Contesting identities: in othered voices

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Declaration

This is to certify that

I. the thesis comprehends only my original work towards the PhD.

II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

III. the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices or the thesis is [number of words] as approved by the RHD Committee.
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Abstract

The Australian population is diverse in its ethno-cultural make up due to its history of Indigenous peoples, colonial occupation and settlement, and later immigration with more than 22.2% of Australian population born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Early childhood is seen as a critical period for the development of who you are, the ‘self’, one’s individual and collective identity (Miell, 1995; Schaffer, 1996). Children construct the identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ using categorical language such as race, ethnicity and colour around the age of two (Epstein, 2009). Epstein (2009) believes that even young children are influenced by the socio-contextual messages available to them about such categorical representations of identities, and thereby choose their identity preferences accordingly. Since 1980s, most educational settings in Australia had developed goals to adopt multicultural policies and practices as their primacy to enable all individuals to maintain their cultures and to educate everyone about Australian values (Leeman & Reid, 2006).

However, Aveling (2002) stresses that Aboriginal and multicultural education was about the “other”, as it only silenced the struggles of those that are seen as different, whilst allowing the prevalent white cultural domination to thrive. Leeman and Reid (2006) add that such discourses with notions of maintaining the cultures of those that are seen as different do not abstain individuals from justifying racist constructions based on ethnicity. Therefore, Kowalski (2007) recommends that early childhood teachers need to become aware of their own behaviours, which contribute towards children’s development of attitudes towards their own group and those of others. Thus, I decided to engage with this complex phenomenon through action research methodology, to explore how language was used by us in early childhood settings to ‘speak’ of our cultural identities within the Australian context.

Through my action research study, I tell the cultural identity stories that we (children, families, staff and I) as boundary (culture/ethnic/race/religion) ‘speakers’, enacted, shaped and contested such identities for each other within early childhood settings.

To tell my cultural identity stories, I use Ganga, the largest river in India as a metaphor to denote everything that this experience was and to ‘speak’ with and about the complexities that were inherent in the topic, the action research methodology and in our subjective understandings and experiences with skin colour and cultures in Australia. By centralising ‘othering’ as a key process in enacting cultural identities, I make meaning of my Ganga-the data using different theoretical interests namely, psychoanalysis and social psychology (Hall, 2003; Crisp & Turner, 2007), Althusserian ideological influence (Althusser, 2008; Fairclough, 1992), and finally through poststructural feminist theory (Weedon, 1987) in
combination with postcolonial (Said, 1978) and critical race theoretical paths (Frankenberg, 1993).

Each time I channelled my Ganga-the data through a particular theoretical course, my Ganga surfaced different meanings, which I call, cultural identity ‘truths’. She first surfaced the role of ‘othering’ in distinguishing individuals and groups as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. As my Ganga and I navigated the next course, she unearthed the power of ideological ‘Othering’ in shaping cultural identities in Australia. As I sank deeper into my Ganga I recognised my inability to decolonise my thoughts and mind. With my Ganga, I realised my own subjective postcolonial partialities, and united my colonised, colonising, and postcolonial voices to resist dominance. In our final course, my Ganga and I bring to light the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ in ‘othering’ our cultural practices. I then conclude my Ganga-the study with postcolonial silences and voices that disrupted and resisted ideological colonisation, to imagine a multicultural Australia, where all cultures are able to be voiced equitably by all individuals and groups.
Key terms and abbreviations

**Early childhood settings**: These are services that provide educational care for children between the ages of 0-6 years, in formal purpose built premises from 7 AM till 6 PM daily during weekdays.

**Early childhood practitioners (ECP)/staff**: Qualified and unqualified professionals, who provide educational care and experiences for young children attending these settings. In the settings in which the study was conducted, staff was the term used to refer to early childhood practitioners.

**English as Additional Language (EAL)**: When English is spoken as second, third or fourth language by bilingual/multilingual speakers.

**Boundary identity**: The term ‘boundary’, in my study refers to one’s identity defined by constructs such as, culture, ‘race’, nationality, ethno-linguistic background as boundary identity.

**Boundary speakers**: I refer to all participants in my study, who speak about the above constructs as ‘boundary speakers’.

The rest of the terms developed as my study unfolded, and are discussed within the body of the thesis.
Introduction

Contesting identities: in othered voices

Who am I

I first introduce my ‘self’, also my ‘other’ before I introduce my study. I am a Hindu Brahmin, who grew up in postcolonial India, a society that was crisscrossed by caste system, religions, invasions and colonialism. I grew up in a Brahmin household, however, I was told from a young age, the evils that Brahmanism had created to hierarchically segment and dominate a society through its caste system. The particular knowledge that it epitomised was meticulously woven into every individual around, not just the subjects of Hinduism and its varied denominations, but also those outside, as whether we were in or out we were responding to the structures of Brahmanism. I was groomed to be an insider who could speak with those outside, and contest varnashrama, the colour, character, attribute, labour based caste system that still dominates the minds of Indian peoples (Ilaiah, 2004). When the Brahminic scriptures taught me to believe that everything is an illusion, my grandfather took me aside and read poetries by Subramanya Bharathi (1822-1921) that contended that the very concept is arguably an illusion too, and gave me permission to contest the immediate realities around us. Outside my household was the society that was still coming to terms with the aftermath of colonialism, the postcolonial independent India that had successfully overthrown British India in 1945. Thus, colour and colonialism had occupied my mind and my emotions for a very long time, and it followed me to Australia, when I migrated with a young family in the late 1980s.

My son and my daughter experienced coloured exclusion by peers as young children in Australian kindergartens and schools in the early 1990s, and the teacher said that ‘children can be cruel, yet are innocent and kind’. She believed that they were being cruel because of their innocence and kindness, and therefore, their coloured exclusion by peers should be accepted. I didn’t have the theories to validate our experiences, and instead we excluded ourselves from those settings.

After about 10 years in Australia I became an early childhood practitioner and colour and colonialism followed me there too. When I was asked to keep my ‘black footprints of the clean floor’, the committee excused the comment by saying that the person perhaps said it because he thought I was a parent and not a teacher. For me, this implied that the comment itself was pardonable, but what was wrong was that it was said to a teacher. In this experience, I was hurt as a parent, a teacher, most of all as a ‘black’ subject. I knew how I
felt, but I didn’t have the concepts to outline why that committee member felt differently about the same comment. I saw colour, the colour of the committee that I hadn’t noticed till then, they were all ‘white’ with clean white footprints. Around the year 2006, I was introduced to postcolonial and critical race theories, by my ‘white’ teachers, and I found my voice to ‘speak’ colours. My introduction to postcolonial and critical race theories gave me the language to express my experiences of colour and colonialism and those of my family in Australia. I now know that in those experiences, my children’s ‘white’ peers and the ‘white’ cleaner were ‘othering’ our ‘blackness’ as something that would tarnish their otherwise ‘clean’ surroundings. This process ‘othering’ expresses a colonial discourse, and ‘whiteness’ has historically seen non-whites as primitive, fearful or exotic (Said, 1978; Taylor, 2004). Most of all, I also understood at this time that they were ‘normalising’ this behaviour with romantic visions of childhood. I embraced these postcolonial and critical race theories due to everything that I was and everything that Australia was at that time. Thus, through all of the above experiences and my theories which were external to me, my ‘other’ became my ‘self’ and my study, my Ganga.

Who is Ganga: my study, my data and me

"The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India’s age long culture and civilization, ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga."

(Jawaharlal Nehru, First Prime Minister of India)

I am from the Indian sub-continent, and we migrated to Australia more than 20 years ago. The morning Glenda and Margaret, my supervisors suggested that I should look into using a metaphor to engage with the complexities of what my study was and has become, I chose Ganga. I grew up with the river Ganga, her myths, her stories and her sanctity, and I hold Ganga very close to me, and Ganga is my story, and my reality. I used Ganga initially to discuss my data, as at that time Ganga represented multiplicity, and therefore, she signified the multiple sources of my data, and as a source of power that could bring about change. Whilst, Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) have used metaphor to discuss their research results in order to symbolically represent their participants’ experiences, Schon (1993, cited in Bass & Gerstl-Pepin, 2010) suggests the use of metaphor to convey our worldview, and how we make meaning of events around us. For Liu and Owyong (2011) metaphor enables the user to link various unfathomable, yet related domains, as it allows one to understand complex concepts by providing a mental map of the linkable elements. I then felt, Ganga as
a metaphor could symbolise all the above for me, and due to the nature of my research (participatory action research), as I began working with Ganga, my data, I became her and she became me. After all, everything that was generated, surfaced and consumed was due to my presence, and therefore, I generated my Ganga, and my Ganga interacted with me. What I analysed and interpreted, in turn analysed and interpreted me, as it surfaced the many that I was, and the many that I wasn’t. Every time I engaged with my Ganga, I realised that she represented every aspect of my study, as Nehru quotes, “ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga”. India’s Ganga is fluid, changing what she encounters and changing with what she encounters; she is multiple, having varied origins, flowing through different nations and called by different names; she is sublime, having the power to divide and unite boundaries; yet, she is stoic, always present, and always occupying the thoughts of her subjects, and always flowing towards the ocean. Thus for me, my Ganga represented me, my study’s origins, my theoretical frameworks, my action research, my data, my ideologies, my analyses, my discussions and my final union. My Ganga allowed me to be receptive to change, and to change to reach my destiny. My Ganga is central to me and my study, and in the following I narrate how I have used my Ganga to ‘speak’ with and for me.

Chapter 1 - Ganga’s streams: literature review

My Ganga’s body is not unitary, many contribute towards who she is and becomes. I named this chapter Ganga’s streams to represent the multiple theoretical bases that I drew upon to represent the varied literature that contributed to my knowledge and understanding to engage with my topic. I explain the reason for my choices, as follows. My study’s focus was to engage with the complexities of practising multiculturalism around nationalism, therefore, Ganga’s head stream established the Australian socio-political context within which my study was conducted, followed by early childhood theories of identity, especially ‘race’, ethnic, national and cultural development. The secondary streams engaged with supporting literature contributing to the body of my study and the cultural identity enactments within it that I discuss in what follows.

I had always distinguished my family’s cultural layers, our multilingual practices, our values towards elders, books, arts and music against what was done here, in Australia, as I definitely could identify differences between the two. However, with my knowledge of ‘othering’ growing as the study grew, several questions flowed persistently in and around me: Isn’t this the procedure that colonisers used to dominate their ‘other’? Did that mean I was guilty of ‘othering’ too? Although on one hand I believed that ‘othering’ was a colonial discourse, I could not reconcile with leaving it there, as I knew I was as guilty of the same
segregating discourse, as my distinguishing coloniser. I wanted to challenge and change the practices that I thought of as being inadequate to engage with cultures. But who am I to decide? Wasn’t I inevitably trying to control what I saw as ‘different’? My family began to use my postcolonial language to discuss our lives in Australia. Therefore, rather than beginning my study with where and what I was, a postcolonial subject, who resisted colonialism, I wanted to decolonise my mind and my thoughts with the use of a multiple theoretical base. I believed this would enable me to overcome my dichotomous coloniser/colonised vision, and become one with what is already here. In 2009 when I began this study, I explored theories of social psychology that explained the ‘othering’ process as a part of self-development, distinguishing ‘self’ from ‘other’ with the use of language categories (See, Lacan, 2002; Crisp & Turner 2007; Hogg & Abrams, 2007). I did not want to discard the body of knowledge that systematically explained and illustrated how cultures and cultural groups and individuals interacted when they came together. I hoped this would cleanse my thoughts and my guilt of being ruled by postcolonial studies, as I would be able to justify my ‘othering’ as a normal act of self-development.

India is a nation that was created by the colonisers, the ‘British Raj’, to rule the population that had historically been diverse in its ethnic, linguistic, religious make-up; a nation that still stands divided after it became free of colonial rule in 1945 (Keay, 2000; Sen, 2005). India, since then is united, yet divided by its national identity, ‘Indian’, a reality, and yet an illusion when it’s multiple roots are traced. Therefore, I could not let go of literature that spoke about how illusionary ideas are realised daily by individuals. Amongst my colonised and anti-colonial roots and my experiences with ‘whiteness’, I was conscious of my postcolonial theoretical interests, and how these surfaced repeatedly as I engaged with theories of social psychology. These interests remained with me and they remained a constant influence on my study. Amongst this, how ideology and dominance operated, especially in postcolonial societies became a secondary stream in my study flowing alongside my social psychology stream. The identity of my Ganga, layered by these streams with their varied attributes, produced the research questions that have driven this study:

- How are cultural identities enacted in early childhood settings?
- What are the meanings that shaped othered identities?
- How can they be transformed to reshape identities in othered voices?
Chapter 2 – Ganga’s courses: theoretical Frameworks

Once the streams of India’s Ganga unite, they become bountiful, and Ganga emerges with force. The second chapter demonstrates the different theoretical frameworks that I have used to give meaning and force to my data. I have used the metaphor ‘Ganga’s courses’ to signify the varied paths that I have used to channel my Ganga’s gushing waters—the data. My Ganga’s courses and streams interact with reciprocity, as the courses are led by the streams, as much as the streams are modulated by the courses. I discuss how I have conceptualised or channelled my data using three different theoretical frameworks or courses. Each course offers specific underpinnings that I use later to engage with my data. The first is based on social psychology (Hall, 2003; Crisp & Turner 2007) which I used to establish the main categories that we use to enact our collective cultural identities in relation to those of others in Australia. The second course provides a base to inquire whether and how our enactments are related to ideological constructions of cultural identity categories, and how we respond to such ideological messages (Althusser, 2008). The third course, which is a combination of poststructural feminist (Weedon, 1987), postcolonial theories (Said, 1987; Frankenberg, 1999), offers an intricate network of currents which I use to transform and re-engage with data to explore how ideologies are reinforced and resisted in early childhood settings. Thus, the courses of my Ganga were many, and she took different twists and turns with each course to reach her destiny.

Chapter 3 – Ganga’s sources: methodology and methods

The sources of India’s Ganga determine her nature. In chapter three, I use Ganga’s sources to shape my paradigmatic stance and thus to shape the nature of my methodology and methods. In this chapter, I show how I position my epistemology, grounding my stance within critical cultural studies (Ezzy, 2004), engaging in participatory action research methodology (Kemmis, 1999) and within this limiting parameters of my study. The methods are my data sources that characterise my methodological stance, and they add to my methodological practice. I used participatory observation, face to face interviews and document analysis as methods of data collection, and these varied sources contributed to the tone of my Ganga, and their contributions later became my Ganga—the data.

Ganga’s forms

My Ganga, like India’s Ganga, are a combination of her streams, her courses and her sources when activated gave rise to an abundance of living forms, which are unique to Ganga, reflecting all her traits. The practice of my action research methodological methods
with participants, in combination with who I am and my knowledge and my experiences, resulted in the emergence of our voices.

**Ganga-the data** – India’s Ganga has the power to create, and erase boundaries that have been created with her state of uncontainable fluidity. Being a transformative study, I considered one of the key purposes of my study was to reconceptualise cultural enactments in Australia, by noting how abstract, undefinable constructs such as, national identity, ethnic and cultural identity are realised by our daily practices. For me, our data represented that power and fluidity, the power to demystify nation and national identities, and also the power with which this was negated. Therefore, my Ganga represents the data, and in the next few chapters, as I stand within and outside of my Ganga, ‘speaking’ with her, about her, and as her, depending on the theoretical course I am using to give data meaning.

**Boundary identities/speakers/speaks** - Culture is a difficult to term to define, it is abstract, yet central to modern societies (Pang, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Weedon, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006; Grant & Sleeter, 2007). Therefore, as central as the term ‘culture’ is to my study and the functioning of today’s society, I found it very difficult to use as a term to represent the way with which we bound our collective identities. Therefore, I used the term ‘boundary identity’ to represent ‘culture’ constituted by our geographic, linguistic, ethnic, and religious origins. The participants, including me became ‘boundary speakers’, and the narratives that I gathered became ‘boundary speaks’. Emanating from this central concept ‘boundary’ are the following thematic concepts used in analysis and discussion chapters, and these are further discussed in detail at the end of Chapter III.

