity manifestations of the young African Australians, as boundary do not sit still. The display of influence over the other is more of an ideological war that prides itself with inaccurate representation and account of

the subaltern. For a minority group, the term 'entanglement' appears to disavow the easy divide of colonised and coloniser, describing the pathway to escaping the "logic of settler colonialism" that saturates both time and space (Dussart & Poirier, 2017, p. 10). The tangled stories of different narrative views of identity reconstruction, of changeableness and renegotiation provide access and anchorage in controlling enduring social situations.

Africa and Australia have long been spaces of encounters, where conflicts and negotiations have been played out, and where different practices, values, interests and cultures come to coexist. The fundamental issue here remains the unequal relations of power and different kinds of troubling encounters, entanglements and constraints attached to the processes of Australia's right recognition of the African Australians even after resettlement. Furthermore, it raised additional questions that focuses on how African Australians relationships to and with Australia are rearticulated in today's context. How do the interactions between African Australians and White Australians within the cultural space becomes entangled and how do participants in this study maintain their diverse responsibilities towards Australia and their world? All these questions become crucial when considering how the young people grapple with the constraints of cultural divides and the existing social situation. Furthermore, it suggests that "the human" interacts with homogenising controlling forces to produce belonging and exclusion.

5.8 Diffraction

As discussed in 4.6, Barad (2007) argues that diffraction can occur with any kind of wave such as light waves, water waves and sound waves. All these waves exhibit diffraction under the appropriate situational circumstance. Just as ocean waves diffracted when encroached or interrupted by a breakwater of very large barrier with a substantial hole in it. As the waves push this available gap, the waveforms simply bend and then spread out. Significantly, the ocean

waves are diffracted as they negotiate the opening through the barrier. In a situation where two objects are simultaneously dropped into a still pond, the resultant effect will be an overlapping layer with each other, which produces a pattern in the form of relative difference. The overlapping waves components are said to interfere with each other and the pattern often created from this scenario is regarded as interference or diffraction pattern.

Using diffraction as a theoretical framework establishes a pathway to figuring difference as a critical difference within. In this study, diffraction is not just a heterogeneous historical profiling of individuals, but an analytical tool for making significant meanings through which "knowledge-making practices" change the effects they have on the world (Barad, 2007, p. 72). Consequently, diffraction becomes an image of changing scenes and an analytical lens with which to create emanating analyses.

This is a significant practice for making a difference in the world, serving as an apparatus for emphasising change in movement. Put differently, diffraction is a commitment to comprehending which differences matter, especially *how* the difference matters and *for whom*. Thus, it is a critical practice of engagement in the form of cutting apart and piecing together (Barad, 2014). Importantly,

> diffraction apparatuses measure the effects of difference, even more profoundly they highlight, exhibit, and make evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing (Barad, 2007, p. 73).

5.9 Summary

In the second section of this chapter, I employed Barad's (2007) concepts of *entanglement intra-action* and *diffraction* to investigate identity negotiation and belonging of African

Australians. What happens most of the time between the young people and mainstream Australian revolves around stereotypical construction that is fraught with conflicts over the actual status of the subject and the uncertain future that lies ahead. The mainstream Australians often had to wrestle with more than just recognising and accepting the African Australians. Therefore, with each intra-action, it is difficult to differentiate in clear terms the *processual experience* between continuity and discontinuity of the ontology of being in the now or in the future, and of how this underscores every encounter.

Chapter 6:   Analysis and Discussion: Part 1

> Diffraction is an optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world. … Diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference (Barad, 2007, p. 71).

6.1   Introduction

Barad's (2007) concept of "diffraction" is employed in this section to analyse emanating themes. The analytical process involved gaining insights by attending to difference and how they matter by reading through lenses. In addition, this section questioned the stable self-subjectivity that assumed a relation with the other and which characterises most social and educational research. In employing the work of Barad (2007, 2014), I regard subjectivity as always in the process of becoming through the reconstruction of newness. Finally, this chapter concludes by suggesting that resolving social belonging and/or identity negotiation, is neither fixed nor desirable, but processual.

African Australians are positioned between powerful systems of meaning and this positioning poses questions at the boundaries of race, culture, civilization, gender and class because it recodes and decodes strings of both those 'othered' and diversity, enacting a process of inclusion and exclusion. This explains why the participant's identity negotiation can only be understood in context. As Popoviciu, Haywood, Mac and Ghaill (2006, p. 405) assert: "the task of employing in-depth interview is to recognise the patterns of differences that enmesh how we locate and identify the subject".

Inquiry of great depth demands that nothing is taken-for-granted. However, any articulated issue involves conflicted emotion and is often sandwiched between humanist and post-humanist thought and these factors reshape our judgment. For instance, Ecclestone and Goodley (2016, p. 1) maintain that what is recognised as insignificant "everyday changes", especially the composition of human being and how we make uninformed judgement about "how we treat them", can advance our understanding of the fluidity of identity questions and subjectivity. By 'inference', I mean, understanding that the forms of these everyday changes, such as the African Australians' experiencing changing identity, do have implications for how they connect.

6.2   Discrimination, Fixity and Racism

The worlds of the participants in this study are troubled with contradictory combinations of black/white, self/other, us/them especially in terms of constructing cultural connectivity, and so there is anxiety between difference and sameness (Bhabha, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2011). There continues to be a growing concern around culture of a place regarding how identity is constructed and negotiated in relation to human and cultural networks. Perhaps, if the participants are quite knowledgeable about where their identity ends, and that of white Australians begins, it can be easy to identify that world as other, different, inferior, and to discern what could be threatening to their identity and interests. For the individuals in this category, it is more than just identifying a world different from theirs as 'other' but negotiating and building a culture of connecting to it, which falls within a broader network of social and cultural relations.

When the participants were asked to describe their experiences of identity negotiation and social belonging, conversations frequently turned to racism. The young people in this study constructed racism as an ingrained and perennial issue that they and/or members of their crew

have struggled to negotiate without necessarily possessing a means of responding to the scourge. The participants perceived racism as a blight of non-belonging, through the experiences of ostracism and exclusion.

For example, when I asked Rothania about her experience of identity negotiation and social belonging around school and fitting in, the following conversation ensued:

Rothania: *The best thing about school was friends. Everyone around me were just nice. Everybody was being so equal, and they took me as they take themselves. Well, I was happy that they did not discriminate against me as someone coming from Africa. But, that does not mean it was all smooth.*

Lekan: How do you mean it was not all smooth?

Rothania: *Ah Yeah! It was in Year 9, we had a kind of a culture day thing and a girl from West Africa, you know, some* [Australian] *kids were being racist to her saying; why is she here? Why is she dressing like that? Why is she talking in that language and accent? We don't even understand ... So, where I was sitting I was*

Rothania is not merely experiencing detachment from the school from where she should endear herself and engage. However, seeing a fellow African like her go through the suffering of having to transact with a 'temporal break' from an *in-between* space (Bhabha, 2012, p. 296). Rothania's contemplation about the criticism of fellow African is contingent upon a sense of incomprehension where choosing to respond or otherwise is a function of the forces of the outside shaping the inside. Thus, an experience that was supposed to be a social-symbolic ordering of being an Australian student seemed to disavow her claim on that legitimacy, which thus places her under scrutiny.

To be misjudged or misrecognised causes disillusionment, but beyond the experience of being misconstrued there is delusion. Rothania's response to the question around experience of school reveals the struggle and tension within the interstice. Often, the *interstitial subjects* [participants] are at the receiving end and they cannot even speak out, not to talk of responding to such challenges. For instance, Rothania could only ponder about what transpired between the white Australian and the African Australian as she reflected;

> *So, where I was sitting I was like okay so, I can't even speak my language here,*
> *then where am I meant to be?*

Thus, whether the internal embankment of questions Rothania raised for her personal consideration helped or not, what appeared paramount remained her inner workings around the space. The complication of the phrase *'then where am I meant to be?'* is a question of tension seeking to understand where she really *belongs* and possibly how to negotiate her way around that.

Furthermore, Alexander's experience resembles Rothania's, and is similarly troubled by a brief silence of disconnection and mixed-reaction. Yet, the traditional grounds of identity are isolated and silenced, especially whenever they are within the boundaries of the host culture. One major aspect of colonialism that Bhabha labours is the ideological construction of minorities and the discourse of stereotypes, which regard the colonised subjects as inferior or "the problem" (2012, p. 101). Being regarded as "the problem" or inferior connotes negativity that can interfere with an individual's self-esteem. For example, Alexander expanded how the ideological construction of fixity and racism experience impacted him and how he responded:

Lekan: How many years have you lived now in Australia?

Alexander: *I have been here in Australia for six years, nearly seven this year.*

Lekan: So, what and how were your experiences like in Australia?

Alexander: *Everything has been good. There has been some ups and downs that you go through in life. I just need know how to pick it up [as if] nothing bad has really happened to me. I also know some in my group that something bad has happened to them.*

Lekan: Like what?

Alexander: *Like some people being racist to them or like assuming [suspicious] they did something bad, which they did not but with different skin colour [black], they just like compare the colours and conclude that you are not from this country. You should go back to your country or something that all those stuff comparing different people and different countries.*

In contrast to inclusive cultural practice, the participants see race, discrimination and fixity as causing a social nuisance to negotiating belonging in Australia. Beyond the idea of biological particularities of different pigments of white and/or black, race is a social construct that is spatially and temporally hinged on categorisation of racial hierarchy (Wilson, 2013). For Alexander, race is reconstructed based on the hierarchical structure of a given context or the societal practice that does not only question but threatens how society sees the participants. In the story, race became an instrument through which a form of control was exerted in establishing and producing not only sameness and difference (Ndhlovu & Willoughby, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2009). Regardless, it produced an objectified view of the African Australians.

The concepts of race, ethnicity and cultural practices are often used to explain the cause of why a group of people experience difficulties in connecting to mainstream culture (Due, 2008; Gale & Parker, 2013; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; Windle & Miller, 2012). From

Alexander and Rothania's explanation, the racial stereotyping leads to the trap of binarisation that created a positive sense of self and demonised the 'other'. The racial labelling cast Alexander and Rothania's crew as problematic, lacking the skill to initiate connection, which thus regarded them as 'strangers' or 'outsiders'. Negotiating this was not only complicated for the participants but they also perceived it as a social nuisance.

Dwayne elaborated on the issues of fixity, discrimination and racism, especially for those who had a dark skin as Fanon identified, *Black skin White mask.* Beyond Fanon's cliché, I saw the participants passionate in discussing the negativity that accompanied their categorisation as incompetent in the job market. Responding to the experience of a situation whereby he was misconstrued, Dwayne said:

> *Recently, I participated in a United Nation international conference. I was trying to raise* [some] *points about discrimination* [categorisation] *and Africa. ... I had people misunderstanding me and telling me that Africa people are not competent. I even try giving them the example of my dad. My dad was a principal back home,* [Democratic Republic of Congo]. *He had his master's and PhD and he's got double degrees in French. But my dad has been looking for job in high school, they have told him these are not the right copies* [appropriate qualification]. *He had to go and take a test in Melbourne University and he sat for the examination and got good score still, he is just a normal teacher.*

Dwayne could not reconcile his dad's predicament of possessing expertise up to PhD level and yet remained unemployable or underemployed. The thought of his dad having to go through the requirement of gainful employment remained inconsequential for Dwayne because of what he perceived as double standards. These are premised on race his dad's appearance. He affirmed:

My dad has remained an ED teacher [as in helping those who wants to speak and learn English] *... I even raise a point about a principal brought from Croatia* [a European country] *and I said I knew that although, he studied here, he did everything here but still got the accent* [of Croatian in his speech]. *But my question is why is he the principal and my dad who's got a better qualification, experience, exposure and will even do a proper job than him does not? You know they had to stop me because I am touching on a sensitive discussion. I am still writing a book about that. I want to raise my voice and create awareness. People* [mainstream Australians] *are not going to accept us for what or who we* [African Australians] *tell them we are.* [We have to construct it ourselves].

Whether the case raised by Dwayne has a striking similarity with how he identifies with Australia remained a question that is ambiguous to answer. If according to Dwayne, Australia will not accept African Australians for who they are, then negotiating belonging tends to begin from the refusal to satisfy the mainstream Australians and corroborate the media's narrative construction of their subjectivity. Dwayne was unequivocal around the subtle unacceptance of the young group of African Australians and maintained that it will require a conscientious attitude from the young people to reconstruct their connection and freed themselves of this entanglement.

6.3   Feeling Belong, yet [not] Belong

The wider significance of belonging lies in the awareness of not just symbolic interaction or attachment but the connective tissue that constructs the difference between the young people and Australia. The participants are often restrained in the thought of in-between experience, evoking the French description of the phrase *au-delà*, which is neither here nor there, but in the beyond. This type of feeling [in the beyond] subverts the thought process of discrimination

and racism, and tends to de-escalate not belonging or having a sense of belonging in Australia. In considering the thought processes of belonging and non-belonging, there is a fundamental principle of prejudicial identity construction, based on the responses of the participants and predicated upon uncertainty and hesitation.

The issues of discrimination and racism are two complicated expression. They are inseparable entities from the concept of 'integrated society' such as that Australia aspires to in some discourses. While the struggle against the surreptitious structure of institutionalised racism and discrimination within the confines of a nation space can be overwhelming, the participants' social articulation of difference remains pivotal to unlocking the complex overlap of an on-going question. Significantly, it is in the beyond that the symbolic interaction between Australia and the participants' interests or cultural values are negotiated. These negotiations seek to validate cultural hybridities that appear during the moments of historical transformation.

The notion of 'belonging' can be a nightmare when discrimination remains subtle and understated, but somewhat a practice, which an individual must deal with and/or negotiate. Therefore, the young African Australian going through "perceived" or "institutional" discrimination or racism (Wernesjö, 2014), go through a reconfiguring process whether consciously or unconsciously. However, the process is not just limited to inhibiting their sense of attachment and integration, but also their capacity to experience inclusion and negotiate their identity.

From the previous pool of empirical research that considered resettlement and the experiences of former refugees in Australia, discrimination and racism remained a factor, and one reconstitutive of individual sense of belonging (Correa-Velez & Gifford, 2011; DIAC, 2011b; McDonald, 2017; Olagookun & White, 2017; Pittaway & Muli, 2009). Discrimination and racism have the power to inhibit individual manifestations of cultural identities, yet individuals

still experience it in "new" and different ways (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004; Forrest & Dunn, 2013). The struggle to belong is an on-going desire and a construction, which in a way creates a vacuum in the participants' push for recognition.

For instance, Marina clarified that in her quest to connect to Australia and negotiate these daunting experiences, this connection was contingent upon structural and personal experiences. The concept of 'belonging' was complicated and confusing, especially for the participants in this study. Following the discrimination and racism claim, for example, I asked Marina: 'Who are you in this Australian context?';

> *Ah! Myself* (laughs) *Oh! I don't know.* [I guess] *I'm just a girl, who is new in this country not knowing of what the outcome would be.*

Whether the uncertainty that clouded Marina's sense of connection is occasioned by how she sees herself, or the status bequeathed on her in Australia was a function of racism and discrimination was questionable. It was evident that Marina was concerned by her invisibleness, which created a crisis in the representation of her personhood and, at critical moments, initiated the possibility of political subversion. However, the complexities of *"not knowing"* who she is indicates continuous questioning about what should be a connecting point to Australia and also shows that not experiencing belonging is critical to the well-being of the young people or create a space to live feeling included.

For the participants, to live feeling included requires a reformation of thought process through "stage theories" of identity development reflected in the theme (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 80). Marina who appeared to be at one stage or phase of identity development often experienced a swinging mode of identity construction and, in the theory, this often occurs in an inconsistent way either at an early stage or later points in time (Oyserman et al., 2012). Thus, the participants

are reconfigured based on the experimentation of the *interstitial space* by developing and improving on the structure of what works and everyday question of 'Who am I?' in their determination and struggle to antagonise bigotry, categorisation, fixity and stereotypical construction.

Marina feels the pain of being discriminated against in Australia, especially when people questioned her intentions. She narrated one of her experiences in which a teacher from her school when she was in Year 12 misjudged her intentions. It appeared that Marina was still struggling with the misconception and negotiating her way around this recurring, emotionally exhausting experience. Marina said:

> *It is very hard now considering a lot of people are probably questioning my* [intentions]. *Because they find it strange for somebody who is of my skin color, somebody from a refugee background doing teaching degree. This is because it sounded new. Let me give you an example* [of what I mean], *I had this teacher … and he asked me how did you feel like? Why did you choose this* [type of course to study at the University] *you know what I mean? I ignored the question because it is a discussion that keeps coming up from a lot of* [mainstream Australian] *people. They are all asking me why I chose teaching. I felt the pain of discrimination because it's kind of weird but then I am* [unmoved, unstoppable] *because, that's my area of interest.*

I referred to this issue of misjudgment and misconception as a superstructure a concept built upon a more primary one, racism and discrimination. Williams argued that "the base is the more important concept to look at if we are to understand the realities of cultural process" (1991, p. 132). In other words, "the base" remains the focal point of the minorities'

manifestation in any given context because it reveals the actual relations of an individual's social existence at a specific level of its development.

Marina continued;

> *It is very strange here in Australia because in my whole life here, I have never seen an African teacher around. So, I think the reason why he asked me that question which really offended me inside but didn't really say anything was the fact that he was asking me why did I choose this* [type of course of study]? *Not for you. It is mainly that they think all the people that come from refugee background do courses like Engineering, Nursing, but they don't know anything about Law,* [teaching profession]. *They forget that other people have their area of interests.*

The question that Marina's teacher raised about her intellectual strength is suggestive and it is built on the classical Marxist pedestal of forms of "intellectual and cultural production that glorify the dominant" (Williams, 1991, p. xiv). Furthermore, Marina appears to be suggesting that if the cultural production and intellectual force elevates the mainstream Australian, then the ideological dominance becomes not only institutionalised, but people like Marina or other minority groups can only become a subordinate. However, beyond the idea of subordination is the thought of being subject to such experience going back to the notion of 'superstructure' and the concept of ideology.

The sub-question under the overarching research question that considers whether the African Australians belonged in Australia yet is a complex one with an intricate response of neither 'yes' nor 'no'. For instance, Alexander stated that the idea of his belonging in Australia depended on situational occurrences while Dwayne maintained that he belonged, although sometimes contradicting his earlier affirmation of his not belonging experiences. The middle

ground experience of neither connecting nor feeling attached to Australia still held the young African Australians at bay. In other words, the participants interacting with the world—Australia comprised the 'transcendental' situations of their living experiences. The experience was transcendental because it surpassed the ordinary or common experience of thoughts and beliefs that are nevertheless, not beyond human knowledge. Consequently, the base on which the operational and physical ideologies manifest themselves are often both discriminatory or racist to the participants. This simply established a continual misrecognition and misrepresentation as argued from the young people's collective statements.

Marina saw the situation as a strange one because of the prejudicial premise of the continuous questioning and it was not only from the teacher but *"a lot of people"*. However, the description of *"a lot of people"* here is more suggestive of the mainstreamers than of African backgrounds. What is rather profound is the struggle that Marina had to undergo to convince herself of the choice of taking up and following through the chosen field of her teaching degree.

In addition, Xhaka took the question of whether the participants belonged yet in Australia further under the sub-question of if he belonged in Australia yet. Xhaka's responded in terms of how he thought about his identity and whether it had a connection with belonging. Xhaka maintained;

> *Definitely. I feel I belong in Zimbabwe. I feel I belong there and the theme of belong[ing]* [cultural practices] *there makes me feel [naturally comfortable] just like my identity… You can know where I belong just for the way I walk and talk, the slang that I speak and the way I dress. You can just tell that this guy is from St. Mary, Zengheza-Cosieke.*

Xhaka was not referring to Australia when discussing his level of belonging, but Zimbabwe, and even within Zimbabwe, there is a locale he is more comfortable in— St. Mary, Zenghesa-Cosieke. Yuval-Davis (2011) argues, individuals can belong in diverse ways and to several different entities of attachment, which can be relatively or distinctly different from an individual experience up to a group of people or humanity. The generally acceptable definition of belonging is about "an emotional attachment and connection, about feeling 'at home'" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 10). However, beyond the feeling of being "at home" and emotional attachment is what I refer to as the zone of uninterrupted expression. I describe this zone as a precinct of individual creativity through interstitial art, where the young people in this study related and negotiated their Australian experiences. For Xhaka, the emphatic status of where he belonged strongly resonated with Zimbabwe because that was where generation of positive and warm feelings for him became real. Xhaka said;

> *I feel I belong in Zimbabwe. I feel I belong there and the theme of belong[ing]*
> *[cultural practices] there makes me feel [naturally comfortable] just like my*
> *identity.*

Dwayne on the other hand, felt a sense of attachment to Australia even though the concept 'belonging' for him was subjective. The response of Dwayne when I asked whether he felt belonging to Australia yet showed a sense of acknowledgement and confusion surrounding his fitting in, operating as an out-group member, or being excluded. For instance, Dwayne in response to that question said;

> *At this point, I feel I belong, I feel belonged. Even though some people may try to*
> *push me down, and some may want to see me fail, but I know what I have been*
> *through and I can get through it. Racist remarks such as 'go back to where you*
> *came from', 'you are skinned'* [dark complexion], *'you are studying this', 'you will*

never get it because you are this kind of skin color ... [are damaging and makes someone feels uncomfortable].

In a way, these peculiar occurrences seemed to be a momentary kind of experience that was naturalised but later become part of the everyday practices the participants had to negotiate through narrative reconstruction. Yet, having a sense of belonging in this context is contingent upon identity articulation. As Yuval-Davis suggests, belonging "becomes articulated, formally structured and politicised only when it is threatened in some ways" (2011, p. 10). The threat, however, becomes the function of the forces of outside shaping the inside. Dwayne understood that he might not have his way around certain issues (which made him acknowledge the possibility of a metaphorical *push down* from a racist remark) but knowing what he had been through could only serve as succor for him. This was the point at which Dwayne had to view 'belonging' from the standpoint of reconstruction of thought process and this can only happen in the mind.

In this thesis, it becomes clear that African Australians face discrimination not just in specific purviews of social life. This includes negotiating education, justice, social participation and even cultural difference, which thrusts them continually in the middle ground of uncertainty. From the purview of individualism, discrimination and racism also stretch the will of the young peoples' interpersonal relationships with their peers within the sphere of socio-cultural connection. The concern here remains the obstructing effect of cultural imperialism that continues to impede social cohesion within polarised groups and ethnic backgrounds within Australia.

6.4 Entanglement, Cultural Difference and Educational Support

The participants in this study see cultural difference as an opposing factor threatening the foundation of fundamental values and meanings generated in the process of cultural interpretation. As explained earlier, these participants have not only transferred historical constructions, but translated their individual experiences into theatrical manifestations. Therefore, the stories shared epitomise their on-the-field knowledge or practices that exist beside African Australians and their counterparts. These narrated stories are lived-experiences, which is a form of "social contradiction that have to be negotiated rather than sublated" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 232).