- ‘Boundary streams’ represent the varied layers that we believed as being significant to our boundary identities, representing who we were in relation to ‘Australian’. I have named these as boundary streams to signify the separate layers that sometimes unite and diverge to contribute towards our boundary identities.
- ‘Boundary courses’, under each of the boundary streams signify the paths that each boundary stream presents, and are guided by the boundary speakers. The submission, diversion or subversion of courses depends on the context, the speakers, their identities and experiences. Every course is illustrated with one or more examples from boundary speaks.
- ‘Boundary source and re-source’ are constituents of each example, and they represent the participatory action research methodology. The boundary speaks
are interactive and reciprocal, and they direct and deflect the flows resulting in unpredictable reactions.

Chapter 4, 6 and 8 – ‘Speaking’ boundary identities with/about/as Ganga

In my data analysis chapters as different theoretical courses shape the tone and content of my Ganga-the data, I ‘speak’ with/about/as Ganga, using the term ‘speaking’ to represent particular forms of analytical interpretation. In chapter four, ‘Speaking boundary identities with Ganga’, I analyse identity statements from narratives, which include my interactions, so I am ‘speaking with Ganga’. I use socio-psychology theoretical frameworks (Hall, 2003; Crisp & Turner, 2007) to analyse how collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ are expressed. In chapter six, ‘Speaking boundary identities about Ganga’, I analyse specific narratives using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, Fairclough, 1992), to recognise how ‘Australian speakers’, ‘speak’ about the identity ‘Australian’. Although the narratives include my voice, the focus is on ‘Australian speakers’ and how they respond to ideological constructions of the identity ‘Australian’ so I ‘speak’ about my Ganga-the data. In chapter eight ‘Speaking boundary identities as Ganga’, I transform all boundary speakers into postcolonial subjects, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’. I combine poststructural feminist (Weedon, 1987), postcolonial (Said, 1987) and critical race theory (Frankenberg, 1999) to discursively analyse and interpret our subjective identity practices. I express my postcolonial inner voice, and I use my Ganga to represent this. In India’s Ganga, estuaries are spaces where the rivers meet the ocean, and these spaces are traversed by converging and diverging streams, flowing from one, Ganga, and flowing into one, the ocean. My Ganga draws on India’s Ganga to present and represent the crisscross of discourses, strategies and material effects of what happened in the data in this chapter as the ‘Postcolonial estuary of contesting ‘Australian’.

Chapter 5, 7 and 9 – Ganga ‘othering/Othering/othering’ to enact/shape/contest boundary identities

These chapters explore the different representations of ‘othering’, as every discussion chapter stems from the analytical interpretation of my Ganga-the data through each of her courses (theoretical framework). Therefore, although each of these chapters aim to address each of my predetermine research questions, the focus of my analysis changes as silenced questions emanate from my discussions. The chapter ‘Ganga ‘othering’ to enact boundary identities’, result from my analytical interpretation of my Ganga-the data using theories of social psychology and psychoanalysis. This discussion is based on the broad thematic concepts used in narrative inquiry and it surfaces the major boundary categories.
‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ used by the boundary speakers to ‘speak’ our boundaries. There are four silenced questions that influence the focus of my proceeding analysis, and this chapter leads to the sixth chapter ‘Speaking about boundary identities with Ganga’, which is an analytical interpretation of the responses of ‘Australian speakers’ to ideological constructions of ‘Australian’. The seventh chapter, ‘Ganga ‘Othering’ to shape boundary identities’ is the discussion based on CDA of Ganga, and I discuss ideology as the ‘Other’ constructing identities within Australia. I use ‘Othering’ to distinguish this from the previous form ‘othering’, as this signifies how the identity of ‘Australian’ is ‘Othered’ by ideologies, and ‘Australian’ subjects in particular ways. The end of this discussion leads me to another silent question that becomes the basis of my theoretical framework used in chapter eight. The seventh chapter also surfaces my inability to decolonise my ‘self’, and how I repeatedly make meaning of this shaping with my own subjectivity, my experiential theories that I subscribe to. Thus, I grapple with my own shortcomings that not only influence how I make meaning of events, but also how I therefore respond to events. In recognition of my commitment, I finally privilege my postcolonial subjectivity and reveal this by transforming all boundary speakers into postcolonial subjects in chapter eight. Chapter nine, ‘Ganga ‘othering’ to contest postcolonial subjectivities’ is the final discussion chapter, in which I ‘speak’ as and with Ganga, my inner voice. The ‘I’ is my voice with fragmented I, to represent the many that I have become. The ‘othering’ in this chapter represents the postcolonial elements using which Ganga makes meaning with voices of ‘othered Australians’ that discursively respond to ideological ‘Australian’.

**Conclusion – Contesting ‘Australian’ in othered/Othered/othered voices**

My Ganga has been emptied into the ocean, and I find it difficult to let go of her. I try and make meaning of my experience with Ganga in this concluding chapter. I discuss the phenomenon ‘Australian’, which was central to our cultural identity enactments, dividing and uniting who we were. We were many, yet we responded to this one image, ‘Australian’, an illusion that was created and nurtured for ideological gratification and power. As Holmes, Hughes & Julian (2007) stress that the conceptions of both ‘Australian’ and ‘migrant’ identities need to be changed to overcome racism and injustice. Here, I contemplate with varied forms of othering that interact and act with this complex phenomenon presented by multiculturalism and nationalism, especially in early childhood settings. I imagine hybridity as a reality for all individuals and groups, and not reserved for some. I end my Ganga with how she began, “ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same”.

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With my tensions that arise from my quest to decolonise, my inability to sever my colonised roots and my postcolonial reality, my Ganga begins to tell her story.
Chapter 1

Ganga’s streams: literature review

I begin this chapter by introducing my Ganga’s streams—the literature, that provides an overview of the socio-political and physical context, and the knowledge bases from which Ganga, my study was conceptualised.

Australia’s Australian

The Australian population is diverse in its ethno-cultural make up due to its history of Indigenous peoples, colonial occupation and settlement and later immigration with more than 22.2% of Australian population born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Therefore, many groups that are linguistically, culturally and religiously different come together within its national boundaries. Before colonial occupation, there were around 600 tribes living in this land, whose social organisation was highly complex, and linguistically diverse (Holmes, Hughes & Julian, 2007), however with no political unity amongst the groups. Since the establishment of this nation and multiculturalism, Stokes (1997) stresses that the assertion of Australian identity has become one of the major political agenda.

According to Hall (1996), exploring identity and especially cultural identity has become a critical topic since the late 1990s, due to large movements of population across the world presenting destabilising phenomena that are juxtaposed, such as globalism versus localism and nationalism versus multiculturalism. Furthermore, Hall adds that colonisation and decolonisation have resulted in postcolonial societies with a population that is made up of colonisers and colonised and many others who are linked sometimes by such histories. Thus, exploring cultural identity is highly relevant within an Australian context, as its society has experienced many of the complex phenomena mentioned above. Initially, Australian identity was constructed around white, colonial identity and after the abolishment of ‘White Australia policy’ (Immigration Restriction Act, 1901). Arber (1999), Young, 2001 and Aveling (2002) state that in early 1970s, in its quest to manage cultural differences, Australian politics moved from colonial discourses that established white supremacy, to discourses of multiculturalism, which seemed more liberal and accepting of different cultural groups. Since then most socio-political institutions in Australia have adopted policies that speak of acknowledging, respecting, valuing and celebrating Indigenous cultures and the cultures of migrants, those who arrive newly to Australia.

Within the Australian context and the context of many countries like Canada, United States of America and New Zealand that share histories of colonial settlement on indigenous lands, the development of an indigenous or migrant identity can be very complex. This requires
the construction of ‘self’ in relation to one’s ethno-cultural identity within the discourse of Australian nationalism and within the realms of multiculturalism that encourages one to own the identity of his/her ethnic origin, thus demanding dual or multiple identities, a ‘migrant self’ and a ‘national self’ in oneself. However, research on border crossing or hybridity, examining the strategic negotiation of one’s identity hasn’t received much attention in multicultural education (Grant & Agosto, 2006).

Grant and Agosto (2006) add such studies on transitory identities are usually on teachers and seldom on students and those on students will reveal how teachers and students mimic or create behaviours to produce a compilation of teaching repertoires. Most of the educational research studies that have been conducted in Australia are those that investigate and explore adults’ and/or older children’s attitudes and constructions of race and ethnicity (see, Aveling, 2002; McLeod & Yates, 2003; Allard, 2006; Santoro, 2007). The few studies conducted in early childhood settings investigate young children’s understanding towards indigenous Australians (see MacNaughton, 2001; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Skattebol, 2003). These studies reveal that children as young as 3-5 years of age, have conceptualised the physical attributes of the national subject ‘Australian’, using which they include and exclude children in their daily interactions and play. Practising and reinforcing ‘race’ and gender identities through play and daily interactions by young children has been explored by many authors (Tacagni, 1998; Johnson, Christie, Yawley, 1999; Grieshaber, 2001; Blaise, 2005; Kitson, 2005; Connolly, 2008; Wenger, 2008). The above literature suggest that young children do conceptualise and practise identity categories such as, ‘race’ and ethnicity through their daily play behaviour and interactions. For young ‘migrant’ children to move between cultures of their ethnic origin and the national identity of their adopted country such as Australia, cultural boundaries need to be established by them with an understanding of purposeful contemplation and contention of these identity behaviours. Therefore, my study aims to explore this complex process of how children and adults enact, shape and contest boundary (culture/ethnic/race/religion) identities of and for each other in early childhood settings in Australia.

**Nation, and national, ethnic and cultural identities**

Culture is a difficult term to define, and is abstract and evolutionary, yet it has become central to most conversations in today’s society (Pang, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Weedon, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006; Grant & Sleeter, 2007). According to Appadurai (2006), the modern nation-state, despite being constructed on the premise of multiculturalism and inclusion is imbued with divisional ideas of nation and
nationality, as these are built on notions of national sovereignty based on ethnicity. Furthermore, Merenstein (2008) states that although ‘race’ is a mere social construct, it has become the reality of many modern societies, as it is often linked with colour, ethnicity, religion and language. Gunarathnam (2003) distinguishes ‘race’ from ethnicity, although she agrees both these terms as social constructs. She opines ‘race’ as implying categories that are natural, inherent and fixed, and ethnicity as categories that are based on common values, and cultural practices such as language, food, religion and kinship. Yet, Gunarathnam (2003) adds that biological markers such as skin colour, hair and other physical attributes used in ‘race’ discourse, are used in discourse of ethnicity indirectly, and thus, one way or the other, culture and ethnicity gets fixed and bound. Taylor (2004) too contends that “race talk” has become a symbol of western societies leading to notions of citizenship, and further centralises our interactions around identity constructs such as ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, class and caste. From above, I understand that interactions that specify one’s identity based on one’s physical appearance (skin colour, hair texture) or one’s cultural appearance (language, religion, food and kinship) are superficial, yet is highly meaningful in today’s society. The theories of identity development too position such interactions as being critical to human beings in modern societies, and I briefly discuss this in relation to current socio-political context of Australia in the following.

**National and cultural identities: the current Australian context**

The conception of one’s identity or an understanding of what one is, the development of ‘self’ is seen by many theorists as something that is innate, unique and desirable to humans (Crisp & Turner, 2007), a distinguishing capacity that sets humans and animals apart. Early childhood is seen by the above theories as a critical period for the development of one’s identity, which is gaining a knowledge of who one is and affiliating oneself with different social groups, defined by factors such as ethnicity, race, culture, gender and class (Schaffer, 1988; Miell, 1995; Schaffer, 1996; Epstein, 2009). These theories therefore encourage early childhood practitioners and other educators to engage in practices that are conducive to developing this strong sense of self identity, especially in relation to one’s ethno-linguistic group and the culture of Australia (see The Early Years Learning Framework, (EYLF), Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Since 1980s, most educational settings in Australia had developed goals to adopt multicultural policies and practices as their primacy to enable all individuals to maintain their cultures and to educate everyone about Australian values. Their key aim was to eradicate racism and prejudice (see National goals for Australian schooling, Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), 1999; Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Victorian Curriculum and
Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2007). These documents recommend the promotion of a strong sense of self-identity in children and families who have migrated to Australia and to promote cross cultural understanding and unity amongst all Australians. However, Aveling (2002) stresses that Aboriginal and multicultural education was about the “other”, as it only silenced the struggles of those that are seen as different, whilst allowing the prevalent white cultural domination to thrive. Leeman and Reid (2006) add that such discourses with notions of maintaining the cultures of those that are seen as different do not abstain individuals from justifying racist constructions based on ethnicity.

The literature above broadly highlights the criticality of early childhood and the development of one’s collective identity, the complexity that is inherent in developing cultural identity within the Australian context, and the inadequacy of current structural discourses in the development of cultural identities that are equitable. Thus, children in educational settings are being exposed to inequitable practices through these guiding documents and by other socio-political structures. I now further engage with theories of identity development and early childhood, as this period is seen as being critical to one’s sense of who they are, the ‘self’, followed by theories which define the process of ‘othering’ as being critical to identity development, and later more specifically the structural contexts that formed and forms the national identity of Australia.

Children’s identity development

The studies by Lewis and Brook-Gunn (1979 cited in Schaffer, 1996), infer that seeing oneself as a separate entity to those around, and positioning oneself using the available linguistic categories as the two basic constituents in the development of one’s identity. The above authors, through their studies stress that categorising begins at 2 years of age with their use of linguistic distinctions such as ‘I’ and ‘you’, and children proceed to categorise themselves within groups such as, gender, age, abilities, race, culture, ethnicity and colour in relation to others. Therefore, from using ‘I’ and ‘you’, to categorise ‘self’ and ‘other’, children begin to form ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’, their collective relationship between categorical groups.

Epstein (2009) too claims children’s construction and understandings of such identities are a part of their cognitive development. Epstein further adds,

“Research has examined young children’s awareness of such relatively stable attributes as race, social class, culture, gender and disability. How children come to understand these characteristics in themselves and others is based on many perceptual, cognitive, and
Epstein (2009) states the following as the developmental patterns collated from research that have been conducted till now on young children’s awareness of race and ethnicity:

- Children’s awareness about races and self-identity begins during toddlerhood and much is developed during their preschool age (Ramsey, 2006).
- By preschool white children prefer to play with other white children and show a stronger sense of race preference than minority children. However, minority children seem to prefer playing with lighter skinned peers, as the desire to gravitate towards the ‘other’ seems to develop very early (Ramsey, 1991).
- Although young children do not understand concepts such as culture and nationality, they are able to link cultural markers such as language and dress with sources (Orellana, 1994; Hirschfield & Gelman, 1997).
- Through the internalisation of values attached to their own ethnic or cultural groups, children show preference to members of their own group than those that are seen as outsiders (Banks, 1993).
- Children make meaning of those around them using dichotomies (like me/not like me) and are greatly influenced by what they hear about similarities and differences from those around them (Levin, 2003).

The above statements compiled by Epstein (2009) on children’s understandings of culture, ethnicity, colour and race acknowledge that children attach values to these attributes and thereby create hierarchies that privilege some and discriminate others. Therefore, children’s construction of categorical identity in relation to race, colour and culture can automatically result in feelings of superiority or inferiority about the categorical ‘self’ and ‘other’, depending on the social status that those groups hold in that given society. According to Wenger (2008), the development of children’s identity consists of layers of experience and it is built through how others think and talk about us and how we talk about us and others. Thus, children’s identity development is dependent on their language based social interactions, and the internalisation of these language exchanges. Although the above literature provides an overview of children’s identity development, and their attitudes about their ‘other’, I wanted to get a better understanding of some of the basic processes involved.
in the construction of one’s sense of who they are. I therefore, further engage with theories of social interactionism and psychoanalysis as follows.

**Children’s identity development: othering ‘me’ and ‘you’**

An individual’s conception and further development of sense of ‘self’ has fascinated theorists over decades, from as early as the 1890s. James (1890 cited in Schaffer, 1988; 1892 cited in Miell, 1995) theorised that ‘I’, the subjective self and ‘me’ the objective self, as the two constituents of self identity. Both Schaffer (1988) and Miell (1995) agree that James believed that ‘I’, the image of ‘self’ created through one’s interaction with others emerged around the age of 5-6 months, and ‘me’ that resulted in the modification of one’s identity in relation to the response from others began around 18 months of age. Thus, they say that James concluded that others and the interaction with others as being imperative for the development of ‘self’. Schaffer (1996), states that the role of social interaction in the development of one’s identity has been later stressed by theorists such as Cooley, (1902) and Mead, (1934). Mead’s theory became the basis for later theorists to explore the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the construction of one’s identity (Schaffer, 1996). According to Elliott (2010), Mead was one of the earliest to explain how symbols, such as language were used by social groups to make meaning of ‘self’ in relation to the world, and emphasised that children drew upon their past experiences using language to relate to the present during social interactions. Elliott (2010) declares that Mead had a great influence on the emphasis of play in children’s development of self, as taking the role of other during play was pivotal to the development of self in children. Elliott (2010) adds, with ‘me’ and ‘I’ being the constituents of one’s identity, Mead proposed that one’s identity was constructed through constant evaluation of other’s reaction to the portrayal of self through symbolic interactions. Mead (1934, cited in Miell, 1995) believed that for progressive socialisation of children into a society, such interactions were imperative. Although Mead’s theory of symbolic interactionism, paved ways of explaining the interactions between ‘self’ and other’ in the creation of ‘self’, it is aptly criticised for its reliance on extremely rational, conscious and cognitive thinking in the making of one’s identity, as if there is very little emotions and feelings involved in this process (Elliott, 2010).

Stemming from Mead’s theory of social interactionism, Lacan, using psychoanalysis further explains the nature of these interactions that distinctly distinguishes ‘self’ from ‘other’ from a young age. Jacques Lacan (2002) a psychoanalyst, defined the ‘mirror stage’ to be highly critical for the development of ‘I’, as the infant who is around 8 months of age gains the ability to see ‘self’ through this image, and he used the mirror to symbolise the
‘other’ that created a unified image to the otherwise disunited ‘self’ with the use of language. For Lacan, it was imperative to distinguish ‘self’ from ‘other’ by deciphering what ‘self’ isn’t in comparison to the ‘other’ to establish ‘self’ (Easthorpe, 1999; Lacan, 2002). Lacan’s ‘other’ here played two roles in the construction of ‘self’, to distinguish ‘self’ from ‘other’ by comparing what ‘self’ isn’t with ‘other’, and the ‘other’ revealed and reinforced ‘self’ using language. Thus, like Mead, for Lacan this process was dynamic and interactive, yet individualistic during the creation of ‘self’, as one’s behaviour was modulated in response to those of the ‘other’. Moreover, the construction of one’s identity was a process of establishing what is different between ‘self’ and ‘other’, a process of innocent ‘othering’. Thus, from above I understood the importance of language based interactions between ‘self’ and ‘other’, to specifically establish difference between the two being critical to the early development of one’s identity. As Spears (1997) states, although the theories of psychoanalysis do provide a framework to conceptualise the highly complex process of constructing one’s identity, they are unclear about the interaction between individuals and cultures, as they do not take into account the social and historical contexts of such interactions. In the following I engage with theories of social psychology that specifically engage with children’s development of their identity in relation to their social context.

Children’s identity development: othering ‘us’ and ‘them’

The theories till now were more concerned with the development of this individual ‘I’ and ‘you’, although they did take into consideration the influence and the nature of social interactions between individuals. However, the identity of individuals are also bound to their allegiance with certain communities, thus giving them a sense of commitment to those communities, such as, gender, class, occupation, culture and age. The theories of social psychology extend the theories of social interactionism and psychoanalysis that explain the construction of individual identities, to individuals’ construction of collective identities.

These theories refer to the development of one’s collective identity that comes with social group membership with one’s affiliation to specific categorical references, including one’s ethno-linguistic/national/cultural identities. Hogg and Abrams (2007) define social group as follows,

“A group exists psychologically when two or more people define and evaluate themselves in terms of the defining and often prescriptive properties of a common self-inclusive category”.

(Hogg & Abrams, 2007, p.335)
The theories of social psychology thus discuss the development of one’s social identity as a part of ‘self’, by taking into account not just the identity of individual ‘self’, but also the layers of identity that stems from connecting with commonalities between members of social groups. According to Crisp and Turner (2007), ‘self’ consists of ‘personal identity’ (one’s personality and temperament) and ‘social identity’ (the social groups such as ethnic, occupational, sports etc. that we consider we are a part of). Moreover, Hogg and Abrams (2007) and McKinlay and McVittie (2008), state that others have a great influence on the construction of our identity, both personal and social and thus, the development of one’s identity is inextricably tied to the identity of others to establish, what one is (self) and what one is not (other), thus differentiating ‘self’ from ‘other’. According Riggins (1997), the ‘other’ in social sciences refers to all people who are seen as slightly or extensively different from ‘self’. Therefore, the presence of ‘other’ and the process of ‘othering’, which is establishing difference in ‘other’ in comparison to ‘self’, become integral in the construction of one’s identity. Moreover, this also means, that categorising individuals in groups with certain perceived attributes that are thought to be the salient features of that group is something inevitably done by everyone in order to position collective category of ‘self’ and ‘other’. This categorisation processes we use in our daily lives are processes of self-discovery, and we apply similar processes in stereotyping people in collective categories to gather as much information about the other person (Crisp and Turner, 2007; Goethals, 2007; Quinn, Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2007). However, the same process, which is the attribution of preconceived characteristics to learn about another is said to result in heavy bias and therefore should be regarded as highly problematic (Goethals, 2007).

For some authors (see, Crisp and Turner, 2007; Hogg and Abrams, 2007; Wright and Taylor, 2007), although categorising and stereotyping may lead to harmful prejudice, such categorisation of groups is inevitable. Therefore, they distinguish what is harmful as the prejudice that may result from stereotyping, and not the actual categorisation and grouping of individuals and groups. Crisp and Turner (2007) add that prejudices between groups can be reduced by bringing groups together, by creating a common identity through re-categorisation and by using other ways to categorise people that brings members from many groups to these new categories.

Stokes (1997) had argued that the key focus of Australian government’s political agenda has been to construct and maintain unified Australian identity, especially after the advent of multiculturalism, and most educational guidelines aimed in to develop the ‘Australian’ citizen. Within the Australian context, one can argue that building a unified
national identity and a strong commitment to this identity is one such re-categorisation to bring members from varied ethnic groups into this new category, ‘Australian’ citizen. With my quest for decolonisation, what the above literature suggested about ‘othering’ to large degree eased my own guilt of establishing difference between who my family and I was in relation to what was here in Australia. Yet, I struggle to discard my colonised roots, and I collate what I have understood from my Ganga’s first stream still in my colonised voice to lead me to my first research question.

- Identity and identity development is central to human development, and early childhood is a critical period during which one gains an understanding of ‘self’, who they are, individually and collectively with the use of language (Epstein, 2009).
- The process of constructing one’s social identity involves categorising one’s attributes, attaching these with those of a group, and moreover, engaging in similar procedures to establish the identity of other individuals in their groups. Therefore, whether it is the assertion of one’s identity or the identity of one’s group, both require ‘othering’, the alienation of one from the rest and as outlined above, and it is considered as something that every human aspires to do (Crisp & Turner, 2007).
- Today’s, modern society is preoccupied with conversations about nation, national, race/ethnic/cultural identities, although all of the above categories are arguably contestable as social constructs (Pang, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Taylor, 2004, Weedon, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006; Grant & Sleeter, 2007).
- The development of identity and especially one’s ethno-linguistic or cultural identity is very complex in a globalised world, specifically for migrants and indigenous peoples in postcolonial settler countries such as, Australia, America, Canada and New Zealand. These groups have to develop multiple cultural identities in relation to their origin on one hand, simultaneously with the national identity of their adopted or colonised land (Hall, 1996). The tensions between heterogeneous groups coming together can be reduced by creating a common identity through re-categorisation of these groups (Crisp & Turner, 2007).
- The national identity of Australia was initially dictated by “White Australia Policy” (Government of Commonwealth of Australia, Immigration Restriction Act, 1901) that epitomised white supremacy. However, after its demise,
Australia’s socio-political structures have strived to engage with multiculturalism to manage varied cultural groups within its national boundaries and the construction of national identity has become a major political agenda (Stokes, 1997).

- Therefore, through multicultural policies and key documents, early childhood practitioners and educators are encouraged to engage in practices that develop a strong sense of who they are as ‘Australian’ citizens, and simultaneously become exposed to varied cultures (see National goals for Australian schooling, Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), 1999; Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2007; Early Years Learning Framework, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). These documents drawn with an aim to eradicate racism, believe that such practices are conducive to cross cultural understanding promoting unity between cultural groups in Australia. Thus, children from a young age are influenced by early childhood practitioners, who are in turn influenced by key documents and policies, the structures that guide cultural identity practices in Australia.

As a migrant family from India, we had experienced ‘othering’ using which we were named and categorised as ‘not Australian’, and we too compared ourselves with what we considered as being outside our practices. Hence, I particularly wanted to inquire the role of ‘othering’ in establishing what was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. Thus, the following is my first research question, which is primarily based on socio-psychological literature emerging from my Ganga’s first stream,

- How are cultural identities enacted in early childhood settings?

Here, I will draw upon identifying whether and how cultural identity enactments are influenced by ‘othering’, as outlined by theories of psychoanalysis and social psychology. Therefore, I will specifically focus on, how language is used process of ‘othering’, particularly in categorising and attributing groups as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. This will enable me to identify the major categories that are used in the classification of cultures in early childhood settings in Australia, and how this is influenced by language. However, exploring the process of identity development in young children with the use of theories of social psychology alone have been criticised for its inadequacies, and in the following I engage with alternate understandings of identity development.
Despite my quest for decolonisation using the above theories on inevitable ‘othering’, my postcolonial reality resisted what I gathered from my Ganga’s foremost stream, especially due to the alternate suggestions the following offered. Most studies have acknowledged the use self-labelling by young children to linguistically categorise the collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’, however, they haven’t interpreted children’s constructions and understandings of their “subjective identification” (Bennett & Sani, 2008), which is the categorical identity that is constructed as a result of structural indoctrination. Spears (1997), specifically argues against the process of re-categorisation used by social psychologists to bring varied ethnic groups together. Spears (1997), states that although theories of social psychology recognises group membership, and simultaneously engages in reorganising groups to build a unified vision, it fails to provide tools that promote social justice and equity, as in the name of re-categorisation the voices of minority groups are silenced. The socio-political focus on the development and the maintenance of this unique national identity ‘Australian’ can be regarded as a process of re-categorisation which is problematic for some. The very creation of a national subject has been problematised by authors such as Stokes (1997), Hage (2000) and Appadurai (2006). Spears (1997) argues that the interaction between individuals and cultures is complex, as ideological discourses in circulation prevent individuals from functioning in a “culture free” environment. My postcolonial reality prompted me to further examine the nature and role of structural indoctrination in shaping the cultural identities of individuals with the use of Althusser’s outlook on individual’s relationship with ideologies, especially in modulating our categorical behaviour. I still revert to my colonised voice, now tinged with my postcolonial resistance to examine the influence of political structures in moulding our identities in the following.

Identity development: othered by ideology

Identity is defined by Althusser (1971 cited in Alister, 1990, p. 123), as “Systems of ideas that dominate the mind of a person or social group”. Althusser like Marx was primarily concerned with defining the functions of socio-economic structures that create and maintain class hierarchy in a given society. However, if ideology is considered as a compilation of ideas that rules an individual or a group, in relation to my study, identity ideas, especially the characterisation of ‘Australian’ can be argued as being ideological. According to Althusser (2008), ideologies are perpetuated by those in power into the society by “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISA), which in turn converts individuals into subjects through the process of “interpellation”. The word “interpellation” is used to signify the repeated bombardment of symbolic messages that are showered by ISA on an individual to
create subjects out of them. Althusser (2008) includes socio-political institutions such as, the state, schools, churches and families as ISAs, who discipline and punish their subjects to make them subscribe to these messages. He further distinguishes an individual from a subject by stating, “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals, by the functioning of the category of the subject” (Althusser, 2008, p. 47). He explains how individuals are groomed to develop and function within their designated categories that they automatically respond with guilt if acknowledged as being otherwise. As the process that linguistically designates and categorises individuals, it can be argued that ‘interpellation’ is an othering process with which categorical identity behaviours are modulated.

Althusser (2008) further elucidates the omnipresent nature of ideology by saying that ideology makes individuals believe that they are thinking outside of it although they are governed within an ideological system. On the same token, Althusser admits that ideology is abstract and cannot exert power in the absence of individuals (Althusser, 2008). Therefore converting individuals into subjects is essential, to subjugate them by those in power, as subjects now respond to fulfil the functions of that subjective category with the belief that they are bound by a common truth. Earlier, it was outlined that individuals’ affiliation to categories such as, gender, ethnicity, culture and other groups is a constituent of one’s collective identity (Crisp & Turner, 2007; Hogg & Abrams, 2007). I had earlier highlighted that most modern societies are preoccupied with social constructs such as ethnicity, race and cultural identities (Taylor, 2004; Appadurai, 2006), and Australia’s socio-political structures have focused predominantly on constructing its national identity (Stokes, 1997). Therefore, I now argue that the ideological construction of ‘Australian’ has become central to the governing bodies of Australia, to subjectively groom and govern individuals, who belong to varied ethno-linguistic groups to reduce tensions that arise from group categorisation.

In relation to earlier identity theories of psychoanalysis, now the ideological constructions perpetuated by socio-political structures serve the purpose of ‘other’ in the development of one’s identity as ‘Australian’, as these provide language based attributes of this categorical ‘self’. The theories of social psychology simultaneously propose that an individual’s conception of one’s personal or collective identity invariably results in ‘othering’, which is distinguishing what one is and not in comparison to their ‘other’. Therefore, now governing structures of Australia has not just created ‘Australian’ subjects to be managed, in doing so it has unintentionally or intentionally also created those that do not fit this category, the ‘not Australian’. Thus, by combining the theories of social psychology with the influence of ideologies in identity development, subjects of Australia,
who are bound by this subjectivity ‘Australian’ will now begin to automatically conduct themselves in accordance to this category, and categorically exclude those who do not fit this image as ‘not Australian’. This covert pressure exerted by ideologies on subjects to behave in particular ways is termed as “hegemony”, and I now proceed to engage with this concept.

**Hegemony**

Hegemony is a term coined by Gramsci, a Marxist theorist, to designate the domination of the ruling class by convincing those in other classes with the use of education and media to believe that the interests of the ruling class is the interests of all (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000). Thus, hegemony is closely related to ideology, as ideology is dispersed and reinforced in a society by social apparatuses as referred earlier (Althusser, 2008), therefore, to attain hegemony, interpellation of subjects with ideology is necessary. Loomba (2005), annotates the link between hegemony and ideology as follows,

> Ideology is crucial in creating consent, it is the medium through which certain ideas are transmitted and, more important, held to be true. Hegemony is achieved not only by direct manipulation or indoctrination, but by playing upon common sense of people ...

(Loomba, 2005, p. 30)

Therefore, hegemony or dominance of subjects does not require force but can be achieved through working on individuals’ consciousness in making them believe what is offered is for their own good and wellbeing, as it is so closely related to their everyday thinking. In my study, hegemony then relates to the ideological conversion and domination of individuals as ‘Australian’ by the socio-political structures, thereby leading them to subscribe to this identity ‘Australian’ as ‘Australian’ subjects. Thus, individuals’ adherence to the ideological constructions of the identity ‘Australian’ in Australia is directly linked to taking ownership of the national identity and the nation. I now navigate to understand how the political structures of Australia have played the role of the ‘other’ in constructing and permeating the ideological national identity into the society. Weedon (1987) and Gee (2010) explain the connection between language and identity as follows.