Following the multiple experiences of the young people in this study from Africa, it becomes clear that the transmission of culture in the 21st century goes beyond the experiential form of *musée imaginaire* or a strategy for survival to thriving in it. When the participants were asked how they connect to Australia, they emphasised the complexities of cultural difference that they often negotiated rather than discarding such striking cultural differences, especially the difference in race, nationality and ethnicity that society forcefully made the participants acknowledge. For instance, Alexander stated:

> *I have seen the difference. It has helped me see the difference between these kind of people* [the mainstream Australians] *and* [other] *kind of people* [African Australians] *and how I should interact with them instead of creating a mess or saying something that can cause trouble.*

The understanding of these cultural differences came through some sort of education, although it may appear circumstantial for the participants, yet the knowledge is passed across based on individual encounters.

The participants in this study moved from being passive observers to becoming active players, filtering access and negotiating the cultural changes as the story unfolded. Thus, while one may not know how culture and educational landscape would play out in the future, at least the young people showcased the importance of getting connected and the benefit of keeping the connection to succeed. In the 'Keeping Connected' project for example, young people describe identity negotiation around belonging, social connection and education (Yates et al., 2010). Similarly, these tripartite factors remained significant pathways through which the young people's lived experiences and identity in this study were negotiated in Australia.

The young people acknowledged an unparalleled desire to study and learn despite the difficulties affecting their connection to school. For instance, Xhaka discussed his view about education and connecting experiences as a tale of *"fascination and disappointment",* a sort of mixed reaction to educational connection in Australia. What is paramount here revolves around the word *"fascination"* that allured Xhaka to school. To be fascinated to school becomes a tool through which a way of life can be negotiated or reconfigured.

There is a form of entanglement between the experience of the past and the prevailing situation which tends to overlap with the participants culture, practices and negotiating cultural difference. While all the participants did not lay emphasis on their former school experience before coming to Australia, one of them *did* focus on the concerted effort of his parent's entanglement, which was also characterised within the rubric of incapacity. As I explained elsewhere in this thesis, to be entangled is not just to be intertwined with another but for an individual to be without power in wielding or controlling their own circumstances. Indeed, there was a form of interruption involved in their education, but how the interruption occurred was surreptitious. For example, Dwayne discussed the intention of the parent prior to the time the family moved from Kenya to Australia. In his words:

Dad wanted to see us [Dwayne and his siblings] *studying because back in Kenya, we were all with my three sisters all meant to go to the University but did not because of* [financial constraints]. *Even when my father did not have a paid job and my mum was not working, we* [still] *got good scores from the Year 12 examinations, but we didn't have money to pay so we decided to say No. But my parent took us all to different English classes every day after school. He* [dad] *had a vision that one day, this English will help us, which is helping us right now.*

From Dwayne's explanation, his displacement within Congo DR up to coming into Kenya was a form of interruption to schooling experience. However, with the movement from their country to Kenya, the family struggled to keep up with economic and financial obligations that could have enhanced Dwayne's and his three sisters' competitive edge.

With this sort of entanglement (which is not just an interlocking experience in which the family got enmeshed or trapped, but a vase of lacking both financial means and willpower) there was no luxury of choice at Dwayne's family's disposal. Despite the occurrence of delays and interruption to Dwayne and his three sisters' schooling, the family still prioritised education and training, while according the skills acquisition of the children a space to thrive. Coming from a French-oriented background (Democratic Republic of Congo, Francophone), Dwayne's family had to accommodate the choice of sending the children to after school lessons. The decision was still tough because there was no financial capacity of having Dwayne and his three sisters at university all at once, but they still enrolled in after school English classes.

Education is a platform for leverage in the quest to connect and live a normal life like any other Australian (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012b). By 'leverage' I mean a force that steadies the unsettled experiences of the young people by providing them a haven for new encounters and possibilities. For instance, Dwayne saw the possibility of achieving his aspiration despite

militating factors such as not believing in himself and struggling in his mind against school completion. For these African Australians, a deliberate effort to defy all odds means rising to the challenge of academic demands and hard work. To this end, Dwayne narrated an encounter with one of his teachers, through which he negotiated his identity and social belonging. The teacher told Dwayne after he completed his Year 12:

> *You did it! I was frustrated even though you kept coming to me. I never had my lunch properly, you kept coming to me asking me questions but at the end of the day, you knew what you were after* [and that's what I got].

Dwayne affirmed, *"I kept pushing myself and pushing hard on myself"*, thus acknowledging the fact that in this world, things or some people might not accept him for who he is yet deploy some readily available resources [school and teacher] through which he could prove the doubters wrong.

Generally, the school is central to young people's daily life and long-term well-being (Matthews, 2008). However, beyond the school's pivotal role and the direct social connection is the reshaping of the young former refugee's identity. The direct effect of the school's role turns out to be the most realistic route to *becoming*, helping the students become active participants in determining and reshaping their life's experiences. For instance, virtually all the young African Australians in this study held their success in appreciation for the role their teacher played in shaping their success as Alexander acknowledged: *"I was successful in everything I do, the teachers also help me, it was not all by myself."*

In the same vein, Rothania recognised the influence of her teacher and the community how they successfully assisted her in negotiating school and Australia. Rothania admitted: *"I got*

support from school, teachers and some social workers who were teaching and helping us to deal with 'others' and all that".

In building a culture of connection, factors ranging from learning, acquisition of knowledge, skills, beliefs and values went on within and outside the school setting. Significantly, these factors are not only the benchmark of what goes on in the school or around the facilitation of teaching and learning processes that make a concrete meaning to helping the participants in this study negotiate identity and social belonging. Some of the other issues raised by the young people include resilience, determination and building contact.

6.5   Resilience and Determination

For these young people, resilience and determination are two inseparable qualities that provide a satisfying response to the perennial problem of connection. These qualities also sustain the participant's desire of identity reconstruction that are always formed in intra-action, and which make the young people purpose-driven within Australian space. The participants in this study showed a remarkable resilience in recovering quickly from difficulties and challenging situations such as language barriers, confidence building, negotiating adversity, changes of environment and living under stress and pressure both within and without. Stress and pressure within in this context refers to (but is not limited to) accumulated conflicts of emotions and affective struggles while pressure without focuses on past displacement, refugee experiences, resettlement challenges and present identity negotiation.

Resilience is entwined with the ability to learn under a complex situation, to live with continuing fear and vagueness. This includes the capacity to negotiate both negative and positive adjustments despite overwhelming restricting experiences and the ability to acclimatise with those uncomfortable life experiences (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Osman,

Hornblow, Macleod, & Coope, 2012; Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, & Sawyer, 2012). The participants demonstrated the sheer grit of connecting to Australia through resilience. However, beyond the bedrock on which this resilience is built, is the underlying individual determination. Thus, they enacted coming to a decision of having to wrestle their way out of pessimism, incompetence and introversion. For instance, when I asked Rothania about her experience of connecting to school in Australia, she stated:

> *It was not really easy… I got here in 2010, so I started Year 6 until year 12 which I just graduated from. Talking about my year at school, it was not easy because … oh my God! It was (really) hard. The fact that I did not know what to talk about, the language, everything around me things were just difficult and was different from where I came from. So, I just made up my mind to go with the flow and see where it leads me.*

For Rothania, going through this sort of 'entanglement' (Barad, 2007) required not just bracing to meet the demands of the new environment, but an enlivening and reconstructing of her past and future, which was larger than what she could possibly have managed alone. This is because the past cannot be said to be concluded and as Barad argued in the acknowledgement section of the book *Meeting the universe halfway*, "the past is never finished" (2007, p. ix). This, however, means that the past cannot be disregarded. Therefore, if the past is an annexe of the present and future, which cannot be ignored, then it implies that Rothania never left her past and similarly, the past has never left Rothania. In addition, the young African Australians' historical experiences of the past assisted in forming a thread of resistance from where the building of resilience becomes practicable. Rothania and Alexander acknowledged the hardship of being a refugee before arriving and a former refugee after arrival in Australia.

These subjective descriptions only served as catalysts speeding up individual resolution towards the set goals and standards raised for themselves.

Subsequently, it became clear that the only sure route for the participants to deal with the difficulties of negotiating school was to make up their mind and keep the end in view. For example, in situations like Rothania's, the internal struggle to keep up with the changing experience in the first place becomes the rallying factor for negotiation. In every situation, transitioning from the past to the present with the future in view does have its share of uncertainty and ambiguity. Rothania stated *"the fact that I did not know what to talk about"* and this could only have complicated her Australia experience.

Thus, the African Australians are individuals who are often *in the making* and *becoming* but what remains to be seen and understood is whether they ever *become* and *belong*. The participants never detached from their 'apparatuses' such as culture, components and the system of who they are or of what they may become (Barad, 2007, p. 170). In other words, the instrument of negotiation employed by Rothania in Australia after arrival was just to make up her mind and see where it led her.

For the participants, connecting to Australia through education was agentive because being connected is not only dynamic, but processual, an intra-active experience that is never static but always in the changing process (Barad, 2007). Thus, while "boundaries do not sit still" (Barad, 2007, p. 171), the reconfigurations of the African Australians' connecting experiences went beyond just an aspect of past experiences working in isolation. In which case, employing multiplicities of approach assisted their transitioning and managing of difference in cultural practices, values, language and beliefs.

Listening to the young people, the possible stories that could be pieced together revealed a cauldron of opportunities and challenges, changes and continuity. This was true of the experience of Dwayne who indicated that *"I was determined to get something out of school, I kept pushing myself and pushing myself hard"*.

For example, it appears somewhat strange to be using a Webster-Merriam or Oxford dictionary in mathematics class but that was the path Dwayne took in his determination to deal with mediocrity and closing the educational gap. Dwayne said:

> *something that I did most was study, go to homework group, project club schools, use my dictionaries a lot. I used to use the dictionary in the Maths class and people use to think I was stupid, but I knew what I was after.*

Dwayne's flexibility and determination proved to be forms of identity, which are always shaped in intra-action. Moreover, such identity negotiation is usually synonymous with the differences between being ordinary and the choice of becoming extra-ordinary with the end in-view. Dwayne sought out the structure of what could be of help to him, which thus assisted in his determination to attain success even when it required doing what appeared to be absurd (using the dictionary in mathematics class) and being regarded as stupid.

6.6 Border and Fitting in

The participants talked about fitting into Australia and discussed the peculiarities of their lived experiences and belonging. The African Australians' struggled with selves in the light of undergoing a split between their imagined homeland and the national boundaries of Australia. They acknowledged the experience of having to negotiate border life, which is always fragmented, and, in most cases, the participants related to these boundaries of specific juxtaposition of different and cultural practices.

Bordering is not just about the demarcation or some specific boundaries that map out a territory or a nation state, but about the different social and cultural values that individuals recognise and or acknowledge over the other practices. In addition, the border life that these young people had to negotiate focuses on limitations and restrictions around their experiences in Australia. While boundaries and or borders are no longer restricted to demarcating physical signs and symbols, the fluid nature of an individual's sense of belonging cannot be classified as fixed, but on-going, a reconstruction that keeps evolving.

Probing further, the participants acknowledged the overwhelming fear that overtook them while negotiating their identity in Australia even as students. During the interview, I asked the participants to tell me a bit more about school and how they managed to fit into the school setting. From the participants' response', they appeared to be concerned about the negative construction of fixity, fear of being stereotyped and categorised as some sort. For instance, Dwayne was emphatic about his dilemma of negotiating that

> *Dwayne: Well, it was very hard to fit in into the environment you know my skin colour. I was scared first, I was very scared. I have questions such as: How are* [mainstreamers] *people going to identify with me? What is my accent like? What are my questions like? How do I talk? How is my interaction?* [one other major concern was] *when I speak, are they going to be able to understand me? So, I was quiet.... Although, I knew I was in a battle I could not help myself by sitting down and keeping quiet. So, I decided to join in* [conversations]*and risk it and speak the way I speak because if I don't speak the way I speak, I am never going to fit in.*

6.6.1 Learning, Peer Help and Speaking out

The participants found their strength in *speaking out.* Interestingly, they did not just speak out so that they were audible but developed a skill built on choice or decision (McGuire & Gubbins, 2010). Specifically, they talked freely and fearlessly about their predicaments. Being frank while expressing their opinions appeared to be one of the negotiating skills they had to develop in the quest to live their lives in Australia. I should say; however, this does not come easy because speaking out is not enough, but knowing *what* to say and *when* to say it makes a difference. Four of the participants had to put extra effort into expressing their views before confidence was built because they came from a Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) nation, the Democratic Republic of Congo. For instance, when I inquired from Dwayne about his experience around schooling in Australia, he had this to say:

> *The best thing about school here is that … I could learn, and friends are always willing to help me out if the teacher is helping someone else. If I am struggling, I could just signify by a raise of hand and one student would like asked 'what question are you stuck on? If they can help, they will and if they can't, I would wait for the teacher and that was one of the best thing that I never experience in my life. Speaking up to ask for help and the help coming from both the student and teacher, I felt like wow! This is something that is going to help me along the way and it actually did, yeah!*

If Dwayne had resolved not to speak up, he might have remained in the shadow of thinking he belonged to the classroom and the school at large. The resource at Dwayne's disposal required him to put it to use, a veritable and handy instrument capable of charting the course of his school life experience.

Initially, Dwayne looked overwhelmed and incapacitated in navigating a pathway around unfamiliar territories and faces. Perhaps it was emotionally draining when he acknowledged that he chose to *keep quiet*. The choice of keeping quiet was not intended or premeditated but was occasioned because of unavailability of resources at his disposal to combat nervousness, timidity and introversion.

Dwayne applied socio-historical temporality, a pattern through which his developing experiences such as being free, speaking up and building confidence can be re-articulated. Bhabha (2012, p. 246) argued that the inscription of cultural identities is contingent upon the "signifying time of counter-hegemonic strategies". He warned that is not a "lack, "excess" or a self-perpetuating series of negative ontologies (2012, p. 246). Significantly, the participants redirected the course of their lives just as Dwayne did in carving out this niche for himself to make meaning of the whole experience.

6.7   Communication and Interaction Nexus

The participants shared the experience of identity negotiation with respect to national narrative, diversity, the yearning to *belong*, a quest to *fit in* and be seen as Australian while building a network of sustainable relationships. I will discuss this in the next section. The young African Australians derive their strength from the phrase 'togetherness'— 'to gather'. The 'gathering together' (if I may put it like this), or the assemblage of the participants through the instrumentation of art was discussed in Chapter 4. There we saw that the process created a permeable space or a naturalistic zone of expression.

The coming together of the participants formed a nexus of diverse histories, where the present is articulated in the emergence of a third space of representation which falls somewhere in the *in-between*. For the African Australians, coming together to re-write their stories through

drama and its enactment on stage helped them to re-articulate the artistic bonds of creativity and profound diversity that helped re-establish a sociocultural consciousness. However, each time encounter with identity negotiation occurred at the point at which the participant's self-consciousness exceeded the frame of the image. When this happens, it eludes the eye and leaves a resistant trace.

For the bounded entities such as the African Australians, they are already operating within an enclosed border with a unique desire to break free from restrictive experiences such as cultural practices, beliefs and values. Yet, their interactions within Australian space are formed relating to a large group network of home, school, play, work place and social gathering; a network of individuals which is basically reconfigured in its intra-active becoming. It is reconfigured because people easily identify with groups and the ethnic and cultural backgrounds that shared individuals' concerns and collective visions.

In addition, reconstruction that goes with the mutual constitution or the mingling of people and things possessing the ability to act created a structure through which living and sharing of personal values was able to influence community relationships. Furthermore, identity reconstruction provided a platform on which the participants addressed the stereotypical discourse of negative categorisation, misconception and misrepresentation while touching on sensitive issues of culture, beliefs, values and other practices with those who do not share similar views.

Therefore, in considering belonging from the standpoint of social locations, it is believed that people belong to a specific race, gender, class or nation (Yuval-Davis, 2011). The sense that they belong to a kinship and/or age group, connects the people to the social and economic practices within such locations. However, they still carry with them a specific practice in the realm of "power relations operating in their society" (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 13). By reason of

their continuous changing experiences, notable differences exist in social locations, no matter how stable they could be in their construction along the corridor of power.

In addition, a yearning to be part of a bigger picture always leaves open an inner quest that struggles to manage in the two worlds, from the various countries they might have come from [in Africa] and where they find themselves— Australia. This explains why the interstitial space theory (which is the overlap and displacement of domain of difference) is important in helping to read the unstable nature of the social location, Australia, and how the participants negotiate their way around it. Trying to operate within a space where the participants are not recognised or accepted can contribute to the unwillingness to get involved and participate in any socio-cultural practice within Australia (Andreasson, 2016; Jansen, 2008; McDonald, 2017).

Dialogic communication remains one of the factors that shape belonging and identity negotiation for the participants. While this is based on individual unique manifestation and experiences, it is, however, ambiguous to comprehend other participants' connections, constructions and reconfigurations of belonging through communication and how decisions are shaped by it. Navigating the boundary of belonging involves complex cultural undertones and understanding that requires the knowledge of promoting equal participation for the young African Australians. However, communication is difficult to negotiate for the participants even when they know what to say. Yet, how to present the idea can be a harrowing experience for them. For instance, Dwayne emphasised how difficult it was to communicate and fit into Australia for him;

> *It was very hard to fit in into the environment… I have questions such as: How are [mainstreamers] people going to identify with me? What is my accent like? What are my questions like? How do I talk? How is my interaction? [other major concern was] when I speak, are they going to be able to understand me? So, I was quiet.*

For Dwayne, the idea of communication within the negotiating process revolved around his personal anxiety and manner of approach to *"fitting into the environment"* or building a conversation. In addition, with little or no resources at Dwayne's reach, the choice of other alternatives of responding to communication became contingent upon 'keeping quiet'. Thinking in the mother tongue before communicating is one key readily available for people whose mother tongue is not English. However, for the participants, communication is not just about encoding of information so that the other person such as a teacher or their peer can effortlessly decode it, but of relationship and being accepted. In a situation, where there is a form of inadequacy, as in Dwayne's inability to engage in a sustained and meaningful conversation, the forces of the outside simply shape the inside with the choice of 'keeping quiet'.

The participants discussed resistance to building and sustaining connection equivalent to their Australian counterparts. Thus, they turned to other resources, which I will discuss below, to deal with the prevailing challenges facing them in negotiating identity in Australia. To deal with this issue, the young people employed what amounted to a reconstruction of the *interstices* (Bhabha, 2012; Said, 1995; 2003) as a strategy to help them to respond to the existing challenge of negotiation. The interstice, which I referred to as *permeable space,* helps in creating a third space that the students were comfortable with and from where they could operate while building connecting pathways while negotiating their identities and social belonging in Australia. When the participants are asked about their connection to school, they all acknowledged the difficulties of connecting despite their positive view of school. For instance, Alexander replied

Well, [School was] *great!*

Lekan*:* In what way?

Alexander*: I mean school was fantastic. That does not mean that I find it easy. The study was hard, but I kept going ... and I grow up strong not ordinary physically but, in my mind, as well.*

Lekan: How did you do that*?*

Alexander*: I found that communication is very important.... It has helped me so much and I have seen the difference. It has helped me see the difference between these kind of people [the mainstream Australians] and [other] kind of people [African Australians] and how I should interact with them.*

He continued:

I was successful in everything I do, but more than this, the teachers also help me. It was not all by myself. I remember when I was in Year 10 and 11, I always wanted to be a school captain. I watched closely how the previous captain has led the school and, so I wanted to be one myself and determined to work towards it. When I got to Year 12, I became a school captain in sport as well, I was very happy about that.

Here, Alexander acknowledged the significance of reconstructing his identity to achieve his desired goal even when the complexities around negotiating that looked difficult. The student's conception of negotiation, appears to be a handy tool in form of strategy or a guiding metaphor that provides hope for achieving a constructive result that is more than just expression of difference. For Alexander, there was a space of being that he appeared to be working towards— *a school captain* that was fashioned from the "interruptive, interrogative [but connecting] experience' of apprehension" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 341).

Therefore, if the students negotiate as well as interrogate the formation of meaning during moments of academic or friendly exchange, then what goes on in those moments is an application of "liminal space" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 5). Within this 'space', there is a substitution taking place just as the substitution that Alexander employs by moving between the fixed identification of being an African Australian to another possible *sui generis* level. Alexander prioritised working towards this status to open-up difference that entertains a possibility of cultural hybridity or the super imposition of another hierarchy: *becoming a school captain*.

In a practical way, Alexander's pathway of negotiating Australia is contingent on the idea of "in-between space" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 5). When the young people are without specific form of practice through which they can deal with detaching experience and/or have not yet seen the status they will hold on to, liminal experience sets in. During this on-going search and before its completion, the students occupied what is regarded as the 'threshold'. Bhabha takes this further and argues that "the stairwell as liminal space" foreshadows the in-between such that "the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction …" (2012, p. 5). This process of symbolic interaction comes with a fusion that constructs the difference among the young former refugee's students, the communicative tool they employed, school settings and Australians.

For Alexander, communication and interaction proved tools for survival within the settings of school structure and his ambition. Nevertheless, the creative intervention that accompanies this in the in-between moment, proved able to assist in switching from possible experience that either displaces or emplaces. This is beyond the binary logic through which identities and construction of difference are usually built; namely, the binary between white Australians and the participants experience in this study. Rather, the interstitial passage between the fixed and unfixed identifications shaped the manifestation of the cultural hybridity. Taking a quick-

thinking look at Alexander's emphasis, what he encounters revolves around principles or codes of self-construction. This happened in such a way that the action taken followed a "constant reconstruction and the reinvention of the self… and the present it belongs to have no objective status, they have to be perpetually re/constructed" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 344).

6.8   Conflict within the ['Interstices'] Permeable Space

The concept of third space emanates from hybridity theory, which refers to a combination or mixture. As established in Chapter 5, the notion of hybridised space creates what is generally known as the third space from where this study's participants draw on available resources of identifiable cultural viewpoints to make sense of their world, a concept that constitutes their identity. Making sense of one's world requires some sort of social articulation of difference and that is what the African Australians employed. However, the processes of these "social articulation of difference are not only complex" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 3), but a re/construction and negotiation of cultural practices within the *interstice* seeks to sanction and authenticate the adopted cultural hybridities that appear during such negotiations.

Bhabha argues that these differences "can be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend to the lives" (2012, p. 3) of the participants. The young people talked about the struggle around each experience they encountered. Significantly, each of these encounters becomes a scaffold on which the subsequent experience can be built. The experiences of identity negotiation and social belonging are an on-going encounter which are never resolved, forcing them to create a passageway from where meaning can be generated.

For instance, Xhaka, 20 years old, had lived in Australia for three years and saw this idea of negotiation around it differently. Xhaka joined WEYA about three months after the group had a presentation on 'Racism' and dealing with the scourge. The presentation by the WEYA crew

encouraged Xhaka to take part in several other improvisational plays focusing on building trust between Australian and the former refugees in the community. After the performance, Xhaka found the inspiration and willingness to be committed to the organisation while applying the knowledge from WEYA in his academic pursuits.