> The Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.

(Weedon, 1987, p. 21)
In language, there are important connections among saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity). If I say anything to you, you cannot understand it fully if you do not know what I am trying to do and who I am trying to be by saying it. To understand it fully you need to know who is saying it and what the person saying it is trying to do.

(Gee, 2010, p. 11)

From above, I understand that language interactions on national identity, also relates to cultural identity, which is a combination of ‘race’ and ethnic attributes (see Gunaratnam, 2003; Taylor, 2004), and thus political statements around the identity of the national subject ‘Australian’ are significant to any discussions on cultural identity. Such language exchanges reveal the function of that statement and the identity of the exchange. In the following, I particularly engage with the political language with which Australia opened its doors to multiculturalism, as this was critical in reinventing the image of ‘Australian’, which till then was overtly positioned on white supremacy.

Identity of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’: a historical context

Historically, Tavan (2004) argues that the policies of Australia (Immigration Act or White Australia policy, 1901), established the Australian identity as English speaking, white subjects by overtly permitting predominantly British nationals and prohibiting others from entering and settling in Australia. Later, Makkai & McAllister (1993) point out that the post World War II gate keepers of white Australia liberalised their borders to other European migrants, to make Australia economically viable. Tavan (2004) adds that around the 1960s Australia faced severe criticism from non-European nations of the world, and it had to open its doors to Asian refugees reluctantly. Tavan also adds, that Menzies, the then Prime Minister of Australia openly declared that it was the nation’s right to build a homogenous population. However, it was only in 1973 that the Whitlam Labour government dismantled ‘White Australia policy’ and declared to the world its demise from its immigration policy (Arber, 1999; Young, 2001; Aveling, 2003). The political ideology until then was that the maintenance of a homogenous, white Australian society was imperative for its sovereignty and unity and taking overt measures to do so was essential in building this nation. Tavan (2004) expresses the inadequacy of what came after the ‘White Australia policy’ (1901) by stating that these policies only clarified the politicians’ unwillingness to renounce their control over Australian society as they did not overtly challenge Australian identity being centrally defined in terms of ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ culture. In what follows, I proceed to identify some of the key language statements that I regard as reflecting the subjectification
of individuals in Australia into ‘Australian’ subjects, during the dismantling of ‘White Australia policy’ (1901).

Since the demise of ‘White Australia policy’, the immigration policies openly promoted a multicultural vision towards a united goal for the society of Australia, thus the ideology shifted from unity in homogeneity to unity in diversity. Grassby’s political statements that unveiled Australia’s immigration policy revealed that the government expected absolute loyalty from its subjects for the “good of all” (Grassby, 1973). Therefore, the political motto declared that individuals and cultural groups as ‘Australian’ subjects were free to maintain their beliefs and faiths as long as the unity of Australia remained undisturbed. Grassby’s (Grassby, 1973) exact words at that time revealed the desire for subjectification of national subjects as he stated that all Australians, despite their backgrounds should take pride in saying “I am an Australian”. More was said about supporting migrant children to extract their goodwill towards Australia,

“it is hoped that this [bilingual programs in schools] will reduce family tensions...... and evoke a new respect by migrants for their adopted country’s proclaimed belief in freedom and equality”.

(Grassby, 1973, p. 9)

Thus, what was expected in the end was for all individuals to become committed to the nation Australia to become ‘Australian’ subjects. Arber (1999), adds that despite all the propaganda around the dismantling of the ‘White Australia policy’ at that time, very little was said or done to address and challenge the ideologies of the group that allowed white supremacy to prevail. Furthermore, Grassby (1973) with his multicultural vision, simultaneously categorically constructed migrants outside the national subject ‘Australian’, which I bring to note in the following.

Grassby’s declaration during the launch of Australia’s Immigration policy in 1973 seemed to present an Australian image that was multiple, reflecting many cultures in this land. However, what I also understood was that he did so by creating dichotomous groups of ‘migrant Australians’ and ‘other Australians’ as he states, “the social and cultural rights of migrant Australians are just as compelling as the rights of other Australians” (Grassby, 1973, p. 9). By stressing on “our national life”, he spoke as the identity bearer of that image ‘Australian’ thus serving the purpose of the ‘ideological other’. Furthermore, Grassby strengthened and centralised this image of ‘Australian’ as he distinguished this by constructing and naming groups such as, “Maltese process worker, Italian concreter” (p.2,
1973) outside the identity of ‘Australian’ by maintaining their ethnic boxes. With all the
named ethnic groups as being something other than ‘Australian’, he spoke about the groups
in Australia that altered “our national life”. Thus, Grassby attributed the characteristics of
migrants distinctly different as follows,

They have brought with them a common history and culture, an ideology different from the
Anglo-Saxon. They perceive different goals and pursue them in their own traditional ways. In
short, they lead a way of life which, while in living touch with its ancient forms and impulses, is
imperceptibly coming to terms with – or at least learning to co-exist......in our society.

(Grassby, 1973, p. 6)

I gathered from above, that the difference was collectively established by combining
many varied groups with terms, “they”, “their ideology and goals” in comparison to a
unitary group of ‘Anglo-Saxon’, representing the national identity ‘Australian’. Grassby
added to this by speaking about these groups, as being “traditional”, “living with its ancient
forms and impulses” and “learning to co-exist”, thus linking migrants with particular
images, and therefore, simultaneously eliminating these from those of ‘Anglo-Saxon
Australian’. The emphasis was on the less modern and the naive ‘migrant other’, who
needed to learn to live in ‘our society’ clearly denoted to me how what was seen as different
was also seen as being less progressive, entrenched in the past and therefore, needed to
‘learn’ to be in ‘our’ environment.

The flowering of a truly national spirit in Australia is not an optional extra, but a major
objective to be sought in the next few decades.

(Grassby, 1973, p. 8)

Thus he further sealed his quest to maintain the ‘Australian’ national subject, an
ambition and an aspiration of the nation, for many years to come. Stokes (1997) aptly
comments, that the development of a unified national identity to manage multiculturalism
has been a major socio-political goal in Australia, since the demise of ‘White Australia
policy’. I further try and uncover those elements in current immigration policy that has
extended the conception of ‘Australian’, in order to elaborate Tavan’s (2004) view about the
maintenance of ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ image as ‘Australian’.

Identity of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’: current context

The politics of current, postcolonial Australia has always been dictated by
“governmental white Australians” as termed by Hage (2000). Hage adds that their desire
has been to dominate the subjects of Australia by holding political and cultural power. The immigration policy, A New Agenda for multicultural Australia that followed (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999) is still embraced with minor updates by the current government as, Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Leeman and Reid (2006) are highly critical of current Australian multicultural discourses, as they believe that they were drawn to manage what was seen as problematic immigrants, who pose a threat to Australian unity and social harmony. They add as Rizvi suggests (1987, cited in Leeman & Reid, 2006) this form of multiculturalism is focused on maintaining the ‘other’ rather than challenging the discriminatory discourses that stigmatises cultural groups and their identities. I proceed to inquire a few statements from current multicultural policies as below,

Recommendation 20 from ‘A New Agenda for multicultural Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999) goes ahead to centralise the very same ‘Anglo Saxon’ heritage by reinstating colonial control over Australian subjects,

_Acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of our multicultural society, and in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which our democracy has evolved._

(Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 20)

By reinstating Great Britain’s democratic value, along with the recognition of multicultural contributions, the statement endorses selective engagement in cultural practices of each other, as freedom of choice. Furthermore, recommendation 22 from ‘A New Agenda for multicultural Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999) lays out the purpose for funding multicultural programs, in the following terms,

“need arising out of ethnicity or other cultural difference it ought to be met, just as all other special needs... exploiting the advantages of cultural diversity provides an economic, social or cultural benefit to Australia.....address disadvantage or loss of entitlement arising out of ethnicity or cultural differences, just as other forms of disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups relative to other Australians are addressed”

(Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 21),

Thus, as Grassby (1973) did, the statement still established ethnic or cultural differences as deficits needing intervention. As a ‘migrant Australian’, I felt that my cultural difference and diversity was distinguished and highlighted as attributes that were exploitable for the
goodness of all in Australia. To me, most of all this established the presence of ‘Australian’, a separate group oppositional to groups that possessed ethnicity and cultural differences, like mine.

The later document drawn by the Commonwealth of Australia (2003) adds to the existing multicultural policy above to speak of the commitment of “all Australians”, under four principles of “Responsibilities for all; Respect for each person; Fairness for each person; Benefits for all”. Here, the policies reiterated the democratic principles under which “all Australians” should be committed to defending Australian values of equality and freedom, and English as national language. Loomba (2005) considers language statements such as above that talk about advantages and benefits of all, as those aimed in perpetuating hegemonic power and control over the ideologically constructed subjects. Thus, the quest for hegemony still prevailed with notions of all subjects working towards this common goal. With the ideological propagation of national identity, playing the role of the ‘other’ in shaping the ‘Australian’ subjects, my interest now shifted to explore whether and whose identity the ideologies ‘othered’ and how. I now began to etch the identity of Australia’s politics with my colonised roots, as both India and Australia share the same heritage of ‘British Raj/rule’. Hence, my second research question prompted by the examination of my coloniser’s politics, now was further darkened with my postcolonial tone due to my Ganga’s second stream.

- What are the meanings of such enactments in shaping othered identities?

While engaging with this question, my key focus will be to identify adults’ and children’s interactions in early childhood settings that ‘speak’ for and about this identity ‘Australian’, the identity that has been ‘othered’ not only by ideology, but also by those who name ‘self’ as ‘Australian’. I will try to make meaning of whether and how individuals ‘othered’ or interpellated by ISA (Althusser, 2008) respond as subjects, to their subjective identities. In doing so, I will try to uncover the ways in which the identities are shaped in particular ways, and whether this identity is solidified or modified consciously and unconsciously in our everyday interactions. However, I recognise that in doing so, I attribute absolute power to the structures, and I make individuals seem like mere puppets by usurping their agency. Moreover, this will not enable me to identify how these ideologies operate and influence our daily cultural identity practices in early childhood settings. Therefore, I further engaged with critical literature that exposed the varied ways in which individuals can engage with structures.
According to Elliot (2007), Giddens addresses this dynamic interaction between individuals (self) and the social structures (other). Elliot (2007) suggests that Giddens believed in the presence of ‘self’ in both individuals and social structures and that ‘self’ has the capacity to constantly engage in reflexivity, contemplating the present and the past to make decisions for the future. Thus the identity of both an individual self and that of the society can be changed through negotiation. Giddens attributed more power to an individual in the construction of ‘self’, as he saw ‘self’ having the capacity to initiate change in social structures. Spears (1997) argues that as much as individuals are influenced by social structures, individuals create social structures and therefore have the propensity to become social agents, who can resist or reinforce those structures. However, Spears adds that the voice of an individual alone is never enough to disrupt dominant ideologies, especially when the social structures support the permeation and propagation of such ideological conceptions of identities. It has been identified earlier that ideology is abstract and impotent and has to be delivered and propagated by social institutions and in turn mediated and embraced by subjects in a society as a part of their daily lives (Althusser, 2008). Therefore, ideologies need a vehicle operated by subjects, to practise their commitment to that categorical identity in varied ways, and authors below discuss how discourses serve as those vehicles in propagating ideologies. In order to understand how ideologies are embedded and are made meaningful by subjects in their everyday practices to reinforce and resist ideological constructions of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, I now introduce discourses.

**Discourse**

“Discourses are sets of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalised force, which means that they have a profound influence on the way that individuals act and think”.

(Mills, 2004 p.5)

*Discourses are out in the world and history as coordinations, (“a dance”) of people, places, times, actions, interactions, verbal and non-verbal expression, symbols, things, tools, and technologies that betoken certain identities and associated activities. Thus they are material realities. But discourses exist, as work, we as humans do to get ourselves and things recognised in certain ways and not others. They are also “maps” in our heads by which we understand society. Discourse, then, are social practices and mental entities, as well as material realities.*

(Gee, 2010, pp. 51-52)

Therefore, firstly, discourses are linguistic statements, which are attached to social institutions, and are significant in influencing individuals’ behaviours and thoughts, their
identity enactments. Thus, the ideological statements, which I underlined earlier as being professed by the Australian socio-political structures, can be seen as discourses that guide how individuals act and think. Secondly, discourses become the medium through which individuals express their identities, and these encompass all forms of symbolic expressions, and our daily exchanges. Ideologies are symbolically propagated via discourses (Wodak, 2001), and discourse is a product of ideology (Locke, 2004). Thus, discourses link our everyday symbolic identity interactions with institutional statements, and therefore the hegemonic perpetuation of ideologies. The same categorical use of language made significant by theories of psychoanalysis and social psychology, now are considered as beyond the mere labels of one’s identity. They become the very essence of how we understand and conduct who we are in relation to who we are not, and therefore our daily realities, our practices. Here, one’s identity enactments include linguistic and non-linguistic constituents. Thus, the distant set of ideas about categorical existence of groups in Australia, constructed by structures become everyday realities within which these identity representations are enacted by representatives through discourses.

The discourses therefore begin to play the role of structural ideologies, the ‘other’ mediating identities of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. Ideology or ideas about who is an ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, gets intricately woven into individual s’ daily existence by social institutions through discourses, and individuals in turn discursively serve as subsidiary vehicles, therefore, the ‘other’ to propagate those ideologies. Here, we are moving away from the rational individual ‘self’ who is capable of making conscious decisions about building the constituents of ‘self’ and ‘other’ identities, but is now making everyday decisions to suit the stipulations of powerful structures with the belief of upholding common interests. Therefore, the discourses of both ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ become the ‘other’ making ideologies operable in our daily lives. Moreover, individuals’ categorical affiliation guides ways of enacting one’s identity in a particular historical, ideological and social context. Therefore, the cultural identity enactments of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, in relation to this disposition become transformed into practising one’s subjectivity and the enacting bodies (both individuals and groups) become subjective agents.

Like Gee, (2010), Camara (2008) remarks on material effects, however, he links these with ideologies, by saying that individuals’ daily social existence is linked to material effects, which are in turn linked to the ideologies espoused by political, legal and religious institutions. Thus, if the subjects’ daily existence and material effects are related to
ideologies, and ideologies are propagated by discourses, discourses are also related to both ideologies and daily existence. Therefore, discourses now govern our identities, as we become committed to ideologically driven categorical identities. However, I reminded myself that individuals do have the capacity to reinforce and resist structures (Spear, 1997; Elliot, 2007), and therefore, there are different ways of being committed to ideologically prescribed identities.

Poststructural feminist, Weedon (1987) too argues that as subjects we can take varied ways of enacting that subjectivity, however, some are more powerful than others, therefore, we can choose either to comply or resist what is socially expected and thus resist power. Weedon (1987) adds that subjectivities are heavily guarded and governed by historically and socio-politically specific power relations. Therefore, I understand that although there are numerous ways of discursively practising ‘Australian’ or ‘not Australian’, certain ways of enacting each of these subjectivities are more powerful than others. The subjects can choose amongst these, however, their choices are attached to material effects, therefore, subjects will choose to perpetuate power or resist, and diffuse power. Spears aptly describes the potency of discourses as follows,

“Discourses can thus be seen as providing a repertoire of resources that the individual uses to achieve different functions as well as to interpret the social world”.