However, Xhaka's previous experience of displacement, growing up as an adolescent with protracted family crises became a past that was never concluded as this continues to impact his connection and identity negotiation in Australia. For him, when asked about his schooling experience since he arrived in Australia, he believed something did not feel right as he was both captivated and disillusioned.

> Lekan: What was your experience like when you were in that school that your mother enrolled you?
>
> Xhaka: *I was fascinated and disappointed at the same time.*
>
> Lekan: How do you mean? Why were you disappointed and fascinated?
>
> Xhaka: *[I mean that sometimes] I do certain things that I am not proud of at school because I was just trying to be original* [be myself]. *I was trying to be different person. Sometimes, I would identify myself as, I felt as if I am weak because sometimes things that happen in the school, if it was from my previous school before coming to Australia, it would be a different outcome. But because I don't know much about here dealing with such difference is very difficult.*

Xhaka's effort to engage and negotiate his identity in Australia conflicted with how other people saw him or how he identified himself. Nevertheless, just because Xhaka saw himself as "*weak*" does not necessarily mean he is helpless or incapacitated, but that he could not simply

reconcile his previous experience before resettling in Australia and the present predicament. The young people's past and immediate present experiences are constructively linked together through which they make sense of their emerging identity and social belonging. In a situation where the conflict becomes complicated or irreconcilable, the young people are simply stripped of a place and or a space they can regard as their own. What follows lies in the individual confusion of 'here' and 'there' and according to Xhaka, the complicatedness of his situation revolved around *"not knowing much about here* [Australia]", which is the genesis of the conflict.

Bhabha (2012, p. 3) argues that with "social articulation of difference" the negotiation of cultural difference may be either in dis/agreement. The "social articulation of difference by the minority [African Australian] is not only complex" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 3), but a re/construction and negotiation of cultural practices within the *interstice*, which seeks to authorise and validate cultural hybridities occur during historical transformations and concession. Even when the young people in this study have a coherent sense of what they deem to be appropriate in a setting, the society friends and peers do not necessarily share those senses of perceived decorum and norms as in the case of Xhaka. The solution to resolving this misrecognition and complexities lies in the *permeable space* from where he can relate better with Australia. Negotiating the *interstice,* especially regarding a matter around difference, traditionally describes the African Australians as separate categories of people with the forces of the outside *shaping* the inside.

Similarly, the conflict of identity negotiation for Marina was like Xhaka's experience of trying to be original and be a different person to her mainstream Australian peers on one side and African Australian friends. In addition, the interstice or *permeable space* for Marina suggests a complication of neither being here nor there, which might be problematic to exchange.

Bhabha's describes this as "double-dealing" an idea of negotiation that positions all the young people in this study in the "in-between" (West & Olson, 1999, p. 243). For instance, when I put forward a question around the notion of "double-dealing", it became clear that Marina understood the challenges around such negotiation, which hinge primarily on pursuing the experience of belonging, approval and acceptance. Significantly, when I asked Marina how she dealt with being an Australian and being a Congolese, she acknowledged the conflict.

It becomes (really) hard because at times when I am speaking with my African friends, I move into the African accent but when I am speaking or conversing [with] *the white people* [Australians], *I move into the white people's accent. It appears as if this type of experience is a change in my mindset. I believe that if I speak with an African accent they* [the mainstream Australians] *may think I am not that educated or possibly that I am from a low educational background [with poor] status. They may think that I did not understand English language properly, but I can speak. So, for me, I think … if I see an African person, I don't know what happens but my English tone changes completely and I don't know how that works out. It just changes completely.*

The young people in this study struggled to make sense of different social contexts and present themselves in such a way that does not unavoidably determine their individuality. One thing becomes very clear: negotiating different cultural zones (African and Australian culture) has not evolved into a relaxing and smooth transition in which the young people are free from the limitations of the embodied world. The African Australians struggle to make sense of who they are and how they fit into Australian society in which contexts are not only reworked but negotiated and collapsed. The switching experiences of moving in and out of African and Australian accent are practically invisible and or perhaps unrecognised by the audience they

seek to impress or convince. In any case, whatever Marina does to prove she's original can easily be misrepresented or even taken out of context. In probing further, I asked Marina why she feels moving in-between contexts could guarantee her connecting Australia, she answered:

> *I do not understand to be honest, it just changes. It's just something that clicks in my body and minds. I don't even know how to control it.*

The experience of Marina corroborated the reconfiguration process that Barad raised from where she argued that "identities" becomes dependent and questioned the "on-going material process" (Barad, 2007, p. 240). However, these individual experiences and manifestations can be (re)designed, re-organised and reconstructed based on such individuals' inclinations in negotiation.

6.9   Acquiring Direction and Identity Formation

One of the factors that shapes the participants' experience living in Australia centres on the acquisition of direction. All the participants in this study found solace in setting achievable goals while pursuing excellence in their chosen fields irrespective of mounting pressure from each encounter or forces shaping their individuality. In socio-cultural theory, motivation is viewed as individual's inherent determination to advance the course of his/her life by making informed decisions that can attract lead to success (Jenkins, 2014; Watkins, Noble & Driscoll, 2015).

In negotiating identity fixation and ascription, the African Australians described cases of individuation in which the young people projected a sense of uniqueness that underscored their strength. The formation of this type of identity hinges on the axis of 'dis/connection and attachment' because identity provides us as people with a form of stability. The thought that the formation of subjectivities deals substantially with social and cultural theory underscores

that way of life can be redefined and reconstructed. The young people operating within this cultural domain readily applied social and cultural effects to reconstruct their subjectivity. The WEYA organisation offered the participants a framework through stage expression to address the details of the specificities of the relations of difference. WEYA offered this in the form of arts, drama, music, dance, oral history and tradition even up to the level of social gatherings to helping the participants redefine their path within the community.

In establishing this socio-cultural path, the students discussed their driving motivation from what keeps them afloat to their personal and collective interests. For all of them, there is a unifying synergy in the inhabitation of cultural borders and socio-historical temporalities in Australia. This unity of purpose came from individuals' willingness to tell their stories of triumph, hurt, dis/connection. How they articulated these stories demonstrated their strategies in engendering hybrid identities in Australia. Their motivation is woven into the conventional status of a "black box" (Watkins *et al*, 2015, pp. 8–10), which they use to connect and become relevant in school.

In a build-up conversation with one of the participants, setting achievable goals was determined as a motivating factor that kept Alexander in the loop of *wanting to become* a school captain. Between Alexander and the school captaincy remained the coil of pedagogy of place and struggle that emerged out of the pedagogy of identity formation which was able to shape him into becoming his dream:

> Alexander: [In responding to connecting to school] *I looked at the previous school captain… how they led the school, and so I wanted to be one myself, when I got to Year 12, I became a school captain in sport as well. I was happy and satisfied about that.*

Lekan: How did you become part of Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA]?

Alexander: *Oh! I was the first member. We were three people at first, two left the group, and I was left alone but I kept going still, because you never know.*

Dwayne, on the other hand, had this to say on acquiring direction when questioned about how he experienced school. Dwayne tried to compare his experience as a *refugee student-in-transit in* Kenya and Australia and gave a narration of stark difference. Dwayne's motivation was inspired by the background in the English classes the parents had enrolled him and his siblings in after school in Kenya. Dwayne had this to say about how the classroom's serene setting aided his willingness and inspired him to want to learn while renegotiating his life around school in Australia:

They speak English there [not French], *my parent took us all to different English classes after school. My father had the vision that one day, this English will help us which is helping me and my siblings right now in Australia. The school here was totally different from back home you know, I felt like I belong because back home, and back in Kenya, you will have like 50 people in a classroom, yeah one teacher. But here you have just 12 kids in a huge classroom. You know like wow! I feel free that this is freedom, I can speak, the teacher could listen to me. The teacher could have time to help me, I felt like I belong yeah, I was very grateful for that.*

Alexander and Dwayne lived their lives around a learning curve of growing into *becoming* through an experiential curve and common sense. I do not intend to go into different forms of learning curve that (Kumashiro, 2015) suggested involved learning toward social justice. Their trajectories served as driving forces that assisted the students to rediscover their footings in Australian school. The premise of social justice is contingent on the belief that all Australians

regardless of their ethnic origin should not just have access to equality of opportunity (Keddie, 2012a; MacDonald, 2017; Olagookun & White, 2017), but are also entitled to genuine senses of belonging and equality.

6.10   Summary

In this section, I discussed the negotiating experiences and strategies employed by the study participants in Australia. I focused on how education and school remained a significant pathway for the young former refugee students' identity reconstruction despite other militating factors such as values, beliefs and their past experiences. The direct effect of the school's role turns out to be the most realistic route to becoming, helping the students to have a grip on how better to plan or even shape their life's experiences. For the participants in this study, the available resources coming out of educational connections emanate from their ability to analyse, criticise and follow the path to reshape their personal identity. The resources employed involved but were not limited to their individual determination and mental toughness. This resilience enabled their confronting and responding to conflict within the interstices, building on motivating factors that inspired direction and encouraged their speaking out to build up their confidence base.

Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion: Part 2

> The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present…[but] creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation (Bhabha, 2012, p. 10).

7.1   Introduction

This section analyses the socio-cultural aspect of life for African Australians in Australia. In particular, it examines how they negotiate different zones of building friendship, relating with their peers, engaging in social debate and managing cultural difference. These zones are areas of interest, ranging from social to cultural manifestations that underscore how they live their lives. This section also discusses the young people's participation in sustaining school culture such as music, drama and sports. through which they negotiate and reconstruct their identity. In this section, I return to the overarching research question: "How do young people who are of African Australian heritage negotiate belonging in Australia?"

There is a fundamental question that emerging in the themes in this chapter. The question concerns whether Australians of African descent ever stop being a refugee and whether they belong yet in Australia. These two sub-questions are jointly discussed in this chapter while also explaining the negotiation of the intervening space, as with colonialism itself, which is a process of disjunction that disenfranchises the participants' individuality.

7.2 Negotiation of 'Culture-in-between', Learning and Religiosity

The participants have their own culture to immerse themselves in. However, while it is true that a new culture of learning emerges through cultivation of redefining newness, dynamic innovation sets in through patterns, needs and interests (Jung, 2015). The African Australians re-defined this newness or cultural pathway by seeking not just for meaning but in the process becoming adaptable and flexible while navigating these new challenges. However, being born into a way of life, does not necessarily imply that they are born with such a way of life. This means, they seemingly grow into becoming the *newness*. This is because culture is learned and "the kind of learning that will define the twenty-first century is not taking place in a classroom" (Thomas & Brown, 2011, p. 17). With the dynamic nature of culture, the participants in this study are without option other than adapting to circumstantial changes.

Some of the ways the participants live their lives focus on their unique individuality while operating through ethnicity, recognising diversity, values, beliefs and attitudes. These are employed in everyday communication, especially when people move into a new country. Finding the new environment different to what they used to know exposes them to new experiences of language difference, weather, lifestyle, food, dress and new history. Thus, because everything suddenly becomes different, they had to dig deep and find another way to address those common changes and experiences. This is known as 'culture shock'.

From all indications, culture shock influences individuals either in a negative (disorientation and vulnerability) or positive (active involvement and productive) ways (Furham, 2012; Marx, 2011; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2005). This is an unavoidable process that the young people generally had to exchange before recognition and acceptance in Australia if there are any at all. For a successful connection, the starting point is recognition and acceptance, not just a checklist for stakeholders whether students or professionals. However, recognising and accepting that

new terrains can bring about new opportunities, differences and challenges assists their reconstructive abilities in varying degrees within acculturative practices. The participants also respond to changes over time through capturing moments that reshape identity reconstructions. The seized moments of these transformations are constructed in relation to history, power and culture, which are, in turn, connected to the evolution of the African Australians' life experiences.

The stories show the participants negotiated and reconstructed their identity in diverse ways from community cohesion to transforming and/or re-configuring their lives' discourse. For instance, Marina's identity reconstruction stems out of preparedness to learn new things and desire to acquire knowledge especially from other people. Marina admitted that participants *"get to learn new things, we also get involved* [in such activities as] *getting knowledge from other people's culture"*.

What is paramount not only to Marina but all other young former refugee students from Africa who sought to reconstruct their identity through negotiation focuses on connection and building of friendship. Marina learned about other people's culture and developed a relationship not only with Australia, but with other crew members in the process.

In addition to the participants' identity negotiation, they acknowledged the idea of religiosity in their quest to push against the tide of not belonging. The participants held their faith predominantly (Christianity and Islam) in high esteem although, they appeared to shy away from the practice based on the lived experiences enacted on stage in one of their presentations. For instance, Alexander maintaining the identity of a *"church guy"* [Alexander's words] is a culture that shapes his view of things more generally. This church culture became a resource that supported his own identity re/construction by evaluating how he would behave after watching the Australians closely.

In addition, this also became a platform where expression could be found, thus contributing to the young people's sense of belonging in Australia. One of the basic ways through which African Australians reconstruct their identity is a new way of thinking in Australia. This provocation of this new thought became a driving force that assisted Alexander in his quest to become a successful student combining responsibilities (school prefect in sport) and education simultaneously.

7.3 The Social Stigma of Labelling, Misrepresentation and Misrecognition

The participants see their being misrepresented as one of the barriers to negotiating Australia. The African Australians defined what makes up their individual qualities, beliefs, values and cultural practices as explicit prejudice overlaid on being regarded as a social problem or causing a social division. In the process of consciously being misrecognised, they regarded Australia as a contested space. The young African Australians discussed the series of labelling and categorisation that are not only offensive, but also do not appropriately describe them as citizens or *bona fide* members of Australian society, especially in the way they are branded 'refugee'. The participants are often being misrecognised by what Bhabha (2012) regards as interiorly homogeneous but exteriorly enclosed groups.

The young people discussed the extreme disapproval and humiliation encountered, especially on socially-inclined ideological grounds through which they can be differentiated against other members of the society. The affixation of stigma on such individual or groups thus characterise them as people with challenging identities who differ from societal cultural norms. Goffman's (2009) seminal book defined stigma as an unfavorable or unwanted attributive pattern that individuals carry and which downgrade that individual's status in society. Those attributed with stigmata are seen as aberrant, atypical and often unwelcomed (Land & Linsk, 2013).

Exclusion has become a systemic challenge of the 21st century (Slee, 2013) and one notable way this happens is through identity ascription, stereotyping and subtle rejection. Thus, social stigma of identity ascription cannot be treated in isolation; rather, stigmata weave a complex layer effect of other conspicuous or subtle exclusionary experiences. These factors such as cultural racism, xenophobia, intolerance and bigotry (Dumenden, 2012) work together against the participants in this inquiry. For instance, Alexander responded to the so-called bigotry, labelling and misrepresentation:

> Alexander: *I have been here in Australia for over six years, everything has been good. Although, there are always ups and downs that you go through life and yeah, but I just need to know how to pick it up like nothing bad has really happened to me. But I know some* [young people] *in my group that something bad has happened to them ...*

> Lekan*: What could that be?*

> Alexander: *Some* [mainstream Australians] *people were being racist to them. They assumed that they did something bad, an accusation [which was built on falsehood and misrepresentation] based on race. Because of different skin color, they just compare the skin colors that you are not from this country? You should go back to your country or something that all those stuff comparing ...different countries.*

For Alexander and other members of the drama crew, cultural difference turns out to be a minority discourse and a form of "social contradiction … that must be negotiated rather than sublated" or else assimilated (Bhabha, 2012, p. 232). From this contradiction, to continue to paraphrase Bhabha (2012), differences emerge between the disconnecting sites and representations of social life that have to be articulated in order to produce transcultural

understanding. To further buttress this, Alexander continued and narrate a personal experience of being stereotyped"

> Alexander: *I was in the car today with one of the people I worked with and he was complaining about refugees,* [and] *we started arguing…*

> Lekan: What was the argument about?

> Alexander: *Like just playing and he called me like you 'refugee' … and I laughed at first but replied and said I am not a refugee. If I am a refugee, you are a refugee as well because this country does not belong to you* [as well]. *If you are born here and your parents are not born here…*[it means you are also a refugee] *and he said: "my father was not born here in Australia* [but I was]. *So, I said if you call me a refugee that means you too, you are a refugee.*

The participants described their encounters as derisive and accompanied by a derogatory labelling or as strangers within a contested social space (Massey, 2013; Miller, 2017; Reyes, 2016). Negotiating identity and belonging by the participants in Australia are strained with prejudice, intolerance and subtle but pervasive racism. This is because, while cultural identity does allow the participants to connect in a new way or bring about 'newness', it also reinforces the setting where individuals coming together are bound up by ties but they experience the tension of belonging differently.

In addition, to see the participants not conforming to the perceived Australian way of life served only to heighten the misrecognition of the young people continually. However, African Australians manage their personal fragmented lives in flux by deploying the structure of "social control" in a contested social or public space (Reyes, 2016, p. 201). Nonetheless, the participants' status of experiencing commonalities and connections is frustrated as the young

people are neither seen as ideal Australian citizens nor have they retained their African root, but are continually categorised as refugees. Therefore, negotiating the dictum 'once an African refugee, always a refugee' becomes an insurmountable contest that requires a never-ending chase and approach to identity re/construction. Moreover, the participants negotiate the point of suture that speaks to them as the social subjects of a discourse (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). At this point, the processes which produce subjectivities or those which construct them as "subjects which can be spoken" (Du Gay et al., 2000, p. 19).

To apply Bhabha (2012), for all the participants, the point of suture simultaneously becomes a space of resistance and expression or enunciation for their identity articulation especially at critical moment. For instance, Alexander was very much alert in responding to what constructed him as "subjects which can be spoken" [refugee] and he responded, *"I am not a refugee; If I am a refugee, you are refugee as well because this country does not belong to you"*.

Dwayne's experience of moving from timidity to *speaking out* helped him to overcome all sorts of diffidence. Similarly, Alexander summoned courage by being bold enough at a critical time to respond to his being negatively constructed as a 'refugee'.

7.4   Complex Social Processes and Difference

In this thesis, social processes are described as the systems of social interaction that take place over a period between individuals in the form of cooperation, adjustment, competition and conflict. Tilly (2016, p. 5) argues that social interaction produces what people experience as race, gender, religion or class, although the applicable agreement around this interaction differs "across places periods and population". Considering these social processes and differences, the interview data suggest possibilities that cross the borders of living without prejudice. For

instance, Xhaka's inability to understand a friendly gesture through smile from a colleague sums up a complicated view of relating with his peers. When asked about his experience around school and how he connects with friends and acquaintances Xhaka had this to say*: "The worst thing about school was mostly the people".*

This suggests a connection to prior experience such as issues arising with his peers either in accosting them or cooperating with them. The categorisation of the phrase 'the people' points to a bumpy experience that centers on social interaction and its nuances. This is because it takes two or more people to have interaction but first and foremost such interaction begins from within as individuals intra-actively relate with the self (Barad, 2007). Xhaka did not focus on areas where the relationship was mutual and effectual. However, what became daunting for Xhaka was the misconception he held around Australian people being different. Realising this led to his re-adjusting his response on social complexities.

Xhaka continued:

> *The people, they give you plastic smile, that fake smile. Because I see you just smiling or because we are looking at each other face to face* [does not count] *but really you don't really like me, and you don't have to smile. I mean you don't have to force yourself to smile. You know it will look like they are welcoming you but after you leave it would be something else.*

Xhaka's pathway towards negotiating the *"plastic smile"* in Australia was already compromised because of deep seated misconception around complex social relationships. Thus, due to this misconstruction, detachment set in. This detachment created a *permeable space* through which he could manage the complexities of trust and interaction, but this took the form of withdrawing from social encounters. In considering this piece of data that focuses

on the social processes of difference diffractively, I turned to Bhabha (2012, p. 93) who argued that:

> We may have to force the limits of the social as we know it to rediscover a sense
> of political and personal agency through the unthought within the civic and psychic
> realms. This may be no place to end but it may be a place to begin.

To understand Xhaka's idea of the "the people with plastic smile" inspires this study to consider the social limits and sense of political and personal agency through which the participants renegotiate their identity in Australia. To understand Xhaka's "personal agency through the unthought" processes, I must focus on the "dimension of doubling" applied in response to difference (Bhabha, 2012, p. 71). Bhaba's "dimension of doubling" refers to the dual status of an individual or the splitting of the subject's performance in a way that questions their identity or that of others.

For instance, Lacan (1975) suggested that "the Other is a dual entry matrix" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 74). This explains Xhaka's signification of 'doubling' at the entry point of meeting with *"the people",* making sense of it in a way that attributes responsibility for the misplacement of possible good intention through that smile. To focus on colonial discourse where Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* becomes operational in negotiating the experiences of doubling identity would be to go beyond the bounds of this thesis. However, what is imperative is the *unthought* that could possibly shape Xhaka's *inter-* and *intra-*relationship territories which gave rise to a new possibility of seeing the smile in a friendly or in a way that suggests that Xhaka is welcomed and, by extension, that he belong in Australia.

In identifying these social processes of difference, I want to refer to the Karen Barad's argument that clarifies Haraway's idea of difference:

a way to figure 'difference' as a critical difference within' and not as special taxonomic marks grounding difference as apartheid (Barad, 2007, p. 72).

Experiencing 'difference' as Xhaka and other participants had done suggests a profound divergence of frustration that had to be negotiated. Being frustrated does not just mean disappointments, struggles or the external outlook such as skin color of who is 'black' or 'white,' but living through the dissenting experiences while attuning themselves to its demand. Since social interaction is mutual and reciprocal, it has a way of influencing the attitudes, character, feelings and actions of people. In this way, it might form the tie between the society and the individual.

The phenomenon of 'diffraction' is significant in the understanding of the social processes of difference through which nature and culture interacts in the negotiating of experience of the emerging artists. Here, I turn to Barad (2007) who argues that understanding the concept of diffraction configurations involves a pattern or "patterns of difference— to be the fundamental constituents that make up the world" (2007, p. 72). From Barad's assertion, it became necessary to consider the configurations and interrogate the patterns.

For instance, Alexander, acknowledged that the complexity of social process did not deter him in any capacity; rather it built confidence that is predicated on his interactive capability. In his words, when asked about his connection and belonging, he said:

> *Yes! I have a sense of belonging as I told you before, because I can interact with*
> *anybody. I can go to that person, I don't need to know the person, I just need to*
> *know how to talk to that person not in a rude manner.*

This, indeed, is a fundamental pattern of difference "that make up the world". This is because our ability to engage other people in a more productive way differs from one person to the

other. However, it does not suggest that interactive capability has direct access to having a sense of belonging. Yet focusing on the statement *"I just need to know how to talk to [this person or] that person not in a rude manner"* presupposes Alexander's acknowledgement of differences in people. Eventually, the understanding of this may, nonetheless, improve relationships with peers, associates, teachers and with their community in Australia.

Alexander continued:

> *Wherever I go, or people* [I meet] *and how I present myself that is how people are going to take me. If I show them that I smoke or drink or have other anti-social behavior, that is how they* [are going] *take me. If I show them that I'm this guy who is quiet, and who is happy and all that, that's how they* [are going] *to take me so. My older colleague that I worked with smoke and, drink but my boss knows that I don't smoke or drink. They tell* [ask] *me do you want ciggy? And my boss says don't give him* [Why?] *because I have already told him that I don't do all that thing. So, I think that I belong wherever I go, I don't know how I will say it better than that.*

In negotiating his life in Australia around social processes and difference, Alexander followed a pattern of having to deal with entanglements, which often impinged on his relationship with his colleagues. Significantly, just as the ocean wave pushes through a gap when encountering an obstruction (Barad, 2007), so did Alexander negotiate around the barriers of social interaction and difference. For instance, meeting with people wherever he goes was not as important as presenting himself in a culturally groomed way. Nevertheless, the pressure of leaving positive impressions in every encounter thus become a diffractive apparatus for Alexander in building up cultural understanding that might have assisted him to respond meaningfully to difference in the third space.

For Xhaka, the social processes of difference were complicated by his deviating from the general norm: Australian cultural patterns presuppose that the African Australians do not have many options for acting or expressing themselves in a peculiar way. By deviating from the norm, I mean moving away from practices that are characterised as 'unAustralian' as such practices become the hallmark of either acceptable or unacceptable socio-cultural standards. For instance, to understand the idea of fitting in and measuring up to the socio-cultural standard within Australia, Xhaka raised a concern around social processes of difference by affirming:

> *All I can say is Australian culture is more like if you come from another country, if you act the way they want you to act and talk the way they want you to talk and be the way they want you to be, then you going to feel like you belong here because you are doing what they want but as soon as you try to pull out your own individual traits and what you are that's when you know* [who you are], *and other people show you their real colors and tell you, you don't belong here.*

Xhaka's concern seemed to be suggesting that there is a white Australian culture that seemed not to be tolerant, and experiencing this intolerable culture simply shaped his sense of belonging.

7.5   Dealing with Ambiguity and Confusion through Identity Introspection

Given the nature of disorientation, the participants raised the concern of going through the phase of perplexity in which they are often 'misrecognised' (Keddie, 2012b). Throughout the interview data, the African Australians put emphasis on this concern and this was articulated in the way they expressed themselves. For instance, Xhaka concluded on the thought that it is hard to recognise who meant well and who did not especially about his welfare in Australia. He claims:

I have a feeling that people did not understand me and did not seek to know [connect] me. They are fascinated by the fact that I was different, and they still want to talk to me… they see me as a scary person. I just feel like people did not get me from the point of … how I work and relate with so much knowledge of where I came from, who I am, [my personality profile] and lastly, who I thought I was coming into different environment. All these questions force me to doubt and question myself of who I am really?

The complexities and the ambiguities of neither being here nor there for the participants, call for the application of meditative resources to make sense of who they are especially when they are being misjudged. Barad (2007) suggests that emergence does not happen once but that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence. To apply this idea, participants' lived experiences in Australia are continuously "reconfigured through each intra-action", and this serves a specific purpose "for the part that we play in the world of differential becoming" (2007, p. 396). I do not think this is typical for Xhaka because taking responsibility is all about understanding. However, there is still this path of omission that completely refuses to recognise him for *who* he is and miscomprehends *what* and *where* he would like to be in Australia. This challenge became the apparatus of deprivation for Xhaka from meeting those moments. This is an experience that emanated from already biased and ambiguous procedures.

In addition, Rothania raised a concern which underscores her difficulties to negotiate a way around connecting to Australia. For instance, Rothania rethought her personal confusion around these ambiguities through identity introspection. She claimed:

So really, I thought thinking about, it was kind of like who am I really coming into a new country? I don't know, I don't really know about myself no more and it's like I've lost everything I had … It was just so difficult for me.

Perhaps, being entangled is not just a function of isolation or a single issue around choice but involves multiplicities of complex factors. Thus, Rothania had an 'apparatus' at her disposal in negotiating this curve. This is her 'introspective prowess' through which questions are first raised and analysed internally. This appears to be a common experience especially for all the participants operating within the *permeable space* or the interstice. Going through the frustration of being confused, not knowing what and how to do certain things or going about a complex situation becomes the mark of their disorientation. For instance, Dwayne responded to this closely in relation to his personal peculiarities and had this to say:

> *It was very hard to fit in into the environment… I have questions such as: How are [mainstreamers] people going to identify with me? What is my accent like? What are my questions like? How do I talk? How is my interaction? [other major concern was] when I speak, are they going to be able to understand me? So, I was quiet.*

Dwayne needed the self-examination to seek for meaning through which a new reconfiguration could be achieved. Ironically, for Dwayne and Xhaka, the experience was different. While Xhaka felt *"people don't understand him and didn't get him* [because perhaps of his looks] *…they see him as a scary person"*, Dwayne, on the other hand, remained *"very scared"* of the Australians.

7.6   Diversity, Cultural Pressure and Changing Identity

The recognition that individuals possess of the specific traits and features setting them apart from other people in the society foregrounds their perception of diversity. The experiencing of this diversity takes up different forms that may include race, personality, geographic location, education level, sexual orientation, life and work experience and religious beliefs. However, within this diversity, individuals are shaped based on the societal condition and experience they

encounter in the process, which inform either a *response* or *reaction* to such experience. If an individual who functions and lives within particular social boundaries responds to changing situations and experiences, the outcome is usually positive but when individuals react to changing circumstances and situations, it often brings about misconceptions. For instance, in Xhaka's reaction to the supposed *"plastic"* smile from Australians, we witness Xhaka's already internalised capacity to deal with changes that may not be favorable or be in the interest of his negotiating tendencies and desire for relationships with other people.

Diversity must be understood in its entirety in cases when minorities have the cultural opportunity to showcase what they can do through cultural expression. Beyond the freedom of cultural expression, diversity establishes an invaluable instrument through which individuals communicates their differences. This is achievable whether the goal is to build a sustainable connection to a wide range of traditions and customs or to engage with institutions to bring about lasting designs and developments. However, to achieve this, diversity must be embraced because it requires harnessing the features listed above to realise and accomplish either individual or organisational goals. Beyond the levels of the self and the institution such expressions of diversity can also be in national interests.

Working in the middle ground of identity formation, the participants acknowledged their confusion around bridging the cultural gulf between their African background of the past and the Australian culture of the present. Barad (2007) argues that identity formation has a changing layer which is not just about positionality or setting but involves an on-going interrelated contingency related to time, space and matter. With the experience of neither being *here* nor *there* in the form of an indeterminate encounter, the participants become reliant on ongoing material processes, which can be "re/configured through one another in dynamic intra-relationship" (Barad, 2007, pp. 240-241). The African Australians in this study, however,

challenge Australia's notion of 'diversity' and the on-going material processes of *becoming.* For instance, when Rothania was asked how she had changed since coming to Australia, she had this to say:

> *Everything has changed really because, I don't really know my mum's [mother tongue] language. Oftentimes, I get stuck or confused when she is talking to other people. So, people think I am more Australian in my culture, but they do not really know much about me… Instead of them asking me about what I know about my culture, they judge me by saying you are too Australian. You do not know anything about your culture.*

To apply Barad's thinking, Rothania acknowledged an important issue that is predicated on change but contingent and contested upon on going material process. In other words, identity formation is a process through which Rothania is configured and possibly reconfigured when responding to her changing cultural landscape. The changing cultural landscape here revolves around her transition from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Tanzania before arriving in Australia. However, most of the experiential pressure occurring remains within Australia. It is in the space of Australia that she grapples with two or more opposing cultural practices (that is, those of DRC, Tanzania, Australia and hybridised). It is in this permeable medial space that Rothania had to negotiate identity. In addition to the changing local cultural landscape, there is the pressure of getting 'stuck or confused' between this culture or the other, especially when her mother is talking to other people. Her negotiations occurred in this *permeable space* or the in-between space from where she was categorised and where in turn she must reconstruct and consolidate her own strategies for negotiating Australia.

Alexander, on the other hand, saw the pressure of changing identity in a different way. The pressure revolved around confusion of being neither here nor there but with an intention to

stick with what he knows and believes. When Alexander was asked how has he changed since he came into Australia, there was a long pause of up to thirty seconds before he answered that "*it depends on which way you are looking at it*". Alexander believes in some way that he has changed, but looking at it from a cultural perspective, he considers that he has not changed. To back up his claim Alexander said:

> *Ah, no if you are talking about culture, I have not changed. That was what my friend was telling me that if you come from other country to Australia, you need to do things* [practice the culture] *that is done here [in Australia]. It* [The country you left] *is not your country anymore, so you must follow the Australian rule, you must do all that Australian do, but I told him, it is my culture and I can't change from that, just as you can't change from who you are, even when [if possible] you travelled everywhere in the world. So, I gave him an example, if you go to my country, so does that mean you are going to change from being an Australian and from doing what you know how to do, and you start doing what Congolese do? And he said No! So, I was confused there.*

Alexander lives within an apparently multicultural society, but the pressure of subtle mono-culturalism is an experience he must internalise in a bid to live his life in Australia. The pressure to change identity, part of the discourse of multiculturalism, explains Alexanders bewilderment of being told to change and become a different person in Australia. However, the friend was unable to change and do the same thing they had done in Congo, following the cliché of 'do as I say and not as I do'. Alexander's case is not just about changing cultural landscapes; rather, it is about the conflict around the interstice (the in-between space). This is a space between one end of a continuum and the other; a space where neither being Australian nor being a

Congolese, complexified further by Rwandan into the picture, can be said to be the ultimate destination for Alexander and other interviewees in this study.

Marina's story was somewhat peculiar to the overarching research questions which revolves around how young people from African backgrounds negotiate identities and live their lives in Australia. In the build-up to the conversation, I asked Marina, *"so, how have you changed since you come into Australia?"* In her response, she says:

> *I have changed completely because coming to Australia, it was difficult. It was not easy but throughout the year of experience in primary school, in secondary school and now in my first year in the University, I have changed into a different lifestyle. Just as when you are of age* [become an adult]*, you grow up and you have different experience. So, I have changed completely because of the way I use to see things is not how I am seeing them now.*

> Lekan: Why are you seeing things differently now?

> Marina: *Because like when you are in primary school, everything you see is like so easy now, you must like to find a way to, you know, like "the calling to adulthood" in Africa. Like you are still in your parent house, so you can't say you are an adult yet, but still you have the idea that you can do things by yourself with your parents' consent as well because we still go do the cultural heritage stuff, we can't leave it behind.*

In a way, Marina appears to be suggesting the proverb, 'the higher you go, the tougher it becomes'. This justifies Marina's allusion to the notion of *"rite of passage",* which is undergoing a process *before* becoming. Marina referred to the cultural experience of being

initiated into adulthood to clarify and validate how things had changed from simplicity to complexity.

In African culture, to paraphrase Wole Soyinka (1990), 'rites of passage' means a conveyance and expression of meanings by placing a firm ritualistic performance through a symbolic but customary reverence of cultural practice. In African society, virtually everything is ritualistic and because there is a fixed way of carrying out practices, such as the ancestral passage rites, pre-natal rites, initiation into manhood or womanhood/adulthood and death rites. This is clear in Soyinka's (1975) *Death and the King's Horseman.* One of the significant responsibilities of the king's horseman lies in committing a ritual suicide voluntarily. The horseman must lead his King's favourite horse and dog through the passage of the living to the world of the ancestors. This epitomises the kinds of ritualistic process within Marina's backstory, premised on the idea that African people appease the deity through rituals (Soyinka, 2002).

To apply the lens of Barad (2007), we see Marina encountering the 'rites of passage' or 'the calling into adulthood' and her thoughts can be understood in light of the notion of materiality of cultural practices. The experiences are no longer mere changing phases and coming of age is no longer a passcode for independence, but a space through which deeper connections and intensities are formed, which technically move Marina into a different phase of communal becoming. Thus, social and cultural tradition serves to explain the passage between the world of the ancestral to the retention of cultural transition and traditional authority.

Consequently, "the calling into adulthood" to which Marina referred is subjective because, for her, making an informed decision was contingent on the parents' affirmation. Being in the university did not change a thing for Marina, but experiencing the *in-between* cultural pressure of changing identity influences her decision and shows how much she has changed. In addition, not "*leaving behind the cultural heritage stuff*" shows the struggle of having to contend with

different cultural values at the same time, making both cultures mutually exclusive. It is in this *in-between,* the intersection and dislodgment of spaces and of difference, that Marina's collective experience of negotiating the rites of passage and her calling into adulthood are negotiated. Thus, carving out a niche of operation while conserving her familiar cultural practices and other competing interests (such as her parents' pressure) assisted Marina in negotiating the 'interstitial spaces' in Australia.

7.7　　　Building Relationships through Art; Reconstructing Narratives

The participants emphasised the significance of building relationships through Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA]. The willingness and the expertise brought into identity reconstruction with the aid of the organisation's artistic director was pivotal in the articulation of the in-between spaces [interstices] through which 'newness' was re/negotiated. Moreover, the African Australians engaged via the instrumentation of art to reshape the misconceptions of white Australians and posit positive, true identities for themselves valuing both the richness of the cultures they have come from and the potential of the culture they hope will embrace them.

The participants challenged the fixed ideological construction of their individuality of being regarded as a "refugee", "the problem", "stupid" and other racist commonplaces. While there are interferences to relationship building, the participants still focused on mending the walls of partitioned categorisation. In addition, the participants' painstaking thought and plan in building a formidable structure of relating with and to their counterparts and Australian society is contingent on creativity and artistic expression. Fundamentally, supported by the artistic direction, the African Australians developed an artistic-oriented program that is not just community-based, but culturally engaging, informative and didactic in a positive way despite the glitches around relationships. In Alexander's statement, he clarified:

how people think of us because we come here, people don't know ... but we told

them our stories and no other people's story. All the story was our idea and not the

artistic director's [idea].

For these participants, there is an aspect of relationship-building that is indispensable; a context of identity reconstruction and re/configuration in which they endeavor to re-write their story. For instance, as noted earlier, the emerging artists understand that there is a perpetual problem with their peers not understanding them, which resulted into their willingness to talk about their experience through art. I regard this as *interstitial art*, an idea expanded in the last chapter of this study.

When I asked Rothania how she negotiated her way around misunderstandings she talked about her involvement in WEYA and the encouragement she enjoyed from the organisation. When she arrived in Australia, Rothania found it difficult talking about her experiences or responding to questions in school and within the community. For example, Rothania said:

when I came here ... [my] *experience was very different ... even if I know the*

answer, I still wouldn't say anything ... so, I will just keep quiet.

However, with her involvement in WEYA, expressing her views started to come naturally. This was a place where she had the opportunity of articulating her personal views about racial slurs, categorisation, fixity and the community's predispositions.

Of significance to Rothania and her colleagues was their willingness and resolution to build a lasting relationship to resolve the misconceptions of some Australians against the erroneous position they clung to. Rothania maintained that:

... they [some white Australians] *think of the skin color differently. The things they do are not just familiar with our culture.* [In essence], *we have to come here* [WEYA organisation] *and talk about how we felt* [especially] *on comments* people [the hegemony culture— Australians] *are making* [about us] *in Geelong on that issue.*

The tenacity to ending misrecognition and construction of fixity offered her a step in the right direction. However, the effort may appear to remain one-sided with the commitment and responsibility resting with the African Australians and not with the wider worlds of Australian-ness, the government, schools and their community. The narratives significantly provide the participants with a sense of nationality— a sense that they belong together to the community called Australia. How these are experienced, and how they shape the participants' sense of belonging, continues to challenge the reality of 'social inclusive practice' within Australia.

The point here is that selective categorisation can prevent a hybrid (and inclusive) community, while the continuous misrepresentation of the young people being labelled as not genuine or legitimate Australians can be displacing. Bhabha (2012, p. 206), reiterated these complexities in Sigmund Freud's essay on 'The "uncanny" to comprehend sense of the intricate time of the national narrative. In Australia, the phenomenon is also "uncanny" because of how the limiting categories and the politics of belonging complicate the African Australians' cultural identity construction and complicates their—*our*—perception of the subject. However, between the participants and Australia is the pathway to amplifying the excluded voices of the minorities such as the former refugees who described their lived encounters and experiences and related narratives of being misconstrued or classed by overgeneralising stereotypes.

Generally, the African Australians were confronted with the task of making their voices heard especially when it came to sense of belonging and negotiating the interstitial space (Olagookun

& White, 2017). The recognition that the former refugees of African heritage are increasingly becoming a marginalised group in Australia suggests that they continued facing barriers to social and cultural inclusion. In addition to the notion of marginalisation is the idea of belonging to already "contested national space" (Andreasson, 2016), which made negotiation even more complex.

The concern here is not just about the in-between space controversy, but how the African Australians negotiate the challenges of identity and belonging within Australia. The participants also appeal for the relational and collective attributes of being-in-place by tracing imaginary and actual journeys of connecting their 'now' and 'then' experiences through art. Besides this evocative appeal, they simultaneously address the questions of ontological security, emotional well-being, belonging and emplacement that Australia would appear to have taken for granted. In contrast to the issues discussed in this paragraph is the aspect of dis/connection around cultural practices and negotiation of *interstitial spaces*.

The process of filtering identity and belonging through dramatic art then becomes a veritable instrument or apparatus through for rebuilding strained relationships among the emerging artists. They are apparatuses of the kind Barad called "material-discursive practice" (2007, p. 170). The 'material-discursive practices' here consist in the art through drama from where the emerging artists differentially articulate their identity. However, in the process of re-articulating their identities, they reconfigure the *meta-narrative*—a type of narrative of historical meaning, experience and knowledge which offers a new way forward—but do so with an understanding of the changeableness of individual or collective agency.

The African Australians did not just converge and talk about their grievances around their being misconstrued or misrepresented but meet in anticipation of re-enacting the 'borderline'

experience through dramatic presentation. For instance, Marina talked about various ideas explored in some of the presentations as a learning process, thus making belonging processual:

> *throughout the different titles and sections* [of drama presentation], *we get to learn new things and we also get involve* [acquiring] *knowledge from another people's culture. We get into ... biography stuff and through this, I have gained a lot of knowledge through WEYA, getting connected and building friendship.*

Interestingly, Alexander saw the point of building relationships as an instructive apparatus for the participants in Australia. Alexander affirmed that whenever they performed, their cultural resourcefulness regarding social and cultural divisions were sewn into the mediated societal fabric, leading to an internally generated curiosity from members of the audience. However, beyond the presentation is the message they intended to pass across which could be about racial profiling, a form of racism; identity and belonging; cultural values, beliefs and practices from Africa, in addition to the presentation on global warming. What is so fascinating is how the young people devised a means of educating their Australian counterparts via performances through which dialogue naturally ensued.

On the topic of building relationships through art to reconstruct misconstrued narratives Alexander commented that:

> *many people are surprised when we perform and asked several questions such as 'how long have you been here? How did you know how to speak English that properly?' I mean, they don't think we could do that and when we perform we educate and inform with our story showing them like how things are in our country.*

The apparent mission of the young people is geared towards unpartitioning the wall, removing the veil between Australians and the young people in this study. Alexander explained that with

difference, one can never finish exploring and discovering new cultural trends that might change the outlook and orientation of an individual or how an individual or group reconstructs their identity.

7.8　　　　Cultural Identity, Heritage and Respect

Cultural identities are marked by a series of factors such as race, class, gender and ethnicity. Clarke (2008) argued that the notion of cultural identity becomes much stronger and distinct when we define ourselves in connection to the cultural other. This means that struggling through the internal differentiation justifies the radically distressing recognition not only in relation to the '*other*', but also in relation to what it is not.

All the participants emphasised the significance of cultural identity based on respect, traditions, customs and fairness, either in the school or at social settings where they had to engage. For instance, Alexander was emphatic in his response about not changing his culture for Australian culture. Alexander had this to say:

> *I have not changed my culture for Australian culture. I know I am still living within the country… but you always have your culture within you. For example, being from Africa, my mum knows how to punish me, and if she punishes me, I know what I did wrong and I know I was not going to call the police. Here if you do the same thing, they call the police quickly that you are abusing the child.*

Marina felt the same way about Alexander's statement but from the cultural heritage point of view. The African tradition and legacy does not give room for independency until the young man or woman is deemed fit to cross the boundary from immaturity to maturity. This is usually accompanied by calling into adulthood rituals, otherwise known as the 'rites of passage'. This was an issue that Marina raised but discussed under diversity and cultural pressure of changing

identity. When I asked about what aspect of cultural heritage she thought Australian could adopt to advance intercultural engagement and capacity, Marina had this to say:

I think it is just that… [long pause] *there is respect around and there is cultural practice that can be exchanged or that they [mainstreamers]can borrow. For example, when you are in African community, you do not live your parent house until when you are 18. Because once you live your parent house before you are 18, what are you doing with your life? It does not matter, even … when you find a way to get money* [self-sufficient] *and do everything for yourself. I think there are still more to learn culturally before becoming independent. If there is any wish I could make, I guess it would be that one.*

Dwayne's vehement concern around cultural identity, heritage and especially respect was unquestionable. In response to this concern, Dwayne became passionate while discussing the apprehension about his perceived notion of cultural deficiency being displayed by some Australian students towards the teacher. In sharing this displeasure, Dwayne referred to the student's reaction to teachers as *"the worst thing about school".* For instance, when I asked what Dwayne could reflect upon about what he disliked about school in Australia, the following ensued:

The worst thing about school was how students react to teachers. You know, it is totally different, you could speak when the teacher is speaking and another student speaking swearing in front of teacher without getting any punishment and for me, I grew up getting punished and I know that being discipline is part of the culture that makes me responsible and become a better student. If I did not get punished, I would not know my mistakes. Students can say they are going to report a teacher to the police and teachers fear police here. That was one the thing that disgusted

me about school. I remember when I was in high school, I asked one teacher how

do you feel after teaching every day? And they told me, you know we just came here

to give knowledge that we have but you guys are taking it for granted and that thing

[statement] *pissed me off. I was not happy [to hear that we [students are taking*

them for granted]. Here you know, people lack respect "Lack of respect" I will

repeat it again, "Lack of respect" [Dwayne made gesticulated sign of double

fingers to indicate quotation marks], *I wouldn't say it's very low, it's nothing, it*

doesn't even exist.

Even though, every participant has their own embodied cultural identity shown in such attitudes as respecting the decision of their parents, reverence and admiration for elders, they still struggle with the culture of the middle ground or the *interstice*. The struggle of the young people was due to cultural conflict between shifting of cultural base from DR Congo and other spaces in Africa, through the *permeable space* to and within Australia. The schools played a pivotal role in stabilising and influencing the young former refugees (Matthews, 2008). However, within the boundaries for social, cultural and learning encounters is the stumbling block preventing connection as explained by Alexander, Marina and Dwayne. For instance, Dwayne reminisced on the culture of 'disrespect' as a detachment that interfered with his connecting experiences within Australia.