(Spears, 1997, p. 6)

Therefore, Spears argues that discourses can serve as the means through which the “different functions”, be it speaking or silencing to dominate, and speaking or silencing to resist and challenge, can be realised by individuals. Therefore, identifying discursive transmission of ideologies is critical not just to recognise how subjects are subjugated by structures, but also how subjects can resist structural imposition. My interest was on recognising some of the key cultural identity discourses available for cultural enactors, and configuring the role of discourses in creating possibilities for resisting cultural dominance. I specifically wanted to engage with unpacking ‘what is Australian’, as this has been underlined by Australian multicultural politics. With my Ganga’s final stream of resistance dominating my colonised thoughts and voice, I proposed my postcolonial challenge with postcolonial ‘othered’ voices,

- How can they be transformed to reshape identities in othered voices?
I intend to engage with this question by identifying how as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ subjects, the children and adults in the setting discursively respond and contribute to this ideologically defined national subject in different ways. Therefore, to identify discourses, I will include not only those language statements that are exchanged between subjects, but also some of our silences and distractions. In particular, with the use of postcolonial theoretical base, I will transform ‘speakers’ into postcolonial subjects, to be able to identify the discursive strategies that not only support the circulation of those discourses, but also those that resist prescribed ways of thinking and being for transformation. Thereby, I will try and uncover as cultural subjects, depending on our subjective affiliation to the ideology, ‘Australian’, rather than enacting cultural identities, how we practice postcolonial discursive subjectivities that contribute towards our daily material effects. I justify the use of postcolonial theories briefly as follows, and I discuss these in depth in chapter 2.

The process of ‘othering’, a benign form of differentiating ‘self’ and ‘other’ is seen as being central to the very conceptualisation and the development of individuals, as underpinned by theories of psychoanalysis (See Easthorpe, 1999; Lacan, 2002; Elliott, 2010) and social psychology (See Stokes, 1997; Crisp & Turner, 2007; Goethals, 2007; Bennett & Sani, 2008; McKinlay & McVittie, 2008). The theories of social psychology stress the importance of alienating one’s group from the rest in order to affiliate the “social self” to categorical groups to inculcate feelings of belonging (see Hogg & Abrams, 2007; Crisp & Turner, 2007). The proponents of these theories also propose that re-categorising groups by bringing all members to form a collective identity can dissipate disunity and tensions between groups (Crisp & Turner, 2007). However, the same process of ‘othering’ has deeper meanings within postcolonial literature, as it is regarded as a process that not only distinguishes ‘self’ from ‘other’, but as a process that sets out hierarchical relationships between the groups of ‘Self’ and ‘other’. The ‘Self’ engages in a purposeful form of ‘othering’ that enables ‘Self’ to possess, take and maintain control over the rest of the groups (see Said, 1978; Ashcroft et al, 2000; Young, 2001; Loomba, 2005; Camara, 2008).

I had outlined earlier how the socio-political structures of Australia had repeatedly aimed to ideologically build a loyal, committed, unified Australian identity and the rest of the identities around the national subject. Authors have commented that this has resulted in migrants and indigenous Australians as being constructed as racially and ethnically different “other” to the national subject (Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006). Holmes et al (2007) believe that the discourse of multiculturalism has created stringent boundaries by
marginalising ethnic communities, and moreover, by fossilising the cultures of those groups it has excluded them from what is considered as ‘Australian’ by the dominant group. Therefore, the ideologies of Australia have created and attributed the distinguishable national subject using which, the subjects classify ‘Self’ as ‘Australian’, and exclude ‘other’ ‘not Australian’ using postcolonial form of ‘othering’, establishing a hierarchical relationship between the national subject and the rest of the groups. My tensions between my colonised roots and postcolonial realities surfaced again, as I struggled with choosing between the many of my Ganga’s stream for further engagement in my study. Still nurturing my quest to decolonise my ‘self’, I finally gathered all my colonised and postcolonial thoughts and understandings that surfaced from my Ganga’s streams to lead my Ganga-the study as follows.

Early childhood is seen as a critical period for the development of who you are, the ‘self’, one’s individual and collective identity (Miell, 1995; Schaffer, 1996). Children construct the identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ using categorical language such as race, ethnicity and colour around the age of two (Epstein, 2009) and moreover, children’s attribution of value to these categories are evident in their play behaviour. Epstein (2009) believes that even young children are influenced by the socio-contextual messages available to them about such categorical representations of identities, and thereby choose identity preferences accordingly. Young children learn from media and significant others through language that is used to refer to their own groups and others, and thus learn to stereotype and develop prejudice (Crisp & Turner, 2007). Therefore, even young children evaluate and position ‘self’ and ‘other’, as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ with what is available in their social environment. Therefore, Kowalski (2007) recommends that early childhood teachers need to become aware of their own behaviour, that contributes towards children’s development of attitudes towards their own group and those of others.

Although social psychology has identified that children use self-labelling as indicators of their social identity development, it hasn’t engaged with the evidence of “subjective identification”, which is influenced by ideology (Bennet & Sani, 2008). Ideological constructions of identity categories can influence all individuals in a given society and thereby dictate categorical identity behaviours due to their commitment to specific categories (Althusser, 2008). Thus, children and adults alike can become influenced by ideologies that perpetuate subjective national, ethnic or cultural categories about who they are and they are not. All identity constructions with the use of binaries are seen as highly problematic by Connolly (2008) and Davies (2008), as these create a hierarchical
relationship between the two groups between which power can be exerted. Therefore, Weedon (2004) and Wenger (2008) recommend the development of flexible identities in all children, to support all cultures to evolve together. However, within the multicultural context of Australia, it has been established that the multicultural discourses of Australia have resulted in the construction of the postcolonial “other”, and this discourse has been the guiding force in educational practices including early childhood education (Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006).

Not many studies in Australia have been conducted in early childhood settings to identify how young children and adults are influenced by structural ideologies and respond to these discursively in particular ways. Therefore, if ideological discourses can influence particular ways of practising ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ identities by individuals, adults and children, how do these affect everyday cultural enactments in early childhood settings? My son, who has spent most of his life in Australia, deepened my reflection on my research questions when he said:

“Hybridity is a reality for us amma, but it is an imagination for white people.”

(othered Australian - my son)

I began to reflect on what he meant by this, and what is his hybrid reality, which is an imagination of ‘white’ people, and will hybridity ever become a reality for all of us, and what inhibits hybridity from becoming everyone’s reality. In these reflections, my Ganga, my study began. I sourced Ganga in order to engage with the complexities of enacting with cultures in early childhood settings, for me, my son, and all the children in them. In the following chapter, I discuss my Ganga’s courses, the theoretical frameworks that I used to channel, shape and deepen cultural identities, Australia and early childhood.
Chapter - 2

Ganga’s courses: theoretical frameworks

My Ganga’s courses—my choice of theoretical frameworks used in making meaning of my data were driven by my topic, the nature of each of my questions, and most of all my own affiliation to specific theoretical understandings, and my understandings and experiences with cultural identities in Australia and early childhood. I began making meaning of Ganga—my data using theories of identity within the field of social psychology. I then sought to identify the influence of structural ideologies and postcolonial theories of identities through discourse analysis. Although in designing my study, I had broadly built ideas about how I would use these theories to interact with my research and data, it was not until I began to engage with the research as an embodied process, my choices shifted and moved as Ganga—the data unfolded particular meanings. These meanings brought with them silenced questions at the time the data was generated and later analysed and discussed through each of my Ganga’s course.

My Ganga’s courses

I had said earlier, my strong subjective investment in postcolonial and critical race theories drove me to engage with social psychology to understand the process of ‘othering’, not only to clarify my understanding of this procedure, but also to decolonise my thoughts and views about events that I encountered in Australia. Therefore, I planned to engage with my data using theories of psychoanalysis and social psychology, however, due to my subjective commitment to poststructural, postcolonial theories, I found it difficult to disengage myself from these roots. I persevered, in order to recognise and highlight if at all there was a gap in the way theories of social psychology explained the interaction of cultures, especially within the Australian context. Diverging from this point, I wanted to then engage with critical theoretical dispositions in order to compare and contrast how and what each body of knowledge contributed to understanding the interaction of cultures. I had broadly set out my research questions as outlined by my literature review to address these components and to theoretically channelize my data under each of my Ganga’s courses. My inner wrestles with my decolonising, yet colonised and postcolonial thoughts with which my Ganga—the study began continued right till the very end of my Ganga’s conclusion. In the following I begin with how I broadly planned to theorise my data, again shifting between my decolonising aspirations, yet colonised and postcolonial thoughts and voices.
Theorising with socio-psychological ‘self’ and ‘other’

My first question focussed on identifying the main language categories with which, we as cultural speakers (children, families and staff, and me) spoke of our boundaries that distinguished our collective ‘self’ against our collective ‘other’. I therefore, planned to use theories of social psychology and psychoanalysis that fundamentally outlined the process of ‘othering’ used by children and adults in constructing the collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. With decolonisation still occupying my mind, in my colonised voice, I summarise some of the key features of this theoretical base, which I intend to use to engage with my first research question.

- Social identity greatly affects the behaviour of individuals, as we categorise the characteristics of our own group and those of others, and it is constructed by individuals, by evaluating the attributes of ‘self’ in relation to the group they belong (Hogg & Abrams, 2007; Wright & Taylor, 2007). The self-categorisation, a process outlined above enables individuals to use a set of norms with which they see the identity of the group of ‘self’ and therefore those of ‘other’ collectively, and the members see more similarities within the group members of ‘self’, and more differences in ‘other’ (Crisp & Turner, 2007; Goethals, 2007; Quinn, Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2007).

- Children and adults use language to categorise and express ‘self’ through ‘other’ (Easthorpe, 1999; Lacan, 2002; Elliott, 2010), and this influences what we think about each other and how we understand the actions and behaviours of ‘self’ and ‘other’ (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008).

My first research question is primarily concerned with identifying the main categories that we, as cultural enactors use language to speak about the cultural identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ collectively. Therefore, I specifically intend to focus on how similarities and differences are established by speakers using language, when they name and attribute their cultural identities.

- Research concludes that by 4 years of age children living in multi-ethnic communities are able to differentiate between members of different ethnic groups (Epstein, 2009). Children as young as 5-6 years of age show a strong preference to be identified with the group that has higher status, and their self-esteem is derived from belonging to that group (Nesdale, 2008). Pre-schoolers’ awareness about negative judgements about their own group make them want to affiliate themselves with a group of higher status, and children gather this
information from the media and those around them (Crisp & Turner, 2007; Kowalski, 2007).

As it has been concluded by researchers above that very young children not only differentiate ethnic groups by conceptualising their attributes, but also adeptly respond to the attitudes contributed to these attributes, I use this framework to recognise how young children distinguish and values cultural identity attributes of ethnic groups in early childhood settings with peers and adults.

My focus in this stage of analysis was predominantly influenced by Hall (2003), who highlights the importance of “difference” in the interaction and classification of cultural meanings, and I summarise this as follows.

- “Difference” matters as by saying what we are, we are also saying what we are not, and these binaries create difference in power relationships.
- “Difference” is necessary to construct the meaning of words, so dialogue with the ‘other’ is necessary.
- Binary oppositions are essentialised as cultural identities, are assigned different positions, and are made critical to classifications and cultural meanings.
- Psychoanalysis argues ‘other’ is essential to construct what ‘self’ is, and ‘self’ is always formed by comparing ‘self’ with ‘other’, and therefore how ‘self’ is perceived by ‘other’ is critical to the conception of ‘self’, and vice versa.

Thus hope to recognise how “difference” is expressed, which I understand as, how children and adults use language to distinguish and categorise our cultural identity (‘race’, national and ethno-linguistic identity), and our specific attributes with which we categorise our collective ‘self’ and ‘other’. I have planned to include the contextual information of such language exchanges, in order to gather the influence of these in reinforcing or recategorising categories expressed for ‘self’ by ‘other’. The following chapters 4 and 5 are based on my engagement with my Ganga-the data under the above theoretical course of Ganga.

**Theorising with ideological ‘self’ and ‘other’**

My Ganga’s initial theoretical course only provides me with a base to organise identity interactions between individuals that reveal how they ‘speak’ about the cultural attributes of ‘self’ and ‘other’ (individual/collective), and their roles in modulating the identities of each other. In my literature review, I had also outlined that our cultural identities are influenced
and shaped by structural ideologies. The second question focuses on inquiring whether our categorical affiliations are shaped by the prevailing ideological statements that conceptualised and developed the identity of Australia and ‘Australian’. In addressing this question, I intend to recognise what is broadly classified and ‘spoken’ as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ by us as cultural enactors, and their relationship with structural statements that convey those ideas to individuals within Australia. I summarise my reasons as follows.

- Ideologies interpellate individuals and convert them into subjects, as they have a strong influence on how individuals behave and function within that categorical identity (Althusser, 2008). Socio-political institutions such as, the state, schools, churches and families are “Ideological state apparatuses” (ISA), who discipline and punish their subjects to make them subscribe to these messages (Althusser, 2008). Thus, individuals are groomed to develop and function within their designated categories, and they automatically respond with guilt if acknowledged as being otherwise. The constant bombardment of ideologies by many social apparatuses, contain messages about one’s identity conduct, including nationalism and it is the individuals’ connection to this subject position that gives them that emotional power (Weedon, 1987).

- Children’s development of ‘self’, their identity is affected by the attitudes that they absorb from the media and significant others, such as members of their family, teachers and peers (Crisp & Turner, 2007). The ideological messages that are in circulation are always in interaction with the individual; therefore, a “culture free” environment is impossible (Spears, 1997).

Therefore, analysing how ideological messages on nationalism and national identity influence adults, and later inform them about supporting children’s identity development allows me to identify the presence and permeation of ideological messages in early childhood settings. To engage in such analysis I intend to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, Fairclough, 1992), and I summarise my reasons as follows.

- CDA is as much a method as it is a theory, as it aims to theorise the role of language, including all forms of symbols, its connections with the wider social processes (Fairclough, 1992). The study of ideology is to investigate how meanings are constructed and propagated symbolically and the social contexts within which they are propagated, and CDA believes language is the medium using which people in power gain and maintain control, and therefore, it can be used to identify how ideology functions in social institutions and how people
obtain and maintain power (Wodak, 2001). According to McKinlay & McVittie (2008), CDA aims to point out the social inequalities present in interactions by how the dominant ideologies are present in individuals' language.

CDA for me serves as a theory and a means that I can use for analysing particularly, individuals’ subjective language expressions of categories ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ and their relationship with structural statements.

- Since the demise of ‘white Australia Policy’ (Immigration Act, 1901 or White Australia policy) in the 1970s, the Australian government’s primary agenda has been to develop a strong sense of national identity amongst its citizens (Stokes, 1997). Therefore, most socio-political institutions including educational settings have primarily aimed to promote the national identity along with exposure to cultures for cross-cultural understanding (Aveling, 2002 & Leeman & Reid, 2007).

I intend to use extracts from the famous speech by Grassby (Grassby, 1973), that launched Australia’s multicultural stance, and statements from Australia’s current Immigration policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; 2003) that were discussed in my literature review. I will specifically focus on whether and how particular identity understandings conveyed by these ideologies are embedded in our language exchanges, and how the structures serve the purpose of the ‘other’ in defining ‘self’.

Fairclough’s model of CDA (Fairclough, 1992) positions text centrally, to analyse its production, distribution and consumption by individual subjects, and further makes links with the wider socio-political structures. Thus, this model links language use with individuals’ categorical identity performance, and their unconscious relationship with the social structures and the propagation of power. Rather than using texts embedded within language statements, as recommended by Fairclough (1992), I intend to thematically collate and use larger bodies of our exchanges in the form of narratives, to include the social context within which they were produced, and my own subjective reflective analysis and interpretations as and when they were exchanged. I specifically will try and identify how certain ways of being and enacting cultural identities within Australia, is ‘othered’, controlled and maintained by ideologies in particular ways.

Theorising with Foucault and postcolonialism

The above use of my Ganga’s theoretical course will provide a base that links whether and how ideologies play the role of ‘other’ in categorising, constructing and defining ‘self’,
especially the national identity of ‘self’. However, this will not enable me to understand why and how ideologies are transferred into our daily practices. My third question is concerned with the transformation of everyday identity enactments of all individuals, ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, in early childhood settings to reshape all identities. For this, I seek the support of poststructural feminist discourse analysis (Weedon, 1987), as discourses are sanctioned language statements with institutional force (Mills, 2004). As Gee (2010) adds discourses are directly related to material effects, and they encompass all forms of symbols, ways of being, thinking and use of language to understand the social world and relate to each other through categorical subjectification.