While education is seen by the emerging artists as a crucial part of their transitioning and getting themselves established in Australia, it comes with "a disturbance of direction often caught in *au-delà*— back and forth or here and there" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 2, emphasis added). Therefore, the participants confront or live with the conflict of trying to make sense of the cultural struggle. For instance, matters arising from social crises or cultural issues are sparked off by histories of different ways of life. The idea of 'disrespect' raised by the participants

constitutes an experience that re-negotiates the 'borderlines' or *in-between* status of cultural difference. However, the question here hinges on how that influenced the young people living their lives in Australia. Because culture plays a significant role in reconfiguring the identities of the emerging artists, then values, beliefs and their practices become either attached or detached in an upward or downward spiral.

7.9   Summary

In this section, I have discussed the research question and sub-questions using the theoretical lenses to read and analyse the data diffractively. Beyond addressing the research question, I considered the sub-question *vis-à-vis* two emergent themes. I selected thematic titles from the words of the participants. The first of the two main themes are the recognition that negotiating identity and belonging is messy. It is regarded as complex and messy because of the uncompromisingly rigorous nature of reconstruction that the African Australians had to undergo in their personal narratives. The second theme was closely related to the first and that is contingent on the participants' misrecognition and ideological construction of fixity that focuses on one participant's declaration: *"If I am a refugee, you are a refugee"*. These two-main thematic focuses were divided into sub-themes such as dealing with the social stigma of identity ascription, dealing with the issue of tribal stigma (van Heelsum & Koomen, 2016).

In addition, I considered the complex social processes of difference in the light of the cooperation in social interaction and the adjustments made by the participants. With these social processes of difference, the young people in this study employed 'apparatuses' (Barad, 2007) to deal with the challenges of ambiguity and confusion through identity introspection. It is apparent that the factors of diversity and the cultural pressure to change identity played a significant role in how individuals were shaped, moulded by societal conditions and their experiences of encounter. Consequently, along with recognising differences in cultural

identity, heritage and accordance of reverence, the participants imparted a conscious effort to build relationships through art. The processes of reconstructing outlooks via dramatic participation and presentation and reflectively changing them via retold narratives are the two-key means of refiguring identities in this study.

Chapter 8:   Conclusion

> 'Belonging is not just about social locations and [the] construction of individual and collective identities and attachments, but also about the ways these are assessed and valued by self and others' (Yuval-Davis, 2016, p. 6).

8.1   Introduction

In the first two chapters of this study, I offered an outline of how African Australians negotiated their identity from often being misrepresented and negatively constructed as a 'problem'. I highlighted some of the in-between experiences and overlaps between these participants' encounters, taking into consideration some of the socio-historical happenings of the past, which, in turn, raised questions on the ideological construction of fixity. In addition, using Baradian concepts which suggested that identities are always formed in intra-action, assisted me in exploring the theoretical framework of entanglement and diffraction to think with theories of identity negotiation and belonging. From the enquiry emerging from interrogating in-depth interview data, I focussed on participants' identity negotiation in the in-between spaces.

This conclusion begins with Siyabonga's poem that was adapted in song by one of the participants and moves on to make informed conclusions about longing to belong based on the dramatic and retold experiences of the participants, all influenced by their involvement in the Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) program.

8.2 Poem title: Show me my Africa

Show me my origin…

Show me my land…

Show me my Africa…

Shine and support the spirit of UBUNTU

Take me back to where I belong,

Let me hear African stories,

Let me see its natural beauty landscapes

Show me my land…

Let me hear those voices of hope…

Land of admissible and prosperity,

Past is the past and let us let it pass…

Show me my Africa…

Where the beauty of cultures reflects

Let me venerate and cherish its traditions…

Let me be the true African

Take me back to Africa.

Before discussing this poem, I want to return to the foreword quotation by Yuval-Davis, which was also referenced at the beginning of this study. Belonging is difficult to unpack because the idea of belonging is individually-based. It goes beyond the notion of laying claim to a place and the positioning of the subject in the labelled discourse of colonialism; rather, it emphasises that before belonging is the culture of negotiation. Moreover, how these are assessed and valued by selves and others differs based on the recognition of difference. It is that *re*-cognition of difference, psychical identification and ideology that liberates the interviewee from the fixations of racial typology and cultural dominance. This is the interpretation the participants identified, assessed and placed value on in their quest to make sense of negotiating the interstitial space.
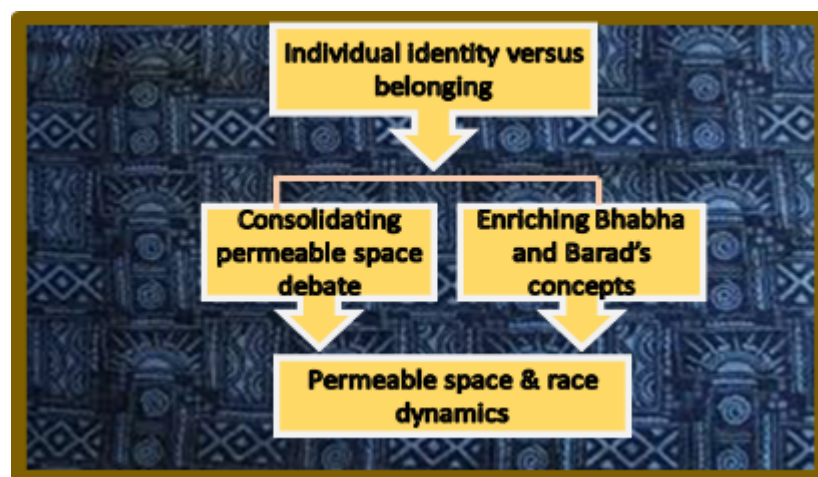
Fig. 17: *A chart showing the network of belonging through the permeable space*.

8.3   Individual Identity versus Belonging

From the interview with the young people, a passionate reference to Africa permeated the conversation around connection and belonging. As I mentioned elsewhere in this study, the nostalgic feeling of the participants' connections to Africa resonated with the poem, 'Africa my Africa' by David Diop, as one of the participants sought to share with me. The poet describes an expectation, but also reflects on the long-awaited hope of Africa, free of

surreptitious colonial rulers, enlarged in opportunity and unabashed in independence. In this poem's title, 'Africa my Africa,' Diop agonises the pain, struggle and desire for liberty of Africans everywhere, and this evokes the position of other precolonial, colonial and postcolonial writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong 'O' and John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo.

Similarly, one of the study participants shared with me the poem titled 'Show me my Africa[31]' during one of the interview segments. In slight contrast to David Diop's poem of the yearning in the past, the poem 'Show me my Africa' emphasises the unbreakable bond with Africa in the present. During the dialogue, the poem emerged when Dwayne maintains that he had songs and especially poems that meant so much to him about Africa. To affirm this, Dwayne came up with this poem in the form of a hip pop rap. I requested to use the poem in my writing and Dwayne consented and forwarded it to my mail address. Dwayne's empathetic identification with this poem makes it part of the fabric of his identity as well as an art-form of kinds of middle space where I argue the participants fashioned their identities and emergent desires to belong.

The rationale behind the excerpts emerged from the participants' continued yearning and aspiration for a home or space they could call their own. Africa will always be unapologetically and inextricably part of them. For instance, Dwayne insisted that the idea it is possible to belong in the Australian culture is undoubtedly *"questionable"*:

> *It* [the idea of belonging] *is very questionable. You know I ask myself, do I belong*
>
> *here? Sometimes, I feel I do not belong here, Africa is home. You know if you ask*

---

[31] The poem 'Show me my Africa' was written by Siyabonga Nxumalo, a principal language practitioner, but sees himself as 'just an ordinary guy' from Doringkop, South Africa.

me where is home? Even if there is war, I will say Africa. There is no better place

like home.

The nostalgic feeling of recognising Africa as home can only affirm the young people's understanding of their status as not ever just belonging 'in' and 'to' Australia. To problematise this, experiencing exclusion and other forms of social alienation continually position the African Australians as 'second class citizens' or some other media construct who may never connect to mainstream Australia. Arguably, as hurtful as the feeling of being discriminated against might be, the participants still fashioned out an escape route— *permeable space* through which they could respond to the racial slurring, discrimination and exclusion.

However, the fact that the young people possessed the resource of *interstitial art* that could ameliorate a sense of connection does not imply they felt entirely comfortable or at home within that interstice. The marginalisation simply reinvigorated the quest for belonging and reinvented the question of where home might be even if Africa is a war zone as maintained by Dwayne. For the young people, what triggered the disconnecting experiences lay within Australia's interruptive interiority, which is an embellished representation of the postmodern but contested frenzied space of no perceivable center. Therefore, the notion of home and belonging simply became an abstract and never-really-attainable entity within the nationalistic discourse of national identity and what it means to be 'Australian'.

The feeling of not belonging comes naturally to the participants irrespective of their individual status, influence and accomplishments in Australia. So long as the space of belonging remains 'questionable' according to Dwayne, then the preference of Africa over Australia or the nostalgic feeling for 'home' will continually militate against any emerging feeling of Australian-ness. The cultural, logistic and semantic complications shrouding 'belonging' interface with individuals' experiences and entanglements, especially when a person belongs

to a grouping (whether ethnic, religious racial, sexual, or whatever) susceptible to categorisation. With this predisposition, the individuals are left with no choice than to articulate and keep re-articulating the quest and the 'longing to belong' within their naturalistic zones of expression. It is possibly a desire, but one they know is likely to remain mostly unfulfilled.

What such longing reveals are that the boundaries of cultural ambience and expression are changeable and contain and reflect experiences that could be of yearning and/or ridicule. Also, it is an articulation of difference confined within the imaginary origin of trying to identify as Australians, which is part of how the interviewees live their lives. The dramatic presentations and the retold narratives facilitated expression within the permeable space from where the forces of the outside shape the inside. Within these interstices, the young people ingeniously considered their *otherness* and modes of representation, how they are represented and how they would represent themselves. I see this ingenuity as a differential and systemic construction of social and cultural logic that allowed the young people to interrogate their identities and sense of belonging or not.

These subjects of race and representation have been carefully pursued by the young people in their artistic priority— drama. This served as the primary medium for reconstructing their subjectivities. In addition, the artistic presentation of sharing multiple and contradictory values and beliefs intervened in the debates on realistic narratives, existential conditions, and the issues of connection/connectiveness and representation/representability. The participants established that there were uncertainties around identity negotiation and belonging, which are always in the middle and continually changing within the boundaries of telling and retelling within their drama presentations and personal narratives.

8.4   Consolidating the Permeable Space [Interstitial] Debate

In this study, interstitial space is an 'in-between' space that re-introduces new cultural possibility in rethinking the questions of identity and social agency. From this in-between space, individuals' experiences, and their perceptions of these experiences, changed through a combination of reflected past and present experience fused into the considered possibility of having a hybrid identity. It is through the hybrid identity or 'mixed-ness' that individuals such as the African Australians in this study reconstruct their identity, establish connection and introduce newness into a continually polarised and fragmented world.

It is within the *interstitial space* that historical transformation of cultural hybridities takes place, especially the articulation of such culture and acts of negotiation of the emerging difference. The participants showed that these differences can be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend to their lives and by extension, through which the idea of national or ethnic 'habitus' can be questioned and reconstructed. As Bourdieu defines it, 'habitus' is neither a result of free will, nor predetermined experience decided by structures, but it is created by some form of interplay between the two-over time (Maton, 2014, p. 49). It is an aspect of identity both inferred and conferred. This means that each experience encountered is a scaffold on which the subsequent experience can be built although, it is a spontaneous and on-going encounter, which are never resolved.

Alexander registered his interest at WEYA drama group, with an indestructible and determined sense of individuality to tell his story. The sense of security he gained from this shielding organisation emanates from the African Australians as a group coming together. Unlike other participants (who were initially sceptical about their joining the group), Alexander entered the WEYA program in a more enthusiastic mode, having struggled with stereotypical constructions

of fixity and misrecognition. The argument has been made that Alexander exhibited at least some measure of determination to reshape a sense of living feeling included in Australia.

In addition, All the participants employed the instrumentality of art through WEYA to reconstruct their stories. Significantly, the participants' stories are formed in-between African and Australian cultures, in which one of the cultures is either more represented than the other or the sum of the parts of difference often intoned in culture, race and class. This is where interstitial space, a permeable space, comes into the mix as a locus of experience. The participants' consciousness positioning is an experience they freely chose not just to adopt but internalise as part of negotiating their identity culturally, socially and attending schools in Australia.

Upon arriving in Australia, the status of Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) does not seem to have left the participants immediately and forever. They often find themselves engaged in a cyclical struggle to defend their cultural territory, identity and their 'blackness', in the light of growing pressure from Australian peers that they are in fact, still refugees. The African Australians had deep-seated temperament about being called 'refugees'. Nevertheless, the participants grappled with the insecurities and inadequacies that this status bequeathed upon their sense of worthiness, which simply cast shadows on their individuality, made the desire for the ideal of Australianness ambivalent, and slowed down the pace of living feeling included.

Like Alexander, Marina and Dwayne also found that their confidence of self-identity came under a contemptuous pressure, especially from the perception and the misconception of the term 'former refugee'. The perception of the participants as 'former refugees', 'other' or 'the problem', deprived the participants of the chance of locating themselves in a position of privilege within the post-resettlement setting. While identities are always formed in intra-action (the mutual constitution of the participants not just coming together but also possessing the

ability to act), the young people found direction in their ethnocentrism. This does not mean that the participants did not also question the basis of the societal values that sought to strip them of their cultural values and disregard the significance of the overlaps and the domain of difference.

Both Marina and Dwayne came to the realisation that they had to confront defining aspects of self-identity. It appears they held on to structures of 'what works' such as 'speaking out', using drama to tell and retell their stories that appears obscure fanatically but also instructively. The collective understanding displayed by the participants on the social problem of labelling further consolidated their understanding of earlier adopted perceptions of a flawed world. It is the adoption of a new will that allowed the participants to recognise the need for transformation and this formed the beginning of identity negotiation within the interstice or permeable space.

In taking on board this new perspective and having transformed misrepresentation or misrecognition through resisting the ideological construction of fixity, the participants were able to re-enact their stories on stage. The young people's interstitial space experience and identity negotiation revealed aspects of their presence and sense of worth in Australia, as people jostling between entanglement and the consequences of in-between space that they had to negotiate. Being at a cross-road and possessing the temerity to choose a path was one in which they strove not just to fulfil moral obligation or contend with complicated issues of negotiating identity in different spaces and times, but also of initiating belonging within already polarised setting.

On the flip side, stereotypical construction extremely disempowered the participants as Marina outlined in her experience of a teacher who thought he was helping but was hurting Marina's agency to choose a course of study at the university. The teacher (who was acting outside her ethical boundary of not being professionally trained as a Guardian and Counsellor) thought she

was helping, by reshaping Marina's thought against her wish. What was more offensive to Marina was how she was relegated to the status of an incapacitated student, one who is not academically sound or could only succeed in some courses of study and does not have what it takes to manage the pressure of education, because she was from a 'refugee background'. Marina grappled with this degrading experience by choosing to prove the teacher wrong and follow her passion of becoming a theatre art student with the hope of acquiring the degree of a trained and certified teacher in the university.

Significantly, WEYA as an organisation appeared to be a creative cocoon for the young people, yet the effect of fixity and negative construction lingered on in the subconscious of the participants, which often resonated a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability. The adoption of permeable space experience triggered a strategic form of action in art, coupled with a renewed sense of creativity and emotional security. WEYA enhanced the participants' creativity to effectively reconfigure the entanglement they encountered. Through this measure, it is understood that the participants were able to engage with the process of reforming and stabilising how they belonged.

In addition, they moved towards embracing a more mature and authentic self that could both handle the pressure of negative construction and turn it into philosophical ideology for enlightening the Australian populace in a ground-breaking way, via drama. At this stage, the participants were able to reach their full potential courtesy of WEYA, which was bolstered by an animated and strong enduring sense of mission by rendering a renewed an invigorated sense of ontological security. The African Australians' newly formed space was now in a secure and resilient condition, thereby allowing their matured and creative selves to develop into a state of commitment to adjusting social, cultural and educational systems for socially just means.

In Xhaka and Rothania's case of identity negotiation, the interstitial space experience resulted from questions and entanglements of the middle ground and hybridity. The participants were overwhelmed and forced to withdraw upon encountering confrontation regarding their legitimacy into a less or non-confrontational zone. This entanglement left Xhaka and Rothania's sense of 'being' in a state of social temporality that is iterative and indeterminate from everyday practices. The participants as hybridised Australians genuinely reconstructed the impermeable space and the in-between experience to their advantage by rediscovering a unified sense of individuality and purpose when they entered a thoughtful and creative relationships with WEYA.

Investment of trust in the artistic director assisted the participants rebuild a taken-for-granted nexus of strong experiential constructive space, from where a more mature artistic manifestation emerged. Furthermore, the achievement of this state of ingenuity and originality, helped the participants to reconceptualise the meaning of identity negotiation and social belonging in Australia. Reconceptualisation of identity negotiation for the African Australians was also an in-between experience as the participants neither experienced euphoria nor absolute disillusionment. There was an acknowledgement of the past experiences, which were never concluded, and the present could not be ignored, but the participants combined both the past and the present to make sense of the in-between space and the consequences of internal resistance.

The permeable space has also been shown to have emerged out of 'liminal' space, relating to a transitional stage of in-betweenness (Bhabha, 2012). These liminal spaces acted as an impetus for identity negotiation. Out of this stage developed the possibility of rebuilding and consolidating an on-going reconstruction or a shield through WEYA in which to accommodate an emerging actual self. The liminal space comprised those privileges for building up and

strengthening a sense of attachment and social belonging. It is through prospects and openings such as these that the African Australians enacted and re-enacted the interventions needed to legitimise their state of pro-activeness and activate their ingenuity.

Navigating the interstitial space with the levels of emotional strength signalled the movement from a fluid state of 'ontological being' towards a more defined sense of individuality. The definition of sense of self is achieved by the participants through re-establishing meaning and purpose in everyday repetitive activities such as the act of putting a dead script to live on stage, even at WEYA's rehearsals and formal presentations. This then reinforced the reconstruction of being ideologically regarded as the 'problem' while also consolidating individuals' creative ability to shape subsequent embeddedness in Australia.

In addition, the participants were left with a sense of not just acceptance of the knowledge that they had changed in a more productive way, but also that they had developed a sense of living feeling included. The acceptance of such on-going changes afforded the participants the privilege of telling and re-telling their stories through drama and thought-provoking monologue. The participants achieved this by plunging into biographical narratives, learning from individual and collective stories that anchors their past, present and future selves, which often stem out of transformed beliefs about themselves and the future trajectories of a complex and a changing world.

8.5 Enriching Bhabha and Barad's Concepts of 'Space' and 'Entanglement'

The insights drawn from the African Australians in this study have facilitated the above discussion of identity negotiation and belonging in several ways. Bhabha's concept of time, narrative and the margins (boundary) of the modern nation made it possible to position the study participants in relation to common symbols of reference (such as race and culture), which

each of them employed in their representation of their selves. This allowed for a painstaking analysis with respect to the tales of the field and the racial constructs. The responses of the interviewees, who are of African heritage (black) were undertaken in the post-resettlement setting and revealed the extent to which they defined and redefined themselves in connection to these categories.

Barad's analytical framework on the concept of entanglement, diffraction, matter and meaning drew attention to the contested nature of a newly constructed identity emerging from what I regarded as interstitial culture. Significantly, the newness emerged through the obstruction of remarkable features of cultural identity and entanglement encountered by the participants in the quest to connect to Australia. Basically, the pattern of all the participants' positions projected a concern of feeling 'not belonging', a critical rejection of their 'Australianness' and misrepresentation of what they represent. In Marina's case, her mastery of switching codes, symbols and practices emerges out of identity negotiation of interstitial space through which she can consolidate her 'Australianness'. Marina acknowledged that she uses different tone and voice modulation when conversing with White Australians and different accents when among her peers from African background. While she could not reconcile the dynamics that brought code switching and voice modulation to her naturally, even though it afforded Marina (some sort of) approval as being learned, she still was unable to fully accept and legitimise her status. Sounding Australian was not enough.

In addition, building on Barad's concept of entanglement, intra-action and diffraction, the participants in this study emerged through inter-related and intra-acting factors not working in isolation but in multiple cases across time and space. Intra-acting factors such as culture, articulation, negotiation, identity and inter-subjective realities and experiences of everyday encounter for the participants were already entangled. With these entanglements (of meeting

obstructions), the participants diffracted the course of 'misrepresentation', 'misrecognition' and 'racial stereotypical construction' to renegotiating the structure of what works, while defending their territory by creating a protective cocoon through WEYA, the dependency and self-contained existence that their life required.

The African Australians bent preconceived narratives and erroneous points of view significantly in such a way that such experience was directed towards them. Their negotiating this type of construction in the world was not only profound but questioned the very entities of whose existence one is dedicated to trust and believe. For instance, Alexander preferred to turn his attention to historical descriptions ordered by the present state of knowledge through discourse when he was regarded as a 'refugee'. Such historical analysis does have a point of convergence to what Foucault refers to as "phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" (Foucault, 2012, p. 4). In other words, the occurrence and incidence of interruptions continue to complicate the never-ending human history of displacements and transformation. In this study however, my attention was not only on the historical descriptions of the young African Australians, but what happened in those *in-between spaces* when identity was re/negotiated from being entangled and threatened.

Furthermore, the recognition of various spheres of activity which is crucial to the participants' exercise of power produced them as a 'social reality' which involved at once an 'other', and yet entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha, 2012, p. 101). The existence of the participants simply called into being in relation to an otherness or what it looks like. For instance, Alexander acknowledging his religiosity as *"a church guy"* in relation to how Australians positioned him allowed for attention to be directed towards identifying the core aspect of what defined his new identity. In so far as 'interstitial spaces' were related to the life-changing experiences that they produced, Bhabha's 'process of identification' offered a clear basis for relating core aspects of

the African Australian's identities before and after their respective post-resettlement experience.

Alexander, Dwayne and Rothania joined the Western Edge Youth Arts [WEYA] setting with specific perspectives about how meaning in the world was structured and how they were going to apply their sense of resourcefulness with these indented constructions to navigate the social, cultural and educational space. Drawing on Bhabha (2012) and Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011, 2017) has allowed for a more thorough deconstruction of the way the participants thought about their locations in the world. From the participants, it is strongly entrenched in the way in which they thought about and identified with the black consciousness, which allowed them to think of themselves as African Australians in the first place. Moreover, the embedded knowledge about White superiority and black African insecurity and inferiority continued to get in the way of meaning and interstitial space experience.

Bhabha provided a working, if not controversial, theory of cultural hybridity, a theory that exceeds previous attempts by others such as Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison and Gayatri Spivak in trying to explain the connections between colonialism and globalism. This study has reconceived Bhabha's concepts such as hybridity, social liminality, interstitial space (permeable space), in-between space to argue that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambiguous, indecisive or questionable and disregarded. The tracing of identity negotiation across the participant's lives (as in the shift from being a refugee to becoming Australians and navigating Australia through WEYA educationally, socially and culturally for example), allowed for closer attention to be paid to the nature of the boundaries which separate these different categories.