Poststructuralism as a theoretical foundation points out that language is invariably tied to identity and it provides a space to talk about ineffectiveness and fragility of identity categories (White, 2002). Weedon (1987) too brings to note that poststructuralism is necessary to challenge unified identities constructed using language, and that feminists can use poststructuralism to contest the monolithic meanings attached to language categories. Weedon (1987) adds that poststructuralism enables one to deny essentialised categories, by focusing on the way texts create subjective positions for individuals that can be inherently contradictory. Thus, linguistic categories as such do not have intrinsic meanings, apart from what is extrinsically attributed to them. However, Gunarathnam (2003) aptly points out that poststructuralism is inadequate in addressing inequities that are presented by postcolonial and multicultural contexts, as categories created within ethnicity and ‘race’ have experiences that are unique, and therefore grouping becomes essential to talk about such experiences. Therefore, Weedon (1987) too recommends the use of Foucault’s discourse analysis to illustrate how structurally bound categorical identity enactments are discursive in nature, and due to their direct relationship with material effects, subjects adhere and practice structurally approved discourses to realise power.

Any discourse analysis is theory driven and therefore it requires the researcher to outline typical discourses identified by that theory (Sapsford, 2006). I use postcolonial and critical race theories to identify, name and discuss the concepts that support these discourses. In the following I initially clarify the discourse analysis technique that I intend to use and later I explain how I use the above theories within my discourse analysis. In this section the analysing maps sketched with specific combination of theories to make meaning of my Ganga-the data is enmeshed with my own subjectivity, my relationship with my colonised and anti-colonial past, my postcolonial realities, and my experiences with colour in Australia.
Foucault’s approach to discourse analysis

Foucault in his work talks about the relationship between language, subjectivity, discourse and their interaction with structures (Foucault, 1972, 1977 & 2010), and how discourses are historically traceable, even though they morph with the context. As pertinent as Foucault’s work is to my study, I found it very difficult to conceptually and justifiably use his works as a theoretical base. Graham (2005) very precisely comments on the difficulty in using Foucault’s work as an organised framework for analysis, however, concedes that Foucault would not have wanted it to be any other way, as he was opposed to prescriptive forms of knowledge. Hall (2003) too agrees with the difficulty in using Foucault, however, recommends this form of analysis in order to link language and daily practice. Fairclough (1992) contends that although Foucault’s approach to discourse analysis is abstract, the key elements of his work can be included when analysing language oriented discourse analysis. Weedon (1987), on the other hand legitimises the use of Foucault’s form of discourse analysis, as it specifically identifies resistance against dominance at the very individual level, to show where and how alternatives already exist, thus enabling changes to eventuate. Therefore, I summarise the key concepts that I have used in my analysis as follows,

- Discourses are particular ways of thinking, being and acting. Although there can be many discourses available, only particular ways of thinking, being and acting a particular identity is legitimised and the socio-contextually approved ways relate to power and sanction (Mills 2004; Gee, 2010). They may become a part of commonsense and they regulate individuals’ body, mind, actions and emotions (Loomba, 2005). Discourses need subjects to embrace them through their subjectivity, or their subjective investment to that categorical identity, and the subjective positions are hierarchically related, as they reflect the power relations already established in the society (Weedon, 1987; Blaise, 2005b). A subject’s attachment to a particular discourse is derived from the power or lack of it between discourses and subjects (Weedon, 1987).

In relation to my study, the categorical identity that individuals speak with, for and about, as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, becomes their subjectivity. However, the discursive practice of that subjectivity, whether ‘Australian’ or ‘not Australian’ can vary depending on the subjects’ attachment to that category, which is also connected to power. Therefore, ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ subjects perform discursively approved practices to retain and maintain power or resist and risk sanctions.
Discourse constitutes the objects of knowledge, the subject, the social ‘self’, and their social relationships (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1992) adds that according to Foucault, what is made into an object (such as race, citizenship, nationality, madness, sexuality etc.) is listed, categorised, divided, described and explained with a set of statements and is attributed and internalised by the subject.

In my study, the ‘Australian’ and the ‘not Australian’ are both identity objects that are classified, listed, described and explained objects using statements, which are consumed and internalised by subjects. Thus, every identity has to be ‘othered’ in order to be internalised by subjects, as this is a process that uses language to categorically attribute and construct identities.

Discourses are strategically interdependent and are historically related to texts, and Foucault argues that they are present in many texts and actions and in many spaces, however, the discursive strategies change contextually to realise those material effects (Hall, 2003). The strategies ensure that only certain effects are realised and are realisable. The strategies constitute statements, actions and silences, thus include discursive and non-discursive constraints (Fairclough, 1992).

In order to recognise and identify the interdependence and historical connections of discourses and the strategic nature of discursive practice, I hope to use postcolonial and critical race theoretical interpretations to name the strategies with which certain material effects are made realisable and are realised.

Discourse is directly related to reality and the discursive language or statement, is spoken from that subjectivity and signifies the meaning of that reality (Fairclough, 1992). In order to critically use Foucault to engage with language statements with an aim to identify the material effects, Graham (2005) recommends the researcher to ask the following questions,

- How does the statement function? How does it list, classify and order (in other words, ‘other’)?
- What does it offer the speaker, what and who does it privilege and what and who does it silence?
I intend to use the above questions to identify the speaker (subject) and the statements that spoke of identities, ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, and how it listed, classified and ordered these identities. By drawing upon postcolonial and critical race theoretical concepts, I plan to name what the statement did to the speaker and what material effects are realisable by both identities.

- Although Foucault believed that nothing existed outside discourses, he did not reject material reality, but believed that identities did not possess meaning outside discourses, as discourses are imbued with power (Hall, 2003). According to Weedon (1987), due to their relationship with power, meanings can contest, reaffirm or maintain existing social relations, and therefore, meanings are not fixed and they change with the reader, the subjective position that one interprets the discursive statement. Foucault’s critiques have pointed out that he gives too much importance to power and dominance and does not take those who can and resist power and dominance (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough (1992) adds that Foucault does recognise subjects’ power to resist by the recognition of “reverse discourse”, a form that uses the same strategies as those of the dominant, but to subvert the same. Weedon (1987) too acknowledges that Foucault attributes much importance to discursive power, however, she adds that there are a number of discourses in circulation and in competition, and some are inside and outside institutional practices, and it is the points of contestation between what is inside and outside that creates possibilities for change.

This is one of the key reasons why I intend to use poststructural feminist discourse analysis, as I believed that by analysing and linking our discourses with our daily realities experienced in early childhood settings, I will be able to identify our unconscious subjective commitment to structurally imposed categorical behaviour. And through participatory action research methodology, I hoped to transform and induce change in current ideas and practises with cultures in such settings. In the following I illustrate how I intend to use postcolonial and critical race theories as a part of the specific combination of theoretical knowledge to make meaning of Ganga-my data. My struggles with my inability to let go of my colonised and anti-colonial past and my postcolonial realities were brought forth strongly by this section of my Ganga’s course, and I slowly began to contemplate with what decolonisation meant for me.
The colonial and postcolonial Australia

Australia has a colonised past and at the advent of colonialism with the arrival of Captain Cook in 1770, Australia Indigenous population was between 500,000 to 750,000 (Flood, 2006 cited in Holmes et al, 2007). By declaring Australia as ‘terra nullius’, empty piece of land, British law was applied indiscriminately to take possession of land and its peoples (Holmes et al, 2007). The Australian Natives’ Association, one of the organisations, which was instrumental in accomplishing Australian federation in 1901, was made up of white men born in Australia (National Council for the Centenary of Federation, 2001) with no member from the indigenous population, as its name otherwise implies. Thus, with an image of having established a unique Australian identity that set them apart from their British origin, the identity of Australia was controlled by ‘white men’ born in Australia. However, Loomba (2005) points out, even now white settlers are seen as agents of colonial rule and gaining cultural and political autonomy in their settled land do not make them a part of the colonised peoples. Initially, the ‘white Australia policy’ (1901) preserved the Australian identity as English speaking, white subjects by overtly privileging predominantly British nationals (Tavan, 2004). Despite its demise in the 1970s, the politics of current, postcolonial Australia has always been dictated by “governmental white Australians” as termed by Hage (2000), with their desire to dominate the subjects of Australia by holding political and cultural power. Thus, the ‘Australian’ identity had always been historically controlled by ‘whiteness’ and its colonial past.

Young (2001) considers that the negation of ‘White Australia policy’ was the postcolonial beginning in Australia. Therefore, Australia can be considered as a postcolonial nation with a colonised history, with its colonised past still influencing the identity of those who colonised and those who were colonised. Considering Australia’s colonial past and postcolonial present, engaging with postcolonial theoretical concepts is highly relevant, especially to engage with the complexities inherent in such societies. I begin with how I understand and intend to use postcolonial concepts in the following.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism can be seen as a period that comes after the rule or colonial domination or imperial power, and as a body of literature that specifically examines power that is still dominant and economically driven (Young, 2001, 2003). It not only highlights the markers of decolonisation, but also aims to act against the current tacit domination of colonial power within socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects of the society (Young, 2001). Young (2001) states, postcolonial theory accommodates multiple movements as it aims to
challenge the hegemonic possession of cultural capital, addresses positives and negatives of bringing people or cultures together and investigates past colonial history. Loomba (2005) regards this is one of the reasons that a temporal definition of postcolonialism is highly debatable, as it not only signifies a country’s independence from colonialism, but also neo-colonialism at the same time, which signifies the country’s cultural and economic dependence to its colonial past. The creation of culture itself is seen as a colonial discourse and Fox (1971, cited in Camara, 2008) adds that colonisers create identities for the colonised in particular ways that the colonised begin to see themselves through those constructions. Thus, colonialism can result in creating identities, especially cultural identities for individuals and groups in settler countries with differences of power between colonial settlers, with control and guardianship, and the colonised peoples, who are controlled and managed.

Most postcolonial authors agree that working with postcolonialism gives voice to the ‘other’, as the ‘other’ is able to express their worldview (Ashcroft, 2001; Young 2001, 2003; Prasad, 2003; Loomba, 2005; Rush, 2006). As much as I tried to avoid using postcolonial lens to view my Ganga-the data, I had already been exposed to these theories. During the implementation of my action research, I hoped to reflect on how consciously and unconsciously my spontaneous interpretations and interactions were being constantly influenced by my investment in these theories. Therefore, as a postcolonial ‘othered’ subject, I believed it will give me a space to express an alternate understanding about multicultural practices in Australia. In the following, I discuss some of the specific postcolonial concepts that I intend to use in my analysis.

**Orientalism**

Said’s scholarly work, Orientalism (Said, 1978), that discusses colonisation and its impact on postcolonial societies, is an earliest source that one could use to analyse colonial language used in centralising western ideologies and ‘othering’ the rest from this central position (Young, 2001; Loomba, 2005). According to Prasad (2003), Said’s Orientalism applies the poststructural analytical tool, discourse, and yet, it is a critique of western poststructural writings that refuses to engage with the ruins of colonialism, and in that way there is tension between the two. Although Foucault did not directly discuss, culture and ethnicity in his work, Young (2001) comments, that the very fact that postcolonialism uses discourse to discuss colonial ways of engaging with the orient (colonised), especially by highlighting its presence in structures and in multiple texts, it is very compatible with Foucault’s work. According to Prasad (2003), Orientalism for Said has three distinct
meanings; firstly, it is a western occupation that focuses on studying the orient as an object. Secondly, it is a dichotomous thought, as it distinguishes orient and the occident. Thirdly, it is a discourse, therefore, it is complex, institutional ways of thinking, being and acting used to manage the orient. As my study is concerned with how language is used especially to construct national and multicultural identities discursively, I decided to use Said’s (1978) Orientalism and its interest, as a source to make meaning of the discursive constructions of cultures in early childhood settings.

Prasad (2003) acknowledges that Orientalism has been criticised by some for its use of stringent dichotomies, (occident/orient; west/east; coloniser/colonised) and its non-recognition of the change in views of the west about the orient with time. Prasad adds that some believe that it overstates colonial representations of the orient and it presents such representations as a discourse and an ideology (2003). Young (2001) and Prasad (2003) agree that although many authors had criticised Said’s failure to recognise the resistance by western and non-western opposition to colonialism, Said has overcome this by doing so in his later editions and books that he wrote after Orientalism. In the following, I discuss those key interests of Orientalism, which are pertinent to my analysis.

‘Self’, ‘other’, and ‘othering’

Orientalism theorises the influence and the impact of coloniser on the colonised in an organised manner, using which one is able to identify, make meaning and classify texts, attitudes and understandings of categorical behaviour that results in dominance of one group over the other. As a body of knowledge it is still concerned with the interactions between ‘Self’ and ‘other’, but its emphasis is on the self-centred nature of colonial discourses and how this position is used to conceptualise the rest, the ‘other’. The west or Europe uses the orient, its image, personality and experience to construct what ‘Self’ is (Said 1978). Said adds that the ‘different orient’, as a construct and a concept, goes beyond imagination as it influences practices (1978). Therefore, maintaining that orient ‘other’ becomes imperative for the very existence of ‘Self’. The Occident, ‘Self’ has institutional force, being in charge of peoples and land due to colonisation, therefore, has the power to dominate, impose and maintain these ideas in varied forms from politics, to education, to everyday realities of ‘Self’ and the orient ‘other’ (Said, 1978).

I summarise some of the key understandings that I have gathered to use in my analysis, beginning with Orientalism (Said, 1978) as follows.
• ‘Self’ and ‘other’ (Occident and orient, Said, 1978) - The collective notion of ‘us’ against ‘them’, Europeans versus the non-Europeans, a dichotomous relationship is established between one group against all the rest. ‘Self’ is superior, while the ‘other’ is inferior, as ‘Self’ is scientific, independent, mature, normal, liberal, capable, logical individual thinker, while the ‘other’ is mysterious and exotic, suitable for display, for its linguistic, cultural and religious personality. The ‘other’, simultaneously is particularly child like, less developed, less orderly, volatile and hostile and therefore needs correction and discipline.

From above, I understand as a discursive practice, everything what ‘Self’ decides will be rationalised and theorised as stemming from objectivity and justifiable with scientific, universal knowledge, well analysed and unattached thoughts. Whereas, the ‘other’ will be regarded as highly personal and subjective being attached to culture and religion, and therefore, their practices are less justifiable and acceptable as suitable for everyday conduct. To maintain control of everyday practices, it becomes important to keep ‘Self’ out of culture and religion to portray normality and everydayness, and at the same time maintain and value the ‘other’ as cultural and religious, to be accommodated as an exhibit, and thus avoid ‘other’ from daily inclusion.

• ‘othering’ – Based on the above distinctions between ‘Self’ and ‘other’, the process of ‘othering’ is central to colonial discourse as it preoccupies all colonial thoughts and ideas, and is based only on difference between two collective groups to enable colonial domination (Said, 1978). Said argues that in other words occupation, domination, examination, intervention and control become justifiable, as this process predisposes all superior attributes to ‘Self’ and simultaneously attributes the ‘other’ as inferior, as this is what ‘Self’ is not.

Thus, the process of ‘othering’ becomes very essential for the very existence of ‘Self’, as without the ‘other’, ‘difference’ remains insignificant, and therefore, domination becomes unjustifiable. All practices of ‘Self’ are geared towards maintaining everything what ‘other’ is on one hand, yet manipulating or moulding the ‘other’ at the same time to suit ‘Self’. Hence, the establishment and the maintenance of ‘other’ as distinguishable, with attributes that are less complete, becomes necessary not only to take ownership and control of the ‘other’, but also for ‘Self’ to remain stable and uninfluenced by the ‘other’.
Orientalism offers an alternate explanation to the inequitable interactions between ‘Self’, the coloniser and ‘other’, the colonised in postcolonial societies. With regards to my study and especially the analysis, it will enable me to identify whether and how the concepts of postcolonial ‘othering’ are embedded in our constructions of cultural identities, and thereby consciously and unconsciously allow cultural domination to perpetuate. Currently, however, postcolonial countries such as Australia are seemingly distant from its colonial ties with the establishment of nation and national identity. Loomba (2005) argues as ‘nationalism’ has only resulted in the perpetuation of dominance, she recommends repositioning postcolonialism from its past link to colonialism and to view this as a theoretical disposition that challenges all forms of domination, by class, culture, gender, place and ‘race’ relations in independent national states. The following are some of those critical concepts that have extended from Orientalism, still within postcolonial theoretical interests.

- **Nation and culture** - Young (1995) too argues against the propagation of national culture and tradition as he believes that it operates in an oppositional manner, by invariably producing the ‘other’, and as it is always comparative, racism is integral to such constructions. According to Ashcroft et al (2000) and Hage, (2000), constructions of nation and the resulting national subject become sites of domination and control, and this is emphasised with myths such as national tradition and values circulated by most socio-political institutions such as, education and media. Said (1994) comments that when culture (specific values and tradition) becomes associated with nation or state, it becomes a factor that differentiates “us” and “them”, and becomes a site of conflict between the two groups.

The above made me critically evaluate the propagation of nationalism and national identity through many institutionalised discourses on the basis of developing unity amongst the citizens of Australia. The very creation of ‘Australian values statement’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007) seemed to be an act of covert domination and negation of multiplicity on one hand, and the acquisition of “normality” and “natural” truth on the ‘other’ (Said, 1978). Therefore, identifying strategies and expressions of ‘nation’ and ‘national subject’ now became more meaningful for me, as these contributed towards domination and power. Thus, in combination with the above concepts outlined by Orientalism, I hope to engage with how we use language to conceptualise the national subject ‘Australian’ (Self) and the ‘not Australian’ (other) and whether these include...
colonial forms of ‘othering’ that centralises ‘Australian’ and marginalises the rest, influencing our daily practices. I recognised that this still did not enable me to identify discursive language that is motivated by resistance rather than dominance. Therefore, in the following I discuss postcolonial resistance to dominance.

- **Resistance** - Loomba (2005) comments, that postcolonialism is a paradigm that challenges dominance and hegemony, and therefore, anyone who resists domination in whichever form is a postcolonial subject. Thus, being postcolonial need not necessarily be about recapturing what existed before colonisation, as postcolonial present cannot be separated from its colonial past (Loomba, 2005). Therefore, typically a postcolonial subject, who stands up against dominance, can be from any group, as after the demise of colonisation, the coloniser/colonised subjective relationship need not necessarily operate. According to Ashcroft (2001) resistance as non-engagement is not empowering, as it does not allow one to come out of submission; however, taking on the discourses of the dominant coloniser and transforming these empowers the colonised to circulate cultural influence and power. There are writers such as Fanon (1967), who express feelings of instability in ‘other’ in being both, and how the perceptions about ‘self’ can become warped and displaced due to colonisation. However, Bhabha (1994) comments on the same instability in ‘Self’, the coloniser. According to Bhabha, the colonisers struggle to position their ‘other’, as on one hand ‘other’ is everything that needs to be excluded, however, ‘other’ is also everything that is desirable to maintain ‘Self’, which he calls as ‘colonial ambivalence’, a sign of fragility and vulnerability in ‘Self’. For Bhabha (1994), resistance is possible when that instability of ‘Self’ is exploited.

Resistance, for me becomes a key concept in illustrating our ability to oppose ideologies, the dominant discourses supported by political structures. From above, I also note that resistance can take many forms, and just like dominance some forms of resistance are more powerful than others in destabilising powerful structures. I understand resistance underlined by authors as follows.

- **Resistance as exposing colonial dominance** – Young (2001) and Prasad (2003) bring to note Gandhi’s resistance to colonial power, and how this form of adopting simplicity to counter modernity could subvert the might of ‘British Raj’. Young (2001) describes Gandhi as someone who developed resistance to
colonial dominance through his acquaintances in London, as together he became more aware of colonial domination and ways of developing resistance to counter it. According to Prasad (2003), Nandy, a postcolonial author captures the psychology of colonialism, and Nandy (1983 cited in Prasad, 2003) recognises Gandhi’s resistance as one that included vulnerability with its simplicity and innocence, yet ethnically sensitive and wholly being aware of the realistic consequences of all evils. Young (2001) adds, that it is this capacity of Gandhi to non-engage with modernity, yet use the same modern media devices, as he did during “Dandi march”, enabled him to expose colonial dominance in India and publicise the evils of colonisation.

- **Resistance as exploiting colonial ambivalence** - Bhabha (1994) states that “colonial ambivalence” resulted in disciplining the ‘other’, and taming the ‘other’ through colonial forms of education and language with the goal of creating able agents for colonial masters. Therefore, Bhabha adds that these able agents have the ability to oppose and resist colonialism. It is the process of “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994), that has enabled “mimicry” and “hybridity” embraced by the ‘other’ to use the language (or the discourse) of the colonisers to resist dominance. The subject therefore, is able to use the tools of the coloniser to challenge the master by being aware of both worlds, the coloniser’s and the colonised. For Bhabha (1996), ‘hybridity’ is a status created by colonialism, within which the subject is double voiced, double accented and double consciousness offering worldviews that are embedded in many forms. Gandhi (1998) cautions against the discourse of favouring ‘hybridity’, as this is prescribed as the elitist way of responding to varied forms of oppression. However, Gandhi adds that postnational, postcolonial ‘hybridity’ still remains promising as long it is not epitomised as the only way to overcome dominance (1998).

- **Resistance as expressing ‘other’** – Young (1995) brings to note the works of Spivak, who argued for the possibilities of “subaltern” (subjects, who are positioned as the ‘other’ by both the coloniser and the colonised) to be heard and recognised, when there is an absence for their discursive position. Spivak (1998, 1999) repeatedly troubles notions of empowering the struggling ‘other’, especially by questioning the dominant discourses that seemingly provide a voice for the silenced, but in reality suppress the voice of “subalterns”. As Young (1995) amply illustrates, when the coloniser and the colonised elites
both speak for and about the “subaltern” (the othered), colonial dominance is repositioned, as both groups colonise another group, and Spivak’s (1998, 1999) commentary centred on women in colonised nations.

Each of the above forms of resistance offers varied forms of identifying counter discourses that work against ideological constructions of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. They offer ways of dissipating structural constructs, and at the same time engage with realities of operating against, and with the dominant, to enable the voice of the ‘othered’ to be heard. Therefore, rather than working under the dichotomies of coloniser/colonised, I now reflect on the strategies of resistance that can be used by us as subjects, from the simple, innocent engagement that counters the dominant sophistication; the elite ‘hybridity’ that counters the dominant by being both; and those that just provide spaces for alternate voices to be seen and heard, by not speaking for and about ‘othered’. Most of all, this will enable me to reflect on my interactions that invariably have the propensity to colonise some ‘othered’ consciously and unconsciously.

**My postcolonial ambivalence**

I had struggled from the very beginning as I constructed my study with the recognition of a gap that needed to be somehow addressed. I knew there was a gap and the literature that I engaged with evidenced this gap, yet I became conscious of becoming my ‘Self’, the dominant ideology that I wanted to challenge. I did not want to simplify our layers, however, I did so in order to theorise and analyse what was said. In my analysis, I am unable to avoid the use of categories, as holding such binary visions with constructions of “One” and “Other” reverts back to the hegemonic reinstatement of central and peripheral identities (Kumar, 2000). However, I also acknowledge that every identity that is objectified and unified is fragile, and especially those that create binaries are contestable. Therefore, I decided to transform subjects, ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ into postcolonial subjects, the ‘Other Australian’ and the ‘othered Australian’ firstly, to acknowledge the extrinsic nature of both identities, as these were structurally constructed by that ideological ‘other’, and made meaningful within contexts such as postcolonialism and multiculturalism.

Secondly, by doing so, I hoped to avoid binaries, as the name signifies both identities are overlapping, and as subjects, we all respond to the ideology ‘Australian’. Moreover, by avoiding hierarchical dichotomies of ‘coloniser/colonised’, ‘dominant/peripheral’, I am able to avoid victimising and victimised status, as Prasad (2003) proposes that both the coloniser and the colonised are victims of colonialism. Thus, there isn’t a group exploiting the ‘other’, as all individuals are governed by ideologies. Thirdly, it still enables me to discuss the
material effects that are subjectively realisable, by not diluting or trivialising the subjective realities experienced and expressed, as Gunarathnam (2003) points out, such subjective experiences do differ between groups contextually and these need to be acknowledged. I was thus constantly pushed and pulled by the above postcolonial ideas, and I now introduce how I intend to use critical race theory in my analysis.

**My ambivalence with ‘whiteness’**

I initially did not want to engage with theories that predominantly focussed on ‘whiteness’. Firstly, within Australia, using ‘white’ is politically very real due to its colonised past and how the politics of Australia later constructed its national identity with ‘race’ policies, yet it is very complex. Secondly, it again creates dichotomous groups of ‘whites’ and ‘non whites/coloured’, which I had always tried to avoid. Thirdly, it hurts personally to engage with ‘whiteness’. According to Hall (1996) and Vickers (2002), debates about Australia’s cultural identity have been intense during particular moments, and debates around nation, citizenship and community puts forth different political propositions to re-establish white identity. Within the first few days of my study, ‘whiteness’ surfaced in our interactions, and it persisted until the very end. Therefore, I began to include the theoretical perspectives from within critical theories of ‘whiteness’ in our interactions and interpretations as I conducted my action research. For example, when the staff who named her collective ‘self’ as ‘white middle class Anglo Australian’ and said, “I am blah, no colour, no food, no celebration, nothing like yours”, I handed her articles that spoke about the importance of recognising her ‘whiteness’ as a culture, and its influence on the rest of the groups. It is much later that I specifically chose to use Frankenberg’s (1993) framework that she had used to analyse the discourses of “white” women’s construction of “whiteness”, as she includes discursive reinforcement and resistance towards this construct by ‘white’ women. Although I decided to use her framework as a part of the specific combination of theories to make meaning of my data, I have avoided centring my discourse analysis on “whiteness” alone, or just ‘white Anglo-Australian’. As I felt that didn’t include the interactive nature of our contributions to the subjective identities of not only each other, but also our conscious and unconscious interactions with the structures. Therefore, in some ways my analysis is still hinged upon interactionism between ‘self’ and ‘other’, however, with the inclusion of critical elements to it. In the following I introduce the concepts and the framework that Frankenberg (1993) used in her analysis, and in chapter 8, I show how I have woven these into my discourse analysis of postcolonial subjectivities in early childhood settings.
Critical race theory and the construction of ‘whiteness’

Young (2003) and Frankenberg (1993) comment that power still remains with “white culture”, and it is the dominant way of seeing the world, as it is seen as the normal or the right way of engaging culturally, socio-economically and politically in a given society. Young (2003) and Loomba (2005) argue that all dispositions that aim to challenge socio-political, cultural and economic dominance, in our current societies come under the umbrella of postcolonialism. In that sense, it can be argued that as Critical race theory is situated amongst postcolonialism, as it challenges ‘whiteness’, the dominant culture, the culture that is seen as ‘normal’ and ‘right’. According to Taylor (2004) “race thinking” can lead to racism, as it was “race thinking” that led to white supremacy, which has been the basis of many western ideologies. However, Taylor (2004) argues that escaping or avoiding “race talk” does not eradicate racism, as any anti-racist work has to stem from the racial categories that it seeks to abolish. Therefore, in order to overthrow the debates that aim to establish white identity as ‘Australian’ (Hall, 1996; Vickers, 2002), I understood that one needs to categorise ‘white culture’, its attributes and practices, and how these have come to be accepted as ‘normal’, ‘right’ or ‘national’. Leonardo (2002) recommends distinguishing “whiteness” from “white people”, as “whiteness” refers to the racial discourse, whereas “white people” represents more the socially constructed categorical identity. Leonardo adds that as important as it is to identify how “whiteness” currently operates in the society to privilege “white people”, and its historical links to oppression and dominance, it is also important to recognise how “white culture” is practised everyday to link the two. Frankenberg (1993) too comments on how “whiteness” was an “unmarked category”, associated with being modern and natural and “regular”, and even when it was recognised by her participants, it was deemed as boring. Therefore, I understand from above that “white culture” is dominant, and its practices are associated with modernity, nationality, normality and therefore regarded as being indescribable.

I struggled to talk about ‘whiteness’ in my study, as my ambivalence to work with ‘whiteness’ surfaced again. Although it has been well recognised by authors, as I highlighted earlier, that the ‘Australian’ identity is very closely established and guarded by “whiteness”, I found it very difficult to define “whiteness” or “white culture”. I recognised its presence and influence as a ‘non-white/coloured’ outsider, but as it is woven intricately with everyone’s lifestyles and worldviews, including mine, I felt that I would have to be highly exclusionary and biased to identify its key features. However, Rose-Cohen (2004) very simply states, that denying “white culture” hurts people who have a culture, and therefore, if my study is to do with deciphering how cultures are enacted, it is very pertinent
to discuss “whiteness”. For Leonardo (2002), it is what white people practice every day, what they eat and drink, their cultural events, that are indigenous to their society, and may be consumed by non-whites nowadays are to do with “white culture”.

Therefore, I again reconciled to use critical race theory, and I specifically planned to draw upon the discourses that Frankenberg (1993) identified as being associated with “whiteness” to enable me to unpack discourses of “white culture”.

**Discourses of “whiteness” (Frankenberg, 1993)**

Frankenberg (1993) recognised how white women constructed “whiteness” discursively; therefore, it was about what the women said in their interviews about their ‘white’ identity, and what they thought and how they acted with “whiteness”. Frankenberg argues that the American society was built with race as a marker of difference, and this still influences the discourses of today in varied ways. The three main discursive categories that she identified were **essentialist racism, colour and power evasiveness and race cognisant.**

**Essentialist racism (Frankenberg, 1993)** – This discourse for Frankenberg was comparable to historical discourses of colonialism, built on race differences, as it spoke about who they were by identifying their ‘other’. The discourse highlighted the differences between ‘white’ and the rest, by declaring these as being essential and they spoke of the colonised peoples by centrally binding what was ‘white’ and ‘western’ as ‘not other’. This discourse also spoke of the culture of the ‘other’ as being highly traditional, and therefore, still not ready for today’s world, and ‘white’ was linked with what was modern and normal. Thus, they separated the material realities of practising one’s culture and instead typified and boxed the cultures of ‘other’. The space that was left as national and normal, after having identified the rest of the cultural groups with their ethnic roots was claimed as theirs. Thus, the discourse of essentialist racism, believed and justified the presence of ‘differences’ and used this to maintain those groups as they were. By disconnecting culture from its material realities, they avoided speaking about race and racism affecting people’s daily lives.

**Colour and power evasiveness (Frankenberg, 1993)** – In this discourse “whiteness” was an “unmarked category”, nothing to be proud of in comparison to the ‘other’. They were self-conscious about white power and drew upon historical moments, and yet, even when they recognised their “white self”, it was formless and existed only in comparison to the “non-white other”. While “whiteness” remained as an unmarked, unnamed category,
with being “white” seen as being “regular”, ‘other’ was specifically seen as being cultural. Thus, they circulated the idea of being ‘white’ as being less desirable and being ‘different’ as desirable. Therefore, this allowed them to engage with ‘other’ selectively, without recognising the privilege that “white culture” enjoyed by being attached to normality. According to Frankenberg, this discourse was most prevalent in her participants and is also noticeable in public discourses in America. The women within this discourse recognised how thinking racially had historically justified racism and inequality, and therefore now responded by saying “we are all the same”. Frankenberg concludes that although this discourse was seemingly positioned against essential racism as it named ‘white self’ and recognised particular historical moments, this still made institutional racism less conceivable and notable, as they perpetuated discourses of essentialist racism by not recognising material realities, and glorifying the ‘other’.