The different categories also allowed for closer consideration of the physical spaces (such as home, school, communities) which are enclosed by these boundaries. Significantly, it focussed

on the extent to which the beliefs, values, practices and norms that operated within these spaces exercised control over those who belonged and shared in that world as against those who do not but regarded as 'other'. For instance, Dwayne coming to terms with 'speaking out' at a critical moment helped consolidate his understanding of difference as part of his cultural heritage, and as what he should be proud of in reconstructing his identity. This type of orientation around Dwayne's life assist in foregrounding the extent to which the WEYA space bring back to life the taken-for-granted internal cultural clashes view of individuals and others during the most critical moment of their life. Bhabha's analytic approach towards in-between space and its negotiation created a more contextually rich basis for unpacking the participant's episodes and enabled profound investigation and trajectory of their biographical narratives.

Given the theoretical scope adopted in this study, only limited reference has been accorded to other theoretical and methodological approaches. Principally, I have restricted myself to the two theoretical concepts of Bhabha and Barad to thinking through the notion of negotiating identity in Australia because it afforded the study the needed stimulus to analysing the socio-cultural issue more expansively. I alluded to contributions from social, culture and discursive phenomenology, which places prominence on identity and subjectivity and the constructions of power relations, continue to reveal the taken-for-granted aspects of race and identity negotiation theory in Australia. The dynamic structure of idiographic representations of enquiry and my status as a *hybridised inquirer* are therefore vitally momentous for securing meaningful contributions to social scientific knowledge not just about identity negotiations, but of social belonging at the levels of self/individual and the world.

8.6   The Interstitial Space and Race Dynamics in Australia

In investigating the identity negotiation of the participants in this study, I gave the nature of interstitial experiences and the manifestation of in-between space among African Australians

tremendous socio-cultural coverage. Here, I offer some concluding remarks about some of the issues and earlier raised themes, which have been developed from my overall analysis of identity negotiation of the African Australians. Nevertheless, there is still a need to continually revisit issues associated with race, ethnicity, class and nationality. This must be taken more seriously in social, cultural and educational contexts where the marker of historical disadvantage about the 'other' tends to fragment and force limitation on the realisation of unique self. In this sense, a dynamic and changing (although processual) space such as the one espoused by Werbner and Modood (2015) debating cultural hybridity in which opportunities for experiencing other possible ways of 'being' must advance the necessity of a progressively globalised world.

First, my analysis shows how entrenched and polarised the issues of race, discrimination and stereotypical construction have become. In addition, these experiences are evident in the biographical reconstructions of the African Australians' lives. The minority status of these participants continues to be caught up between dominant structures of hierarchies of belonging, belonging with a difference and white Australians' identity politics. For the participants who were engaged in the introspective struggle of their identity like Dwayne, Marina and Xhaka, who joined WEYA organisation with the aim of sharing their experiences, the call to bypass the stereotypical construction of fixity has proved to be an arduous path to follow.

Those classified as 'African Australians' find themselves in an unwarranted position and forced to lay claim to some *other* identity. The participants, whose identity status have undergone fluctuating degrees of changes in Australia, had to negotiate this in the midst of Black and White race categories. As such, the dichotomy of Black and White race does not seem to be under as much overwhelming pressure of having to change its terms and boundaries. This reveals the extent to which identity negotiation in Australia remains a site of ambiguity and

contestation. The engrained discomfort and contradictory nature of identity negotiation has been shown in some instances to be both proactive and reactive. These measures are boundless barriers in connecting a sense of individual and common purpose for the effective socio-cultural revolution of Australian society. The participants' quest for a sense of belonging has sparked a critical self-reflective process that has demanded a sort of confrontation to the very nature of their existence as racialised individuals. In a way, this has placed on them the responsibilities of reconstituting and relocating the nature of being in Australia to enable the maintenance of a cohesive and integrated biographical narrative of not just self-identity, but of negotiating it.

Secondly, there has been a pivotal shift in thinking beyond the confines of dominant racial constructs of 'us' versus 'them'. This is revealed by my research participants' adoption of a new type of identification—interstitial identity. As earlier established in Chapter One, Interstitial identity means a distinguishing construction of the terms "personal" and "social" that link the past and present experiences of an individual in other to create a culturally viable life while recreating potential futures. The participants in this study seemed to have adopted an identification with blackness, which emerges from a philosophical consciousness and self-awareness of the need to reconstruct their own identity in the struggle for the full control of their purposes in life. Here, interstitial identity comes to be viewed not in terms of skin colour, ethnicity or nationality, but in terms of how the participants feel about themselves in Australia.

Furthermore, the interstitial identity represents a means of acknowledging and reflecting on the spirit of the struggles against social location, hierarchies of belonging, identification and emotional attachments, ethical and political values of Australia's discriminatory past, so that a new path of personal growth and connectedness to the world can be fashioned. This study has shown that African Australians' reflections on the differences that they have undergone is also

a signal that the young people represents a form of critical engagement. The engagement in the sense refers to social symbols, values and practices that continue to exclude and silence the presence of other possibilities of being or living in Australia. The participants further show the frailty of the socially constructed and divisive nature of racial categories such as resorting to the default mode of seeing Africa as home because of their struggling to come to terms with belonging in Australia.

Although the in-between space is preoccupied with the challenging task of 'unlearning' and 'unmaking' of race (Bhabha, 2012), they still hold much opportunity and anticipation in store as they journey to fulfil their purposes. This dynamic context demands that the autobiographical narrative of negotiating identity be "diffractively analysed" (Barad, 2014) to achieve coherence as it negotiates the intra-action between the participants and Australians. The participant's decision to adopt the description of African Australians indicates the extent to which they have come to internalise an identity, which is more pluralistic in nature, and one which is not restricted to Australian context.

In addition, the role played by creative development programs at the WEYA's artistic organisations needs to be acknowledged. The establishing and consolidating of a common task and world view cut across the setting up of WEYA programs, which have intensified and even normalised the transformation plan. Therefore, WEYA as an interstitial space and manifestation of a protective cocoon for the participants becomes a product of late modernity. The organisation has been geared towards advancing change within the lives of the study participants and is now also feeding back to promote and consolidate fundamental change within Australia itself. What is more challenging for the participants here revolves around negotiating dual identity status of (not being recognised as an) Australian with an African root.

Significantly, this formed a necessary part of grappling with changes in their pursuits of individual growth and collective goals.

In summary, using Bhabha's (2012) location of culture and Barad's (2007) entanglement of matter and meaning to unpack the nature of identity negotiation experiences of African Australians serves to highlight the various levels of discomfort accompanying the way transformation is navigated, internalised and expressed in public space. An interstitial space experience also alerts one to the significance of contextualising meaning, of recognising the social structures and matters at play in the formation of selves and of acknowledging adaptive abilities for enacting change. As African Australians increase in numbers in Australia, the ability to adapt and achieve recognition, inclusion and non-discriminatory experiences in some settings where white dominance is the norm continues to be a challenge (see McDonald, 2017; Olagookun & White, 2017). By exploring the experiences of these participants who have successfully navigated (still navigating) the shifts in identity negotiation that accompany their Australian transition, we can make an important contribution towards creating a nurturing and receptive learning environment.

8.7   Implications for Policy and Recommendations

As discussed earlier, racism and discrimination were identified as the most pervasive and dreaded social dissonance, largely causing identity tension and experience by African Australians. Policy and service provision must exceed a mere lip-service awareness to becoming enhanced through the existing research on anti-racism, discrimination, misrepresentation and stereotypical construction of fixity. For example, misrepresenting Africa as often associated with 'disconnection', 'backward', 'tribal', and 'problematic' remains a construction of negativity often in conflict with how the participants see themselves (Berthold et al, 2014; Blair et al, 2017). Individuals who do not normally share these status and values

are classified as other, 'outsiders' or 'strangers' (White, 2017) and for that reason "excluded" from the commonwealth opportunities in Australia (Nunn, 2010, p. 193).

Inflammatory reporting through the media and misinformation about a group such as the African Australians can complicate mutual relationships. Perhaps the reason for poor cohesion of the participants not seeing Australia as home is contingent upon their unacceptance through a form of racism that is very subtle and a fledgling cultural dissonance that continue to plague Australia. The participants showed a spirited attitude to confront and engage with the wider populace on the issue of misrepresentation, identity negotiation and social belonging by contributing their views in a more creative and polemic ways through art. Therefore, it is critical that identity negotiation strategies and belonging be accorded an impassioned pedestal to thrive in the form of opening-up cross-cultural dialogue. In addition, encouraging the minority to express their mind through any means they are most comfortable with will be a step in the right direction.

Therefore, it is recommended that policy and service provision targeting re-educating stakeholders both of private and public organisations about navigating cultural capacities engagement and maximising socio-cultural situation becomes indispensable. Cultural Engagement Capacities in Australia (CECA) is a phrase and acronym that I coined out of my research data. Cultural engagement capacity in Australia means the ability of an individual, group of individuals and organisation to enter a mutually constitutive socio-cultural relation and operate within a geographical setting such as Australia. Thus, individuals or groups operating from such pedestal put forward arguments, which may require a great deal of skill in deeper understanding of cultural nuances and exposure. These cultural capacities are then achieved through the development of intercultural traditions, challenging the status quo with

the sole aim of making appreciable difference and improvement to accepting the cultural ideology of people from the interstices.

Furthermore, it is suggested that strategies for inclusion and belonging should build on the knowledge expansion and interstitial experience of the African Australians. For example, in confronting identity negotiation, the participants had already employed some methods such as speaking up about discrimination and negotiating complex social processes of difference through arts among others. For the participants, this is a critical strategy for combating the discriminatory attitude, misrecognition and the scourge of racism. Besides, this strategy tends to influence Australians in a more educative way, especially when they encounter different voice who may not necessarily share or uphold their views.

This is not just a calculated pathway in changing the experience of inclusion for African Australian but also of other minority groups who may be impeded by the expectation society placed on belonging. The participants are embodied social actors who concretised their lived experiences through the enactment of arts in WEYA. Also, in material form, the participants grappled with the transformative influence of the platform or stage from where they wielded their agency out of entanglement. Just as the participants identified building a culture of connection and positive relationship as a strategy for identity negotiation, so should Australia encourage an atmosphere of healthy dialogue to shaping belonging and encouraging cultural capacities engagement.

Finally, since building relationships through arts and biographical narratives was partly explained in terms of cultural conflict, it is recommended that policy and service provision focus on supporting both African Australians and Australians to redefine cultural cohesion. Significantly, innovative and creative practices that utilise arts in a more didactic way are effective in working the nuances of the interstitial or in-between space. Therefore,

consolidating and expanding artistic cultures will aid better the negotiation of cultural conflict. Nevertheless, the fundamental causes of cultural conflict such as misrecognition, a disdain look, categorisation [as 'refugees, 'unwanted', 'problem'] as social parasite must also be addressed to prevent socio-cultural disharmony and tension.

The next section expands on the methodological discussion of what shape participant's everyday realities of articulating their identity and how this contributes to knowledge.

8.8   Methodological Discussion and Knowledge Contribution

African Australians are passionate and accustomed to searching for and acknowledging their place in Australia (Uptin et al, 2013, 2016). What is uniquely different when considering identity negotiation is that young people show a perennial and resilient desire for recognition as society members, social connection within their own and other local communities and belonging at local, community and national levels. What they negotiate are comfortable levels of in-between-ness. Importantly, my participants expressed this desire of what I referred to as *interstitial culture* through the instrumentality of *arts* and negotiated identities.

Negotiated identities are identities that are restructured by negotiated apparatuses or embedded instruments. As such, the negotiating instruments are concurrently the maximisation of cultural forms of signification such as race, ethnicity, hybridity and "social ellipses" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 213), especially within the *permeable space*. This ideal maximisation is constructed through negotiated re/configurations within their 'imagined communities' that emerge from the overlap and intersectionality of people, re-working of the space, [re/configuration] and practice.

One of the basic practice that initially caught my attention was the participant's analytic response and vivid recollections of events across time and space. In addition, the participants unfolded definite moments during which they grow into responding to their embodied sense of

what the interview entails. Looking back at the picture of the interview segments, I encountered analytical interviewees whose interests and curiosity hinged on lending their voices to unpredictability of identity and belonging. Significantly, the weight of their individual experiences along with their artistic exposure on stage where they have explored identity and belonging theatrically got me thinking. Beyond making a dead script to live on stage, the participants recounted their experiences of past real-life encounters and saw it re-lived when responding to questions on belonging and inclusion in Australia.

Co-constructed interactional styles stimulated participants' account of their negotiating experiences in Australia. I suspect that many researchers may consider my description as a positioning they have already employed in their research work. Although, this orientation of interactional style is not a new field of practice, I expect there will be certain benefits from articulating clearly the nuances of interactional style. Some of the benefits that can be deduced from this co-constructed interactional style is how the participants and the interviewer are fused into one entity in the reproduction of knowledge. Secondly, the systematic way of describing and/ or orienting to the project generate an understanding towards eliciting information that is neither substandard for the quality of study being carried out nor complicated for the participants to negotiate. The conversational style of the interview suggests that the whole exercise is processual and one of a co-construction.

Furthermore, for effective mutual exploration of lived experiences involving *negotiation* and *connection*, it takes the adoption of a learner's culture and willingness to know on the part of the interviewer. When my own contribution does enter the conversation, it is basically to notice my own attachment to negotiation of cultural identity as the participants attend to their responses and the impact of these on the interaction. With this conversational and co-constructed style of knowledge making, a more democratic position was created, and as it were,

sitting beside each other and interchangeably deliberating on these issues enhanced freedom and mutuality. In this type of situational interaction, neither the interviewer nor the interviewee is superior to each other, as no one is positioned as an overall knowledge bank on the issues beyond their own meaning under discourse.

For example, the participants' experience of their own *negotiation* and *connection* raised the tensions that become apparent in discussing sensitive issue as identity and belonging. It has the potential for addressing the problems earlier discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, of putting together compromise with improved understanding. The interactional style of jointly exploring these issues is also accompanied by the interviewers' construction of gradually building knowledge that showcase theorised aspect of the study without revealing my intentions to the participants. One fundamental benefit here lies in placing theories and models of earlier gained knowledge under scrutiny, with the aim of considering its appropriateness through the lens of participants contribution which can mostly be achieved co-constructively.

The young people of African heritage are part of the multiple and emerging cultural practices usually intersecting and intertwining with the Australian space, but we need to acknowledge that the collection of people comprising any culture will encompass the powerful and the gate-keeper. The young people in this situation are not only "tangled up in one another" (Boyd, 2015, p. 9) but live entangled continually, an experience through which negotiation becomes inevitable. For clarity, when Australian Prime Ministers give their speeches in the parliament, there is a likelihood that those speeches might have been constructed with a politicised construction of the Australian populace and their specific cultural practices in mind. Those speeches, however, are now interpreted within and possibly beyond the boundaries of Australia. Not everyone relates to the constructions of so-called Australianness portrayed and

it is unclear who is intended to fit into the panoramic 'culture' imagined or the speech delivered by politicians.

This study grappled with the dilemma of history, real-life situations and the question of what can be regarded as real. Therefore, before arriving at the singular question guiding this study, I conceptualised and raised a sequence of questions:

- What does it mean to call a place a home or to belong?
- Why might calling a place home in any context be a matter of importance to educational success of the African Australians?
- To what extent does the influence of belonging on young people of African heritage shape the participant's everyday realities of articulating their identity?
- How can we enhance our understanding of identity negotiation and cultural identity questions in Australia?
- How do the connections between the social belonging of African Australians' prior life experiences and learning and their present express themselves?
- What is the extent of their success or failure in negotiating belonging in the face of stiff educational demands?
- Is the sacrifice they make commensurate to the outcome of their success if any, and is it worth all the effort?

The list of these generative questions is endless, but these lines of enquiry assisted in re-orienting the direction of the study.

Pragmatically, I offer an excerpt from my own transcripts to showcase interactional style in order to make the discussion less abstract. In this example, my speech is accentuated, and there is some shared laughter in the process. This underlisted interactional construction was a

conversation between one of the participants [Marina] and the interviewer during the process of constructing knowledge;

> Lekan: *Do you think I'm going to ask difficult questions [chuckle, both smile)*
>
> Marina: *No, I'm not sure, …I don't know, but that's okay.*
>
> Lekan: *Don't stress the question I'm asking revolves around what you have read in the information sheet.*
>
> Marina: *I am up for it, bring it on.*
>
> Lekan: *So, can you tell me a bit about yourself?*
>
> Marina: *I am Marina, a university student studying Bachelor of Arts and I like performing arts and teaching as well*
>
> Lekan: *That is interesting, so do I. I love teaching as well, I guess is the master of all crafts. But how did you get started in WEYA?*

In addition, exploring the unfamiliar territory of the participants' individual stories enhanced the realisation that this enquiry began in the actualities of the young peoples' lives with a focus on how they negotiate culture. This study demonstrated that interstitial culture like hybridity, third space, and permeable space provided, and continue to provide, young African Australians with new opportunities, offering them platforms to re/negotiate their identity. These groups of participants provided the necessary impetus and motivation for understanding the nuances of hierarchies of belonging and identity negotiation. Because negotiation is involved, interstitial cultures have different characteristic features and manifestations compared to the unentangled cultural practices of an in-between spaces.

Furthermore, this study has built on Bhabha's concept of hybridity and interstitial space through the theorisation of *permeability*. The idea of permeability allowed me to deconstruct

the inseparability of culture and identity and to anatomise young African Australian's negotiation of how the past challenges and the present has assisted in the emergence of newness and becoming. The stories show progress to true agency. I have considered how the subjects are put into compartments within society and how agentive structure of art allows them to resist categorisation in different sites and at different times.

This thesis has contributed to the investigation and understanding of how the participants continued to inhabit somewhere in the middle. This study suggested that negotiated identities are restructured based on negotiated apparatuses, especially within the permeable space. The narratives contained evidence of the entangled structure of the participants' negotiation within changing cultures and the contingent ontologies within their worlds. This can be a sustainable resource that can contribute to the understanding of former refugees while also widening Australia's capacity to engage more productively.

8.8.1   Limitations of this Study

As acknowledged in the introductory section, there is no evidence to suggest that African Australian are the problem to social belonging in Australia. Therefore, this study may have been adequately strengthened using mixed methods and the compilation of statistical data to compare the experiences of African Australians with other young Australians. While this study cannot be said to be statistically representative yet, it remains a quintessence of common stories shared by young people of colour. It should be noted that the participants whose experiences I drew on in this thesis were highly capable and knowledgeable communicator especially about their experience of exclusion and racism in Australia.

This study works with only 5 young people of African Australian descent who are all former refugee but now reside in Melbourne. As such, the results cannot be considered as a general commentary or complete representation on all young former refugees who have resettled across

Australia or in other Western countries. Besides, the data collected are not expected to remain the same but as at the time of data gathering, the following data in this study are evidence of their lived experiences in Australia.

In addition, as the participants grow older, these experiences are bound to change even as their circumstances changes. For instance, one of the participants Marina, recently got admission into the University to study a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Art. This established the fluidity of an individual identity that is never fixed but always in motion, in the form of a phase/level transitioning for Marina.

I acknowledged that there are more males' participants in this study than female participants. Firstly, the researcher is a male but beyond the gender issue is the number of young former African refugees that are available and willing to participate in the interview process. Consequently, the findings of identity articulation and connection issues with the African Australian participants in this study are subjective profoundly around male perspectives.

The study also limits itself to participants that had been resettled in Australia under the Offshore Humanitarian Entrant Program (OHEP). By implication, this means that the participants had been nominated with refugee status prior to their arrival in Australia under the Humanitarian Entrant visa program. The choice of working with the participants from WEYA was more of a logical and logistical negotiation. The study engaged participants with profound knowledge around exclusion, different histories and biographies in terms of their lived experiences within the interstice.

8.9   Recommendations for Future Study

The study on identity negotiation of African Australians and the notion of their belonging in Australia is limited in scope to the participants engaged in this study. Within the context of the

study presented here, I have identified two areas of interest which have fallen outside the scope of the present study. These areas need to be taken up for further comprehensive investigation to build upon existing finding in this thesis. The first area of interest concerns the concept of liminality and its nuances. Although, reference was made to liminal space, it was only briefly addressed compared to the idea of interstitial space that this study employed in deconstructing 'in-between space'. In considering the liminal dimension and negotiation that occurs within an organisation that African Australians are involved in, it would enhance a more constructive and insightful understanding of how social location shapes belonging.

In addition, the viewing of connecting organisations such as WEYA in this study as a liminal space might provide additional theoretical and analytical frameworks for unpacking Bhabha's (1994/2012) interstitial space, location of culture and identity negotiation. The adaptation of Frantz Fanon's (1952) work on *White Mask Black Skin* by several scholars (such as Bhabha, 1994/2012; Said, 1978; 1995; 2000; Spivak, 2010) has shown how useful the concept of liminality is for theorising about identities in transformation and shedding light beyond binary opposition (of 'us' versus 'them') on the way in which social structures affect identity negotiation and belonging. Further research exploring the strategies employed by young people who are still in the high school and by extension, considering how the parents of the young African Australians negotiate belonging and connect in private and public life experience to Australia will be a worthwhile study in the right direction.

Finally, exploring the views of the community leaders of African Australians may possibly accord future study the needed evocation in investigating further on identity negotiation and belonging in Australia. While the comparison of subjectivity construction was minimally considered in this study, it could be explored on a large scale among participants from different African countries. Moreover, a research study comparing how indigenous Australian and

African Australians who had formerly been refugees (re)negotiate their identities and social belonging could be investigated using in-depth interviews and observation to elicit information from the potential participants. To conclude this study, I would, however, argue that the way in which identity and belonging is navigated by African Australians, and the way in which they reconstruct and rearticulate their stories, both in educational and social settings can offer potential insight for educators, professionals and trainers seeking to be more inclusive in their approach to engaging the young African Australians.

References

Abkhezr, P., McMahon, M., Glasheen, K., & Campbell, M. (2018). Finding voice through narrative storytelling: An exploration of the career development of young African females with refugee backgrounds. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. *105*, 17–30. DOI.10.1016/j.jvb.2017.09.007

Abur, W., & Spaaij, R. (2016). Settlement and employment experiences of South Sudanese people from refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. *Australasian Review of African Studies, 37*(2), 107–128. DOI:10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/107-128

Achebe, C. (1971). *Things fall apart*. London: Heinemann.

Agbenyega, J., & Klibthong, S. (2013). Whole school initiative: Has inclusive education gone astray? *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, *9*(1), 3–22.

Alvarez, S. P., Canagarajah, S., Lee, E., Lee, J. W., & Rabbi, S. (2017). Translingual practice, ethnic identities, and voice in writing. *Crossing divides: Exploring translingual writing pedagogies and programs*, 31–48. Colorado: Utah State University Press. DOI.10.7330/9781607326205.c002

Alvesson, M. (2010). *Interpreting interviews*. London: Sage Publications.

Anderson. B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (New ed.). New York: Verso Books.

Anderson, K., & Taylor, A. (2005). Exclusionary politics and the question of national belonging: Australian ethnicities in 'multiscalar' focus. *Ethnicities, 5*(4), 460–485.

Andreasson, T. M. (2016). *Belonging in a contested national space: Men from refugee backgrounds and their experiences in Australia.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University of Western Sydney, NSW.

Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging – An analytical framework. *Geography Compass, 4*(6), 644–659. DOI:10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2002). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London: Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2013). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* London: Routledge.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2017). Migration, Australia, 2015─16 (3412.0). Canberra, ACT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3412.0

Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2017). Migrant Data Matrices, (No 3415.0). Canberra, ACT: Author. Retrieved from www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3415.0

Baak, M., (2011). Murder, community talk, and belonging: An exploration of Sudanese community responses to murder in Australia. *African Identities*, *9*(4), 417–434. doi:10.1080/14725843.2011.614415

Back, L., Sinha, S., & Bryan, W. C. (2012). New hierarchies of belonging. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *15*(2), 139–154. doi:10.1177/1367549411432030

Baldwin-Edwards, M. (2005). *Migration in the Middle East and the Mediterranean*: Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *28*(3), 801–831. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/345321

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*: Duke University Press, Durham.

Barad, K. (2011). Erasers and erasures: Pinch's unfortunate 'uncertainty principle'. *Social Studies of Science, 41*(3), 443–454. doi:10.1177/0306312711406317.

Barad, K. (2013). Ma(r)king time: Material entanglements and re-memberings: Cutting together-apart. In P. R. Carlile, D. Nicolini, A. Langley, & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *How matter matters: Objects, artifacts, and materiality in Organization Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (pp. 16–31). DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199671533.001.0001

Barad, K. (2014). Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax, 20*(3), 168–187. https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.927623

Battro, A. M. (2010). From Malraux's imaginary museum to virtual museum. In: R. Parry (Ed.), *Museums in a digital age*. New York, NY: Routledge. 136–147.

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*(6), 697–712. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. E. (2006). Immigrant youth: acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*: *An International Review*, *55*(3), 303-332. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2006.00256.x

Berthold, S. M., Kong, S., Mollica, R. F., Kuoch, T., Scully, M., & Franke, T. (2014). Comorbid mental and physical health and health access in Cambodian refugees in the US. *Journal of Community Health*, *39*(6), 1045-1052. doi:10.1007/s10900-014-9861-7

Betts, K., & Birrell, B. (2007). Making Australian citizenship mean more. *People and Place, 15*(1), 45–61.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The location of culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. K. (2013). Introduction: Narrating the nation. In: Homi K. Bhabha (Ed.), *Nation and narration* (pp. 1–7), New York, NY: Routledge.

Blair, K., Dunn, K. M., Kamp, A., & Alam, O. (2017). *Challenging racism project 2015–16 National survey report.* Penrith, NSW.: Western Sydney University. Retrieved from https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1202226/Challenging _Racism_Report_3.pdf

Block, K., Riggs, E., & Haslam, N. (2013). Values and vulnerabilities: The ethics of research with refugees and asylum seekers. *Values and Vulnerabilities: The Ethics of Research with Refugees and Asylum Seekers* xvii, Toowong, QLD: Australian Academic Press.

Board, A. S. I. (2012). *Social inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring*. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Bodén, L. (2015). The presence of school absenteeism: Exploring methodologies for researching the material-discursive practice of school absence registration. *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies, 15*(3), 192–202. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708614557325

Bongiorno, F., & Eklund, E. (2014). The problem of belonging: Contested country in Australian local history. *New Scholar: An International Journal of the Humanities, Creative Arts and Social Sciences, 3*(1), 39–54.

Bourke, L. (2016, May 18). Peter Dutton says, 'illiterate and innumerate' refugees would take Australian jobs. *The Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved from https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/peter-dutton-says-illiterate-and-innumerate-refugees-would-take-australian-jobs-20160517-goxhj1.html

Boyd, D. (2015). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Braidotti, R. (2013). Posthuman humanities. *European Educational Research Journal, 12*(1), 1–19. doi:10.2304/eerj.2013.12.1.1

Braidotti, R. (2016). Posthuman Critical Theory. In D. Banerji; & M. R. Paranjape (Eds.), *Critical posthumanism and planetary futures*. 13–32. New Delhi: Springer India. DOI 10.1007/978-81-322-3637-5_2

Bronski, M., Pellegrini, A., & Amico, M. (2013). *'You can tell just by looking': And 20 other myths about LGBT life and people* (Vol. 9): Boston: Beacon Press.

Brooks, R., Te Riele, K., & Maguire, M. (2014). *Ethics and education research*: Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Browne, P. (2006). *The longest journey: Resettling refugees from Africa*. Sydney, UNSW Press.

Butcher, M., & Dickens, L. (2016). Spatial dislocation and affective displacement: Youth perspectives on gentrification in London. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *40*(4), 800–816. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12432

Butler, J. (2011). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Buttler, M., Argoon, A., & White, A. (2016, March 15). "We Will Get Tough on Thugs." *Herald Sun*. http://www.heraldsun.com.au.

Cassirer, E. (2017). Pathways to methodologies: Semiotics of knowledge construction. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *A guided science*: *History of psychology in the mirror of its making* (pp. 195–228). New York, NY: Routledge.

Chase, S. (2011). Still a field in the making. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 421–434). Thousand Oaks, California, Sage.

Chatterjee, A. (2016). Migrants at sea: Case studies of Syrians and Rohingyas. *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, *12*(2), 58–70. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2016.1239358.

Chomsky, N. (2014). *Aspects of the theory of syntax* (Vol. 11). Cambridge: Massachusetts MIT Press.

Clark, A., & Ashton, P. (Eds.). (2013). *Australian history now*. Sydney, UNSW Press. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vkq7z

Clarke, S. (2008). Culture and identity. In T. Bennett, & J. Frow, (Eds.). (2008) *Handbook of cultural analysis*. London: Sage, 510–529. http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/12508

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). The ethics of educational and social research. In *Research methods in education* (pp. 99–128). London: Routledge.

Cohen, N., & Arieli, T. (2011). Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling. *Journal of Peace Research, 48*(4), 423–435. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343311405698

Colic-Peisker, V., & Farquharson, K. (2011). Introduction: A new era in Australian multiculturalism? The need for critical interrogation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 32*(6), 579–586. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2011.618104

Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2008). 'Being black in Australia: A case study of intergroup relations', *Race & Class*, *49*(4), 38–56.

Cook, H. (2017, March 31). Hair's a key to 'identity' but black students are being told to play it straight. *The Age*. Retrieved from http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/hairs-a-key-to-identity-but-black-students-are-being-told-to-play-it-straight-20170330-gva3lf.html

Coombs, D. S., Lambert, C. A., Cassilo, D., & Humphries, Z. (2017). Kap takes a knee: A media framing analysis of Colin Kaepernick's anthem protest. In B. R. Yook., Y. G. Ji & Z. F. Chen (Eds.), *Looking back, looking forward: 20 Years of developing theory and practice* (pp. 48–62). *20th International Public Relations Research Conference* Orlando, Florida. Retrieved from https://www.instituteforpr.org//wp-content/uploads/IPRRC20-proceedings_Final.pdf#page=49

Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S. M., & Barnett, A. G. (2010). Longing to belong: Social inclusion and wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds in the first three years in Melbourne, Australia. *Social Science & Medicine*, *71*(8), 1399–1408.

Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S. M., McMichael, C., & Sampson, R. (2017). Predictors of secondary school completion among refugee youth 8 to 9 years after resettlement in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *18*(3), 791–805.

Correa-Velez, I., Spaaij, R., & Upham, S. (2013). 'We are not here to claim better services than any other': Social exclusion among men from refugee backgrounds in urban and regional Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26(2), 163–186. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fes003.

Crane, E. (2016, April 11). At least 24 people charged after the violent Sudanese Apex gang riot which terrified Melbourne's Moomba festival – including children as young as 14. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3532965/At-24-people-charged-violent-Sudanese Apex-gang-riot-Melbourne-s-Moomba-festival.html

Crawley, H., Duvell, F., Sigona, N., McMahon, S., & Jones, K. (2016). Unpacking a rapidly changing scenario: Migration flows, routes and trajectories across the Mediterranean. Migration Crisis (MEDMIG) Research Brief No. 1. http://www.medmig.info/research-brief-01-unpacking-a-rapidly-changing-scenario/

Crawley, H., & Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(1), 48–64.

Cresswell, T. (2014). *Place: An introduction*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Daskalaki, M., Butler, C. L., & Petrovic, J. (2016). Somewhere in-between: Narratives of place, identity, and translocal work. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 25*(2), 184–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492615592181

Davies, B. (2014). Reading anger in early childhood intra-actions: A diffractive analysis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(6), 734–741. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414530256

De Gioia, K. (2017). Giving voice to families from immigrant and refugee backgrounds during transition to school. In: Dockett, S., Griebel, W., & Perry B. (Eds.) *Families and transition to school*: *International perspectives on early childhood education and development* (pp. 37–49). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Department of Immigration and Border Protection, (2013). The Department of Immigration and Border Protection *Fact sheet 60 – Australian refugee and humanitarian programme, Commonwealth Government*, Canberra, ACT. Retrieved from https://www.immi.gov.au/media/factsheets/60refugee.htm.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, (2008). *Annual report 2007–08*. (No. 2.1.2) Humanitarian settlement services, Commonwealth Government, Canberra.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, (2011a). Refugee and humanitarian issues: Australia's response, Commonwealth Government, Canberra.

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, (2011b). *A significant contribution*: *The economic, social and civic contributions of first and second-generation humanitarian entrants: summary of findings*. (2011). [Canberra]. https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2014/economic-social-civic-contributions-booklet2011.pdf

Department of Immigration and Border Protection, (2016). The Department of Immigration and Border Protection Annual Report 2015-2016. Retrieved from https://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/reports/annual/annual-report-2015-16.

Derrida, J. (2016). *Of grammatology*: Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.

Due, C. (2008). 'Who are strangers?': 'Absorbing' Sudanese refugees into a white Australia, *Australian Critical Race & Whiteness Studies Association*. ACRAWSA *e-journal*, *4*(1), 1–13.

Dumenden, I. E. (2012). *The soft bigotry of low expectations: The refugee student and mainstream schooling.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), La Trobe University.

Dussart, F., & Poirier, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Entangled territorialities: Negotiating Indigenous lands in Australia and Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dustmann, C., Fasani, F., Frattini, T., Minale, L., & Schönberg, U. (2017). On the economics and politics of refugee migration. *Economic policy*, *32*(91), 497–550.

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods 8*(1), 54-63.

Earnest, J., Joyce, A., de Mori, G., & Silvagni, G. (2010). Are universities responding to the needs of students from refugee backgrounds? *Australian Journal of Education, 54*(2), 155–174.

Ecclestone, K., & Goodley, D. (2016). Political and educational springboard or straitjacket? Theorising post/human subjects in an age of vulnerability. *Discourse: Studies in the*

Cultural   Politics   of   Education,   *37*(2),   175–188.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.927112

Edgeworth, K. (2015). Black bodies, White rural spaces: Disturbing practices of unbelonging
for 'refugee' students. *Critical Studies in Education*, *56*(3), 351–365.
http://dx.do.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.956133

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white mask*. New York: Grove Press.

Farnsworth, S. (2016, December 4). "Young South Sudanese 'constantly stopped' by police, as
community grapples with Apex stigma." *ABC News*. Retrieved from
http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/young-south-sudanese-constantly-stopped-
by-police/8078642

Farnsworth, S., & Wright, P. (2016, December 6). "Victoria youth crime: Statistics raise
questions about calls to deport youth offenders." *ABC News*. Retrieved from
http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-04/statistics-raise-questions-about-calls-to-
deport-youth-offenders/8087410

Farouque, F., Petrie, A., & Miletic, D. (2007, October 2). 'Minister speaks on Africans not
adjusting to Australian life', *The Age*, p. 2.

Ferrando, F. (2013). Posthumanism, transhumanism, antihumanism, metahumanism, and new
materialisms: Differences and relations. *Existenz*, *8*(2), 26–32.
https://existenz.us/volumes/Vol.8-2Ferrando.pdf

Fletcher, J. (2015). Dutton can 'play God 'with refugees' lives. *Green Left Weekly*, (1046), p.
10.

Florian, L., Black-Hawkins, K., & Rouse, M. (2016). *Achievement and inclusion in schools*.
New York, NY: Routledge.

Forrest, J., & Dunn, K. (2013). Cultural diversity, racialisation and the experience of racism in
rural Australia: The South Australian case. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *30*, 1–9.

Forrest, J., Lean, G., & Dunn, K. (2016). Challenging racism through schools: Teacher attitudes to cultural diversity and multicultural education in Sydney, Australia. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(3), 618–638.

Foucault, M. (1994). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (2013). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London, Routledge.

Fozdar, F., & Hartley, L. (2013). Refugee resettlement in Australia: What we know and need to know. *Refugee Survey Quarterly, 32*(3), 23–51.

Fraser, J., & Voyageur, E. (2017). Crafting culturally safe learning spaces: A story of collaboration between an educational institution and two first nation communities. *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*, *2*(1), 157–166.

Furham, A. (2012). Culture shock. *Journal of Psychology and Education*, 7(1), 9–22.

Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2013). Widening participation in Australia in higher education. *Higher Education Funding Council for England; CFE Research,* Leicester, England. Retrieved from *http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30064915*

Gifford, S. M., Bakopanos, C., Kaplan, I., & Correa-Velez, I. (2007). Meaning or measurement? Researching the social contexts of health and settlement among newly-arrived refugee youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *20*(3), 414–440. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem004

Gough, J. (2017). Brexit, xenophobia and left strategy now. *Capital & Class*, *41*(2), 366–372. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816817711558e

Grabska, K. (2010). Lost boys, invisible girls: Stories of Sudanese marriages across borders. *Gender, Place & Culture, 17*(4), 479–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2010.485839

Griffiths, M. R. (2012). The white gaze and its artifacts: Governmental belonging and non-indigenous evaluation in a (post)-settler colony. *Postcolonial studies*, *15*(4), 415–435. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2013.777993

Grossman, M. (2013). *Entangled subjects*: *Indigenous/Australian cross-cultures of talk, text, and modernity*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality*: Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Hage, G. (2014). Continuity and change in Australian racism. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *35*(3), 232–237. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2014.899948

Haggis, J., & Schech, S. (2010). Refugees, settlement processes and citizenship making: An Australian case study. *National Identities, 12*(4), 365–379. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2010.520972

Hall, S. (2000). Who needs 'identity'?. In: Evans, J., Du Gay, P., & Redman, P. (Eds.), *Identity: a reader*, (pp. 15–30). London: Sage Publications.

Hall, S. (2000). Cultural identity and diaspora. In N. Mirzoeff (2000), *Diaspora and visual culture* (pp. 21–33). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. (1996). *Questions of cultural identity*. London: Sage.

Hanson-Easey, S., & Augoustinos, M. (2010). Out of Africa: Accounting for refugee policy and the language of causal attribution. *Discourse & Society*, *21*(3), 295–323.

Hanson-Easey, S., Augoustinos, M., & Moloney, G. (2014). 'They're all tribals': Essentialism, context and the discursive representation of Sudanese refugees. *Discourse & Society*, *25*(3), 362–382.

Haraway, D. (1997). *Modest-witness@second-millennium*. *Femaleman©_meets_oncomouse™*. *Feminism and technoscience*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Harris, A. (2010). 'Too tall, too dark, too something: New racism in Australian schools'. In M. Broderick & A. Traverso (Eds.), *Trauma, media, art*: *New perspectives*, (pp. 211–226) Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

Harris, A. (2013). *Young people and everyday multiculturalism*. New York: Routledge.

Harris, A. (2016). "Belonging and the uses of difference: Young people in Australian urban multiculture." *Social Identities Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture, 22*(4), 359–375. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2015.1113128

Hebbani, A., Obijiofor, L., & Bristed, H. (2010). Intercultural communication challenges confronting female Sudanese former refugees in Australia. *Australasian Review of African Studies, 31*(1), 37–61.

Herz, M., & Lalander, P. (2017). Being alone or becoming lonely? The complexity of portraying 'unaccompanied children' as being alone in Sweden. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2017.1306037

Hodge, B., & O'Carroll, J. (2006). *Borderwork in multicultural Australia*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

hooks, b. (2009). *Belonging: A culture of place*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Huddart, D. (2007). Hybridity and cultural rights: Inventing global citizenship. In J. Kuortti & J. Nyman (Ed.), *Reconstructing hybridity: Post-colonial studies in transition*, 21–41. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vu/reader.action?docID=556778&query

Hughes, K., Corcoran, T., & Slee, R. (2016). Health-inclusive higher education: Listening to students with disabilities or chronic illnesses. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *35*(3), 488–501. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2015.1107885

Huijser, H. (2014). Australian Idol versus Cronulla: Whither the postcolonising nation? *MEDIANZ: Media Studies Journal of Aotearoa New Zealand, 10*(2), 131–143.

Husserl, E. (2006/1911). *The basic problems of phenomenology: From the lectures, winter semester, 1910–1911*, Collected Works, Vol 12. (I. Farin & J. G. Hart, Trans.). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Hutchinson, M., & Dorsett, P. (2012). What does the literature say about resilience in refugee people? Implications for practice. *Journal of Social Inclusion, 3*(2), 55–78.

Iltis, T. (2015). Secrecy hides abuse of refugees and government criminality. *Green Left Weekly*, (1056), p. 10.

Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash, *Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University.

Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Jackson, N. (2017). Diversity in Australia. In N. Pelling & L. Burton (2017), *Abnormal psychology in context: The Australian and New Zealand handbook*, 10–33. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Jakubowicz, A. (2009). The risk of diversity. *Around the Globe, 6*(1), 25–33. http://search.informit.com.au.wallaby.vu.edu.au:2048/documentSummary;dn=332288444251635;res=IELHSS

Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social identity*. New York: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/dateien/dateien_studium/Archiv/2015_HS_Furholt/Literatur/%5BRichard_Jenkins%5D_Social_Identity,_2nd_edition_(Ke(BookZZ.org).pdf

Johnson, J. M. (2002). In-depth interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, (pp. 103–119). New York, NY, Sage Publication.

Jung, Y. (2015). A new culture of learning: Cultivating the imagination for a world of constant change. *Studies in Art Education, 56*(3), 281–283.

Kamali, L. (2016). *The cultural memory of Africa in African American and black British fiction, 1970-2000: Specters of the shore*: New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kamp, A., Alam, O., Blair, K., & Dunn, K. (2017). Australians' views on cultural diversity, nation and migration, 2015-16. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *9*(3), 61–83. http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v9i3.5635

Kane, D., Tiell, B., & In, I. A. (2017). Application of normative ethics to explain Colin Kaepernick's silent protest in the NFL. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 32(1), 1–14. doi: 10.1111/japp.12103. http://thesportjournal.org/article/application-of-normative-ethics-to-explain-colin-kaepernicks-silent-protest-in-the-nfl/

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work 45*(5), 439–447.

Keddie, A. (2012a). Pursuing justice for refugee students: Addressing issues of cultural (mis)recognition. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16*(12), 1295–1309. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2011.560687

Keddie, A. (2012b). Refugee education and justice issues of representation, redistribution and recognition. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 42*(2), 197–212 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2012.676624.

Kelman, D. (2008). Narrative, dialogue and resistance: Making meaning through drama with young people 'at risk'. In A. O' Brien & K. Donelan (Ed.), *The arts and youth at risk: Global and local challenges,* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 93–107.

Kelman, D. (2011). 'Who told you there was meaning?': Mimesis and narrative complexity. *NJ*, *34*(1), 9–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/14452294.2011.11649527

Kelman, D., & Rafe, J. (2014). 'Come you spirits': Shakespeare, mythology and process drama. *English in Australia*, *49*(3), 57–65. http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=911087578781151;res=IELHSS

Kennan, M. A., Lloyd, A., Qayyum, A., & Thompson, K. (2011). Settling in: The relationship between information and social inclusion. *Australia Academic & Research Libraries, 42*(3), 191–210.

Kim, I. H., & Noh, S. (2016). Racial/ethnic variations in the main and buffering effects of ethnic and nonethnic supports on depressive symptoms among five ethnic immigrants groups in Toronto. *Ethnicity & Health*, *21*(3), 215–232. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2015.1061101

Knott, E. (2017). Nationalism and belonging: Introduction. *Nations and Nationalism*, 23: 220–226. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/nana.12297

Lanas, M., Rautio, P., Koskela, A., Kinnunen, S., Viljamaa, E., & Juutinen, J. (2017). Engaging with theoretical diffraction in teacher education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *38*(4), 530–541. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1126917

Land, H., & Linsk, N. (2013). HIV stigma and discrimination: Enduring issues. *Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services, 12*(1), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/15381501.2013.765717

Lather, P. (2016). Top ten+ list: (Re) thinking Ontology in (post) qualitative research. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies, 16*(2), 125–131. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616634734

Lather, P., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). Post-qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *26*(6), 629–633. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.788752

La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, (2009). Between belonging and discrimination: The experiences of African Australians from refugee backgrounds, Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre. Retrieved from http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/2136/1/Between_belonging_discrimination.

Lau, K. Y. (2016). *Phenomenology and intercultural understanding: Toward a new cultural flesh* (Vol. 87). Switzerland: Springer.

Lawrence, R., & Gibson, C. (2007). Obliging Indigenous citizens? Shared responsibility agreements in Australia Aboriginal communities. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (4–5), 650–671. doi:10.1080/09502380701279002

Lee, Y. (2012). *Modern education, textbooks, and the image of a nation*. London: Routledge.

Lenz Taguchi, H., & Palmer, A. (2013). A more 'livable' school? A diffractive analysis of the performative enactments of girls' ill-/well-being with (in) school environments. *Gender and Education*, *25*(6), 671–687. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2013.829909

Lester, J. (2015). Cultures of work-life balance in higher education: A case of fragmentation. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 8*(3), 139–156. http://0-dx.doi.org.library.vu.edu.au/10.1037/a0039377

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research,* (pp. 97–128). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Loomba, A. (2015). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. London: Routledge Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/id/10070543.

Lopes, G. H, Ibaseta, N., & Guichardon, P. (2016). How can osmosis and solute diffusion be coupled for the simultaneous measurement of the solvent and solute permeabilities of membranes? *Desalination, 387*, 61–74. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.desal.2016.03.006

Lozano-Verduzco, I. (2015). Desire, emotions and identity of gay men in Mexico City. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *16*(4), 448–458. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038833

Lucas, S. R. (2014). Beyond the existence proof: Ontological conditions, epistemological implications, and in-depth interview research. *Quality & Quantity, 48*(1), 387–408. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-012-9775-3

MacDonald, F. (2017). Positioning young refugees in Australia: Media discourse and social exclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–14. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1350324

Mackay, M. (2017). Identity formation: Professional development in practice strengthens a sense of self. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(6), 1056–1070. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1076780

Mackenzie, C., McDowell, C., & Pittaway, E. (2007). Beyond 'do no harm': The challenge of constructing ethical relationships in refugee research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *20*(2), 299–319. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem008

MacLure, M. (2013). The wonder of data. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, *13*(4), 228–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708613487863

Majavu, M. (2017). *Uncommodified blackness: The African male experience in Australia and New Zealand*. Switzerland: Springer.

Major, J., Wilkinson, J., & Langat, K. (2013). Sudanese young people of African refugee background in rural and regional Australia: Social capital and educational success. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education, 23*(3), 95–105.

Markus, A. (2013). *Mapping social cohesion: The Scanlon foundation surveys national report*. Caulfield East: ACJC, Monash University, Australia. Retrieved from http://www.awecc.org.au/uploads/1/1/4/5/114540309/scanlonfoundation_mappingsocialcohesion_2018.pdf

Marlowe, J., Harris, A., & Lyons, T. (Eds.). (2014). *South Sudanese diaspora in Australia and New Zealand: Reconciling the past with the present*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Marx, E. (2011). *Breaking through culture shock: What you need to succeed in international business*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Massey, D. (2013). *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Massey, A. (1999). Methodological triangulation, or how to get lost without being found out, In Walford, G., & Massey, A. (ed.) *Explorations in Methodology (Studies in Educational Ethnography, Volume 2)* Stamford: JAI Press, 183–197.

Matthews, J. (2008). Schooling and settlement: Refugee education in Australia. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 18*(1), 31–45. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09620210802195947

Maton, K. (2014). Habitus. In: Grenfell, M (Ed.). *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*, (pp. 49–65). New York: Routledge.

Mawere, M., & Mubaya, T. R. (2016). *African philosophy and thought systems: A search for a culture and philosophy of belonging*. Cameroun: Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group.

May, V. (2011). Self, belonging and social change. *Sociology*, 45(3), 363–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511399624

Mazzei, L. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2012). Complicating voice in a refusal to 'Let participants speak for themselves'. *Qualitative Inquiry, 18*(9), 745–751. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800412453017

McGuire, D., & Gubbins, C. (2010). The slow death of formal learning: A polemic. *Human Resource Development Review, 9*(3), 249–265. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1534484310371444

McPherson, M. (2010). 'I integrate, therefore I am': Contesting the normalizing discourse of integrationism through conversations with refugee women. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 23*(4), 546–570. https://doi.org/10.l093/Jrs/feq040

Mestan, K. (2008). *Given the chance: An evaluation of an employment and education pathways program for refugees*. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Brunswick. Retrieved from www.bsl.org.au

Miller, D. (2017). Strangers in our midst: An overview. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, *20*(6), 707–711. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2016.1231750

Miller, E., Ziaian, T., & Esterman, A. (2018). Australian school practices and the education experiences of students with a refugee background: a review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *22*(4), 339–359. doi:10.1080/13603116.2017.1365955

Mills, C. W. (2000). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Milton, A., Rahman, M., Hussain, S., Jindal, C., Choudhury, S., Akter, S., … & Efird, J. T. (2017). Trapped in statelessness: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *14*(8), doi:10.3390/ijerph14080942.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2003). I still call Australia home: Indigenous belonging and place in a white postcolonizing society. In Ahmed, S., Castañeda, C., Fortier, A. & Sheller, M. (Eds.), *Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migration* (pp. 23–40). New York: Berg Publishers.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2006). Towards a new research agenda? Foucault, Whiteness and Indigenous sovereignty. *Journal of Sociology, 42*(4), 383–395.

Naidoo, L. (2015). Educating refugee-background students in Australian schools and universities. *Intercultural Education, 26*(3), 210–217. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2015.1048079.

Naidoo, L., Wilkinson, J., Langat, K., Adoniou, M., Cunneen, R., & Bolger, D. (2015). *Case study report: supporting school-university pathways for refugee students' access and participation in tertiary education*. Retrieved from http://www.uws.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/830864/Case_Study_Report.

Ndhlovu, F (2009). 'The limitations of language and nationality as prime markers of African diaspora identities in the state of Victoria', *African Identities, 7*(1), 17–32.

Ndhlovu, F., & Willoughby, L. (2017). Migration, heritage languages, and changing demographics in Australia. In Kagan, O. E., Carreira, M. M., & Hitchens Chik, C. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of heritage language education: From innovation to program building* (pp. 22–32). New York: Routledge.

Neumann, K., Gifford, S. M., Lems, A., & Scherr, S. (2014). Refugee settlement in Australia: policy, scholarship and the production of knowledge, 1952– 2013. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *35*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2013.864629

Ngum Chi Watts, M., Liamputtong, P., & McMichael, C. (2015). *Early motherhood: A qualitative study exploring the experiences of African Australian teenage mothers in greater Melbourne, Australia*. http://dx.doi.org.wallaby.vu.edu.au:2048/10.1186/s12889-015-2215-2

Nicoll, F. (2008). Consuming pathologies: The Australians against Indigenous sovereignties. In: Moreton-Robinson, (Ed). *Transnational whiteness matters*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 57–79.

Noble, G. (2005). The discomfort of strangers: Racism, incivility and ontological security in a relaxed and comfortable nation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 26*(1–2), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860500074128

Noble, G. (2009). Where the bloody hell are we? Multicultural manners in a world of hyperdiversity. In Noble, G. (Ed.), *Lines in the sand: The Cronulla riots, multiculturalism and national belonging*. (pp. 1–22). Institute of Criminology Press, Sydney, NSW.

Norman, J. (Political reporter). (2017). *Multiculturalism will only work if all Australians sign up, Coalition's first policy statement says*. [Radio programme]. Guest speaker Zed Seselja NSW: ABC News. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-20/policy statement-on-multiculturalism-calls-for-unity/8367844

Nunn, C. (2010). 'Spaces to speak: Challenging representations of Sudanese-Australians', *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 31*(2) 183–198.

Nwosu, O. C., & Barnes, S. L. (2014). Where 'difference is the norm': Exploring refugee student ethnic identity development, acculturation, and agency at Shaw Academy. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 27*(3), 434–456. https://0-doi-org.library.vu.edu.au/10.1093/jrs/fet050

Olagookun, O., & White, J. (2017). Including students from refugee backgrounds in Australian schools. In B. Whitburn and V. Plows (Eds.), *Disability Studies: Educating for inclusion* (pp. 95–105). Rotterdam: Sense. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-866-2_7.

O'Neill, M., & Hubbard, P. (2010). Walking, sensing, belonging: ethno-mimesis as performative praxis. *Visual Studies, 25*(1), 46–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725861003606878

Onsando, G., & Billett, S. (2017). Refugee immigrants' experiences of racism and racial discrimination at Australian TAFE institutes: a transformative psychosocial approach. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *69*(3), 333–350. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2017.1289552.

O'Reilly, K. (2009). Visual ethnography. *Key concepts in ethnography,* Los Angeles: Sage.

Osman, M., Hornblow, A., Macleod, S., & Coope, P. (2012). Christchurch earthquakes: How did former refugees cope? *The New Zealand Medical Journal (Online), 125*(1357), 113–121.

Oyserman, D. (2015). *Pathways to success through identity-based motivation*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283713289_Pathways_to_Success_Through_Identity-based_Motivation

Oyserman, D., Elmore, K., & Smith, G. (2012). Self, self-concept, and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 69–104). New York: Guilford Press.

Papastergiadis, N., & Trimboli, D. (2017). Aesthetic cosmopolitanism: The force of the fold in diasporic intimacy. *International Communication Gazette*, *79*(6/7), 564-583. doi:10.1177/1748048517727171

Parker, S. (2015). 'Unwanted invaders': The representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and Australian print media. *eSharp*, *23*, Myth and Nation.

Phillips, D. K., & Larson, M. L. (2012). The teacher–student writing conference entangled: Thinking data with material feminisms. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, *12*(3), 225–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708612440256

Pinson, H., & Arnot, M. (2007). Sociology of education and the wasteland of refugee education research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 28*(3), 399–407. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.wallaby.vu.edu.au:2048/stable/30036215

Pittaway, E., & Muli, C. (2009). *We have a voice, hear us: Settlement experiences of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa*. Centre for Refugee Research, Sydney, UNSW. Retrieved from http://www.apo.org.au/research/we-have-voice-hear-us-settlement-experiences-refugees-and-migrants-horn-africa

Pittaway, E., Muli, C., & Shteir, S. (2009). 'I Have a Voice--Hear Me!' Findings of an Australian Study Examining the Resettlement and Integration Experience of Refugees and Migrants from the Horn of Africa in Australia. *Refuge*, *26*(2), 133–146.

Polonsky, M. J., Ferdous, A. S., Renzaho, A. M., Waters, N., & McQuilten, Z. (2017). Factors leading to health care exclusion among African Refugees in Australia: The case of blood donation. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*. Retrieved from online journal https://doi.org/10.1509/jppm.13.036.

Popoviciu, L., Haywood, C., & Mac and Ghaill, M. (2006). The promise of post-structuralist methodology: Ethnographic representation of education and masculinity. *Ethnography and Education, 1*(3), 393–412. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17457820600836871

Preissle, J. (2006). Envisioning qualitative inquiry: A view across four decades. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 19*(6), 685–695. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600975701

Probyn, E. (1996). *Outside belongings*: New York: Routledge Psychology Press.

Pugh, K., Every, D., & Hattam, R. (2012). Inclusive education for students with refugee experience: Whole school reform in a South Australian primary school. *Australian Education Resources, 39*, 16. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s13384-011-0048-2

Quinn, N. (2014). Participatory action research with asylum seekers and refugees experiencing stigma and discrimination: the experience from Scotland. *Disability & Society*, *29*(1), 58–70. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.769863

Ramsay, G. (2017). Central African refugee women resettled in Australia: Colonial legacies and the civilising process. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *38*(2), 170–188. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2017.1289904

Refugee Council of Australia. (2015). *2014-15 annual report – Refugee Council of Australia.* Retrieved from https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/RCOA-Annual-Report-2015-WEB.pdf.

Reiner, A. W. (2010). *Literature review. Background paper for African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Human Rights Commission.

Reyes, R. C. (2016). Public space as contested space: The battle over the use, meaning and function of public space. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, *6*(3), 201. http://dx.doi.org/10.7763/IJSSH.2016.V6.643

Rishbeth, C., & Finney, N. (2006). Novelty and nostalgia in urban greenspace: Refugee perspectives. *Journal of Economic and Social Geogra*phy*, 97*(3), 281–295. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2006.00520.

Rumbaut, R. G. (2008). Reaping what you sow: Immigration, youth, and reactive ethnicity. *Applied Development Science*, *12*(2), 108–111. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10888690801997341

Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

Said, E. W. (1995). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. 1978. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

Said, E. W. (2000). Invention, memory, and place. *Critical Inquiry, 26*(2), 175–192.

Sampson, R. C., Gifford, S. M., & Taylor, S. (2016). The myth of transit: The making of a life by asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *42*(7), 1135–1152. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1130611

Schultheiss, D. E., & Davis, B. L. (2015). Immigrant workers: Career concerns and barriers. In P. J. Hartung, M. I., Savickas, & W. B. Walsh (Eds.). *APA handbook of career intervention* (pp. 259-277). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Sellberg, K., & Wånggren, L. (2016). *Corporeality and culture: Bodies in movement*. London: Routledge.

Shapiro, S. (2014). "Words That You Said Got Bigger": English Language Learners' Lived Experiences of Deficit Discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *48*(4), 386–406.

Sidhu, R., & Taylor, S. (2007). Educational provision for refugee youth in Australia: Left to chance? *Journal of Sociology, 43*(3), 283–300. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1440783307080107

Silove, D., Ventevogel, P., & Rees, S. (2017). The contemporary refugee crisis: An overview of mental health challenges. *World Psychiatry*, *16*(2), 130–139. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/wps.20438.

Skrbis, Z. (2006). Australians in Guantanamo Bay: Gradations of citizenship and the politics of belonging. In Yuval-Davis, N., Kannabiran, K., & Vieten, U. (Eds.). *The situated politics of belonging* (pp. 176–190). London: Sage Publications. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446213490.n13

Slee, R. (2013). Meeting some challenges of inclusive education in an age of exclusion. *Asian Journal of Inclusive Education, 1*(2), 3–17.

Smith, K. (2017). Sack Dutton, say refugee activists. *Green Left Weekly*, (1143), 4.

Snaza, N., Appelbaum, P., Bayne, S., Carlson, D., Morris, M., Rotas, N., …Weaver, J. (2014). Towards a posthumanist education. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *30*(2), 39–55.

Soja, E. W. (1985). The spatiality of social life: Towards a transformative retheorisation. In Gregory, D. & Urry, J. (Eds.). *Social relations and spatial structures* (pp. 90–127). Palgrave: London.

Sonn, C. C., Quayle, A. F., Mackenzie, C., & Law, S. F. (2014). Negotiating belonging in Australia through storytelling and encounter. *Identities, 21*(5), 551–569. http://0-dx.doi.org.library.vu.edu.au/10.1080/1070289X.2014.902376

Soyinka, W. (1990). *Myth, literature and the African world*. Cambridge University Press: New York.

Spaaij, R. (2015). Refugee youth, belonging and community sport. *Leisure Studies, 34*(3), 303–318. http://0-dx.doi.org.library.vu.edu.au/10.1080/02614367.2014.893006

Spivak, G. C. (2010). Can the subaltern speak? In Morris, R. (Ed.). *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea,* (pp. 21–78). Colombia University Press: New York.

Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Illinois, USA: Waveland.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). The posts continue: Becoming. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 646–657.

Stevens, G. W., & Walsh, S. D. (2016). Deepening our understanding of risk and resilience factors for mental health problems in refugee youth: A plea for scientific research. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *58*(5), 582–583. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.02.011

Taguchi, H. L. (2012). A diffractive and Deleuzian approach to analysing interview data. *Feminist Theory*, *13*(3), 265–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700112456001

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16*(1), 39–56. http://dx.doi:10.1080/13603110903560085

Tempany, M. (2008). *Concepts of mental health and wellbeing held by Sudanese Australian young people: A qualitative project*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Monash University, Melbourne.

The Age. (2016, March 15). "Crack Down Hard on Hoods and Hooligans." *Opinion, The Age*. http://www.theage.com.au.

Thomas, D., & Brown, J. S. (2011). *A new culture of learning: Cultivating the imagination for a world of constant change* (Vol. 219): Lexington, KY: CreateSpace.

Tilly, C. (2016). *Explaining social processes*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2015). Identity negotiation theory. In J. Bennett (Ed.). Sage encyclopedia of intercultural competence, Vol. 1 (pp. 418–422). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118540190.wbeic129

Tyson, L. (2015). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide*. London: Routledge.

Ulmer, J. B. (2016). Diffraction as a method of critical policy analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *48*(13), 1381–1394. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1211001

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011). The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/4ec262df9.html.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014). Australia: Country chapters AUL: Australia by the Government of Australia [handbook]. Retrieved from: http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/3c5e542d4/unhcr-resettlement-handbook country-chapter-australia.html

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014). *War's human cost: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees global trends 2013*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2015). '*Frequently asked questions about resettlements*'. *UNHCR, The United Nation Refugee Agency*. Geneva, Switzerland. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/56fa35b16.pdf.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016). *UNHCR projected global resettlement needs 2017*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR. https://euagenda.eu/upload/publications/untitled-62356-ea.pdf

United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (2017). *UNHCR* Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/statistics/unhcrstats/5b27be547/unhcr-global-trends-2017.html

Uptin, J., Wright, J., & Harwood, V. (2013). 'It felt like i was a black dot on white paper': Examining young former refugees' experience of entering Australian high schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 40*(1), 125–137. http://dx.doi.org:10.1007/s13384-012-0082-8

Uptin, J., Wright, J., & Harwood, V. (2016). Finding education: Stories of how young former refugees constituted strategic identities in order to access school. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(3), 598–617. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.885428

van Heelsum, A., & Koomen, M. (2016). Ascription and identity. Differences between first- and second-generation Moroccans in the way ascription influences religious, national and ethnic group identification. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 42*(2), 277–291. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1102044

Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Victorian Council of Social Service (2015). *2015 review of the charter of human rights*, *Melbourne Victoria*. Retrieved from https://engage.vic.gov.au/application/files/4914/8609/7795/Submission_64_Victorian_Council_of_Social_Service.pdf

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, (2008). *Rights of passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people*. Retrieved from https://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/home/our-resources-and-publications/reports/item/163-rights-of-passage-the-experiences-of-australian-sudanese-young-people-dec-2008

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, (2014). *Report on the operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*. Retrieved from https://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/our-resources-and-publications/charter-reports/item/1260-2014-report-on-the-operation-of-the-charter-of-human-rights-and-responsibilities

Vossoughi, N., Jackson, Y., Gusler, S., & Stone, K. (2016). Mental health outcomes for youth living in refugee camps: A review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016673602

Wahlquist, C. (2018, March 19). Reporting on 'African gangs' akin to 'media terrorism', says Melbourne campaigner. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/mar/19/reporting-on-african-gangs-akin-to-media-terrorism-says-melbourne-campaigner

Walder, D. (2011). *Postcolonial nostalgias: Writing, representation, and memory*. New York: Routledge.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2005). *The psychology of culture shock*: London: Routledge.

Watkins, M., Noble, G., & Driscoll, C. (2015). Pedagogy: The unsaid of socio-cultural theory. In Watkins, M., Noble, G., & Driscoll, C. (Ed.), *Cultural pedagogies and human conduct*, (pp. 1–16). London: Routledge.

Watkins, P. G., Razee, H., & Richters, J. (2012). 'I'm telling you… the language barrier is the most, the biggest challenge': Barriers to education among Karen refugee women in Australia. *Australian Journal of Education, 56*(2), 126–141. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000494411205600203

Waugh, A., & Grant, A. (2010). *Ross & Wilson anatomy and physiology in health and illness E-Book*. Churchill Livingstone: Elsevier. https://opentextbc.ca/anatomyandphysiology/chapter/12-4-the-action-potential/

Werbner, P., & Modood, T. (2015). *Debating cultural hybridity: Multicultural identities and the politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed Books.

Wernesjö, U. (2014). *Conditional belonging: Listening to unaccompanied young refugees' voices*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Upssala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

West, T., & Olson, G. A. (1999). Rethinking negotiation in composition studies. *JAC*, *19*(2), 241–251. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866237.

Western Edge Youth Arts, (2017, October 10). About our organization. Retrieved from http://westernedge.org.au/about/our-organisation

Westoby, P. (2009). *The sociality of refugee healing: In dialogue with southern Sudanese refugees resettling within Australia – Towards a social model of healing*. Seaholme, Vic: Common Ground.

Westoby, P., & Ingamells, A. (2009). A critically informed perspective of working with resettling refugee groups in Australia. *British Journal of Social Work, 40*(6), 1759–1776. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcp084

Whitburn, B. (2016). Voice, post-structural representation and the subjectivity of 'included' students. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *39*(2), 117–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.946497

Whitburn, B., Moss, J., & O'mara, J. (2017). Inclusive education, subjectivities and the posts. In Whitburn, B., & Plows, V. (Ed.), *Inclusive education: Making sense of everyday practice* (pp. 31–43). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

White, J. (2017). The banality of exclusion in Australian universities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *21*(11), 1142–1155. doi:10.1080/13603116.2017.1350321

White, J., Drew, S., & Hay, T. (2009). Ethnography versus case study: Positioning research and researchers. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(1), 18–27. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0901018

White, L. A. (2016). *The evolution of culture: The development of civilization to the fall of Rome*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Williams, O. A., & Esieba, E. A. (2014). Examining the legal frame work of the international refugee protection system. *World Journal of Management and Behavioral Studies, 2*(2), 8. http://dx.doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wjmbs.2014.2.2.1309

Williams, R. (1991). Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory. In Mukerji, C. & Schudson, M. (Ed.), *Rethinking popular culture: Contemporary perspectives in Cultural Studies,* (pp. 407–423). Berkeley: University of California.

Wilson, K. (2013). *Race, racism and development: Interrogating history, discourse and practice*. London: Zed Books.

Windle, J. (2008). The racialisation of African youth in Australia. *Social Identities*, *14*(5), 553–566.

Windle, J., & Miller, J. (2012). Approaches to teaching low literacy refugee-background students. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 35*(3), 317.

Wodak, R., Mral, B., & KhosraviNik, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Right-wing populism in Europe: Politics and discourse*. New York: A&C Black.

Wole, S. (1975). *Death and the king's horseman*. London: Eyre Methuen.

Wu, Z. (2014). Let fragments speak for themselves: Vernacular heritage, emptiness and Confucian discourse of narrating the past. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *20*(7-8), 851–865. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2013.860392

Yates, L., Bond, L., Dixon, M., Drew, S., Ferguson, P., Hay, T., ... & White, J. (2010). *Keeping connected: Identity, social connection and education for young people living with chronic illness*. University of Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved from http://vuir.vu.edu.au/21834/1/KC2010_Final_Report.pdf

Yeats, W. B. (1920). The second coming in. In Finneran, R. (Ed.), (1991), *The collected poems of W. B. Yeats*, *Vol, 1* (pp. 189–190.). London: Macmillian Press.

Yip, T. (2016). To be or not to be: How ethnic/racial stereotypes influence ethnic/racial disidentification and psychological mood. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *22*(1), 38–46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000046

Youdell, D. (2006). *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities* (Vol. 3), Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice, 40*(3), 197–214. http://dx.doi.og/10.1080/00313220600769331

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2016). Power, intersectionality and the politics of belonging. In Harcourt, W. (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of gender and development* (pp. 367–381). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2017). Everyday bordering, belonging and the reorientation of British immigration legislation. *Sociology, 52*(2), 228–244. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0038038517702599

Ziaian, T., de Anstiss, H., Antoniou, G., Baghurst, P., & Sawyer, M. (2012). Resilience and its association with depression, emotional and behavioural problems, and mental health service utilisation among refugee adolescents living in South Australia. *International Journal of Population Research*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2012/485956

Žižek, S. (2016). *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours*. London: Penguin Random House UK.

Zunes, S. (2017). Europe's refugee crisis, terrorism, and Islamophobia. *Peace Review*: A *Journal of Social Justice 29*(1), 1–6. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2017.1272275

Western Edge Youth Art Drama Theatre Ticket.

Fig. 18. *A picture showing the ticket of one of the identity negotiation and belonging presentation by WEYA.*

APPENDIX 1

Show me my Africa (A Poem by one of the participants).

Show me my Africa!

The Africa I'm comfortable in,

The place of origin of humans,

And the Hominidae of homo sapiens

Show me my Africa!

That straddles the equator and,

Encompasses numerous climate areas.

Hosting a large diversity of ethnicities

Of cultural landscapes and languages

But my Africa was interrupted.

Derailed by the invasion of 19th century

From Cairo to Cape Town

And Senegal to Somalia

My Africa was robbed of her earliest fame

Dispossessed of her colossal statue of Ramesses II

Cradle of the world civilization

Plundered by the Atlantic slave trade

Take me back to my Africa

Where the spirit of UBUNTU resonates

Where the culture of love endures,

And the beauty of unity radiates

Take me back to Africa,

My Africa: Home my home!