**Race cognisant (Frankenberg, 1993)** - Women within this discourse named themselves self-consciously, and spoke of their awareness of historical moments or events in their lives and were concerned about social issues. They openly voiced that race and racism plays a role in people’s daily lives, and therefore this discourse was against both essentialist racism and colour and power evasiveness. They spoke of the privileges of being ‘white’ and the privileges of being seen as ‘normal’. They engaged in conscious identity searching and were ready to take action against inequalities, by taking ownership of past discrimination and were willing to use their white privilege to enact changes. They shifted power to women of colour without speaking for them, and they spoke with compassion and patience together as white and coloured women. I would like to share Frankenberg’s comments below that linked “whiteness” and “Americanness”,

> “Whiteness, as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitely excludes and those to whom it does violence. Those who are securely housed within its borders usually do not examine it. The same is true of “Americanness” in relation to those it marginalises and excludes...”

(Frankenberg, 1993, p. 228)

In the above Frankenberg not only proposes how “whiteness” is normalised, yet visible to those who are not ‘white’, she likens “whiteness” with national identity, “Americanness”, and how the normalisation of “Americanness” is recognisable by those who are not American and most of all the non-examination of both these constructs “does violence” to those who are otherwise.
Therefore, I regarded that the above structure that Frankenberg used to conceptualise how “whiteness” and “Americanness” was constructed will be suitable for me to analyse how ‘Australianness’ with ‘whiteness’ is constructed; whether and how it is constructed around normal, unnamed cultural practices and how it excludes and sees ‘difference’ as ‘not Australian’. While postcolonial theory recognises the practises of ‘resistance’ by ‘other’, critical race theory outlines how ‘resistance’ is practised by the dominant, the ‘white national Self’. Therefore, using the two theories together will highlight how dominance can be overthrown by groups, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’. And thus in many ways this will enable me to overcome the gaps identified in Orientalism by some authors earlier. In my final engagement with my Ganga-the data, I will use postcolonial concepts, including those recognised by critical race theory as strategies that support those specific discourses and how they make certain material effects realisable by subjects.

I also hoped to analyse my own discourse by situating my ‘self’ amongst the participants in my study. Therefore, in order to include the voices of all subjects and how our discourses contributed to constructing, reinforcing and resisting the identity of ‘Australian’, I decided to continue to use the postcolonial categories that I referred to earlier, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’, and analyse my ‘self’ as ‘othered Australian’. One of the key reasons for my choice of action research methodology, was that I could research my ‘self’ and this engagement challenges the creation of the “researched other”, as it acknowledges one’s subjectivity, includes personal voice and the researcher is lead by the researched (Denzin & Giardina, 2007). I embraced my action research methodology as much as my postcolonial and critical race theories, and I imagined that it was possible to bring about changes in current practices, as now I had my experiences, which I could theorise, my live data gathered collaboratively, which I could validate and theorise with children, practitioners and parents. Yet, as I practised action research, I saw “difference”, in our histories, in our theories, in our experiences, in our subjectivities, and in our colours, through and with all my ‘other’, and this made this procedure highly complex and volatile.

I wanted to be led by the researched, but my subjectivity held me back and made me contest, and tried to lead my researched to where I was. For example: I found it difficult to be silent when I heard a child who was ‘brown’ say, “I hate brown skin, I am white”. But the staff felt that I had to accept this because the child was trying to fit in with the rest of the group. Is this because I am ‘brown’ and the practitioners were ‘white’? Should I leave this and be led because this is a subjective difference? I struggled to be led with such
interpretations; however, my theories and this final stage of discourse analysis enabled me to understand our silences and our voices.

Later, as I engaged in analysis I also found it very difficult to be critical of individuals, who engaged in my study especially during my analysis and discussion. I was emotionally attached to them in particular ways, and when they normalised, nationalised “whiteness” and ‘othered’ ‘difference’, as whites, non-whites and as children, I could mentally theorise their interactions, but found it difficult to write. In whichever way I engaged with what was said and done, I felt that I was speaking for and about them using singular vision. Analysing our interactions and actions as discourses in many ways enabled me to reconcile with this procedure, as I felt reassured that I was speaking with subjects and not individuals, whose company and conversation I still cherish. I understood later that we were all discursively responding and contributing to that phenomenon ‘whiteness’ and ‘colonialism’ in different ways. Thus, engaging with postcolonial and critical race theories, through action research methodology was very personal and emotional, yet, engaging with my data and these theories using discourse analysis made it surprisingly less personal.

I now illustrate how I enacted my engagement with literature and theories that were interpretive and critical that led to the generation of my Ganga’s data sources on cultural enactments in Australian early childhood settings.
Chapter - 3

Ganga’s sources: methodology and methods

General methodology

This section of my study is related to the technicalities of research conduct, and I cannot help but use my colonised voice to discuss the contributory sources that generated my Ganga—the data, her subjects, our voices and our silences. By now my Ganga’s postcolonial form repeatedly wonders and questions what decolonisation is and when and how will I realise that process. My study aims to interpret how cultural identities are enacted in early childhood settings, and use this data to transform current practices with a hope to enable multiple expressions and views to be expressed equitably. Exploring cultural identities is a complex phenomenon, as Hall (1996) indicates any large movements of population across the world presents complex, destabilising phenomena, such as nationalism versus multiculturalism. Lichtman (2006) proposes that qualitative methodology especially suits small studies that involve gathering verbal data to interpret and understand complex, daily social interactions. Therefore, I set my study and its general methodology under the qualitative paradigm, as the main research question aims to engage with this complex social phenomenon, which how cultural identities are negotiated in early childhood settings. Toma (2006) comments that qualitative research answers “how” certain events are occurring by complexifying as opposed to quantitative research, that predominantly aims to answer “why” certain events are occurring by simplifying. I hoped my choice of qualitative methodology to provide data that is rich and complex to interpret ‘how’ everyday interactions and behaviours of children, adults and institutionalised discourses in early childhood settings influence our enactments of cultural identity.

My study’s purpose was also to transform current practices, as the literature I engaged with earlier suggested that current practices in educational settings were inadequate in promoting the cultures of all ethnic groups in Australia (see, Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006). Therefore, I further chose action research methodology, with a hope to work closely and collaboratively with children and early childhood practitioners in those settings, and to experience the daily complexities encountered in practising with cultures. Guarjardo (2008) amongst many authors believes that action research has a transformational effect naturally. Therefore, I conceptualised my study under the qualitative participatory action research paradigm, with an aim to not only collect data on enactments of cultural identities in early childhood settings, but also to use this data, to collaborate and take action with the
participants in my study. Moreover, I felt this methodology would enable me to get personally involved with the topic, events and understandings, having experienced Australian multiculturalism as a migrant. I familiarised myself with literature on participatory action research as follows.

The literature on participatory action research highlighted both its limitations and strengths, and I first discuss how some of the authors outlined its limitations. According to Denscombe (2010), the scope and scale of action research is very limited, as it is highly personal and therefore less generalisable. Denscombe (2010) adds that impartiality is never attainable, as the researcher can never become detached from what is happening by taking an unobtrusive stance. Norton (2009) too comments that this form of research is seldom considered as “proper” research, as it does not adhere to scientific, positivist research traditions and practices are seldom theorisable. After having recognised the limitations of participatory action research methodology, I engaged with literature that contemplated with these complexities and made suggestions on how to minimise such shortcomings.

Participatory action research methodology

Griffiths (1998) distinguishes epistemology and methodology, as epistemology is the knowledge base that the research is set in and the methodology is to do with how research sets about acquiring that knowledge. Therefore, the epistemology of my study is cultural studies, as Ezzy (2002) and Steinberg (2006) define, cultural studies as a tool that interprets text in the light of cultural and social systems with pre-existing theories to reveal the operation of power in cultural life, knowledge and identity politics. Ezzy (2002) adds that the researcher under this paradigm examines what is present and missing in texts, by situating the study not as scientific truth, but as historically and subjectively related. My study is concerned with how cultures are enacted within early childhood settings in Australia, especially the complex dynamics between national and multicultural identities presenting arbitrary power relationships. My Ganga that informed this study was formed in my many ways through my own migrant experiences of living in Australia. I was aware of my subjective disposition and what my identity would bring and trigger within this complex process and I wanted to engage with the complexities, and have a space to speak about my engagement. Thus, I chose participatory action research methodology as a means of acquiring that knowledge as Ezzy (2002) and Steinberg (2006) comment, our subjective relationship between our cultural life, text, social systems and power.

After having read much literature that considered participatory action research as one of the noblest forms of research, as it is a critical, liberating and change inducing process that
stems from mutual respect and participation (Burns, 2000; Freebody, 2003), I eagerly designed my study with this. Authors suggest that it blurs the boundaries between the researcher and the researched, as action research involves collaborating with teachers, students and parents (Reinharz, 1992; Kemmis, 1999), and that it is a method in which the study is conducted in its natural setting (Cohen Manion and Morrison, 2007; Punch, 1998). My postcolonial Ganga immediately grasped participatory action research with much excitement and anticipation for challenge and change.

I planned my action research to proceed in stages that included, collaborative selection of specific events and interests, collecting data, documenting, analysing, reflecting, and then taking action, and authors suggest that this cycle or the spiral of actions was to be repeated again collaboratively (Freebody, 2003; Martin, lisahunter & McLaren, 2006; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009). I hoped to begin my enactment of action research with children’s voices, as Stringer (2008) believes that children are able to extend their understanding of events and experiences by talking and reflecting on them in a supportive environment and action research allows the inclusion of children’s input into educational practices. Blaise (2005 a) writes about her experiences with transformative research as being a process that amalgamated theory, praxis and method.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, cited in Kemmis, 1999) state the following as the fundamentals of action research,

- It is a method of improving education by changing it and learning from the results of these changes.
- It is participatory and collaborative, as the researcher is involved with a group such as teachers, students and parents who are interested in change to plan and implement newer practices.
- It is open-minded and requires the maintenance of personal journal that includes the recordings of events, interactions, reflections and learning.
- It is political, as it involves making changes beyond the immediate group.

Similar to above Creswell (2008) outlines the key characteristics of action research as, problem solving, practice based, collaborative, dynamic and action orientated. My literature review not only outlined the silences the struggles of those that are seen as different in Australia due to the identity of ‘Australian’ being constructed around ‘whiteness’ (Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006), it also highlighted the role of political ideologies statements in influencing such ideas (Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004). I could relate to above both
personally as a migrant in Australia, and professionally as an early childhood practitioner working with children for over 12 years. Bearing all the above in mind, and with my personal aspirations, I envisioned not just collecting information on how young children’s cultural identities were enacted and its meanings in creating ‘othered’ identities, but hoped to change current practices so that those identities could be transformed in a manner that included multiple voices.

Denzin & Giardina, (2007), especially outline that including multiple voices, especially the researcher’s subjectivity makes the act of researching less colonising. Being a postcolonial subject, who had always consciously and unconsciously opposed colonial domination, participatory action research seemed less colonising to me, as it researched ‘self’ and exposed ‘self’ with ‘other’ and it was inclusive of multiple voices and identities. However, I reminded myself that this form of research can also be equally colonising, as I planned to initiate change, having already established the existence of gaps in engaging with cultures and identities in educational care settings in Australia. Therefore, I familiarised myself with some of the difficulties inherent in action research as follows.

Griffiths (1998) amply outlines the complexities of engaging in collaborative research, especially educational research that aims to bring about changes as follows. According to Griffiths (1998) firstly, human beings are constantly reacting to the presence of the researcher and the research and this has implications on what knowledge is sharable, when and how; secondly, depending on the researcher’s background and subjectivity, the issue of power, especially in relation to one’s gender, class and race in a particular society becomes critical; and thirdly, when research involves participant observation, the researcher wants to use anything that is exchanged in relevance to the research, and the dilemma in being an “insider and an outsider” within the context arises with what can be shared with whom during collaboration. I believed that I was conscious of the controversial nature of my topic, yet I hoped as centres and participants had consented to participate, they probably were aware of the prevailing complexities in engaging with multiculturalism, therefore, I thought that this process will be mutually committing and transforming.

Kemmis (1999) especially recognises the difficulties in taking a critical view in action research, as the critical view aims to emphasise the connections between individual and social. This Kemmis (1999) adds, can be extremely complex especially when the researcher is outside the group. Therefore, Smyth (2008) advises action researchers to view collaboration as organic and evolving rather than fixed and dynamic. Smyth (2008) further advises action researchers to acknowledge the presence of each other and what it brings to
this research, by being open about the different motivations involved to create shared understandings. The ideal qualities of an action researcher have been outlined by many authors. For example, Carr (2007) epitomises the need to develop a consciousness or an awareness that enables the action researcher to recognise his or her prejudices. Nelson (2007), views an action researcher to be a critical friend, who can ask provocative questions and critique the observed practices through alternative lens, and insists that the most desirable quality in an action researcher is the ability to include the voices of all involved so that everyone is able to take ownership of this project. I hoped to cultivate that awareness by analysing my own emotions and dispositions during my engagement with data generation, collection and analysis. As I was a researcher from an institution outside those of the settings where I planned to conduct my study, I was aware of my outsider status and my critical stance and I planned to suppress my postcolonial voice as I enacted and interacted with my participants. Thus, as an action researcher, I planned to engage in data collection and analysis simultaneously, and make decisions about the available actions as I collected, exchanged and analysed data with all involved.

**Methods of data collection**

Action research method which is cyclic in nature includes keeping a daily record of observation, planning, implementation and repeating the cycle until the change in practices to resolve a problem is achieved (Stringer, 2008). According to Flick (2002) and Edward (2001) qualitative methods deliver an in depth knowledge about the attitudes and values of the participants. I chose data collection methods that I could use initially to establish the complexities embedded in how cultural identities are negotiated and constructed with the use of language. The data had to be not only descriptive, rich but also include contextual information to enable me to identify the nature and course of identity negotiations.

Cohen et al (2007) suggest using multiple methods of data collection as a type of triangulation that increases the credibility of findings. In my study, the different methods became necessary due to my Ganga’s streams (literature review) and courses (multiple theoretical base) that I used to approach the topic. I planned to use the following methods namely, participant observations (informal and purposeful interactions with focus children, families and staff), and the analysis of documents that supported and promoted cultural practices in early childhood settings. I hoped participant observations will enable me to collect language expressions that represent our cultural enactments, and document analysis will allow me to identify the influence of structural language embedded in our exchanges about cultures. I planned to include open-ended face to face interviews with children and
staff to compliment the first method, as authors believes that it offers multiple views of what is collected and interpreted as data (Eder & Fingers, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007). I believed that such interviews would offer me space to take specific data to children and staff to gather their views about what I had observed and interpreted using my own understandings. Multiple methods of data collection also supported channelling my Ganga-the data through different course, theoretical frameworks.

Denscombe (2010) suggests that this form of theory triangulation enables social researchers to view a phenomenon from more than one perspective and avoid taking a universal stance. As outlined in chapter 2, I planned to analyse data using a multiple theoretical base, as I believed this would provide alternate meanings and extend my understanding of the topic. However, Denscombe (2010) cautions researchers using method and theory triangulation, as he highlights that this limits the available time to address the topic in a targeted, specific manner. According to Denscombe (2010), theory triangulation can make the data analysis much more complex and result in providing inconclusive contradictory results. Therefore, to overcome this, Denscombe advises researchers to ensure that the analytical discussions from different theoretical bases are integrated in a cohesive manner. In my study, I hoped to use the discussions stemming from each theory base to enable me to delve deeper into the data to explore the origins that influence our daily cultural practices.

**Participant observation**

I planned for participant observations to generate the main source of data in my study, as I believed this would provide me with records of verbal interactions with children and adults in the settings to share for later collaboration. This technique is also considered to be one of the primary methods of data collection especially in educational settings, as the researchers participate in daily activities of the participants and take notes of events as they occur (Burns, 2000). According to Stringer (2008) participant observation is commonly used in action research and it is usually loose, open-ended providing a detailed description of contexts and behaviours as they occur as the researcher becomes immersed deeply in that context and interact with people to gain a deeper understanding. Stringer (2008) further suggests that these observations used in action research should focus on, people, places, acts, activities, events, resources, times and feelings. I therefore planned to familiarise myself with the settings, children, families and staff and get involved in their daily routine in a manner that the boundaries of the researcher and the researched are blurred as I collect data. Brian (2005) especially recommends the researcher to actively engage in children’s
play, to be able to share interactions and raise questions that may otherwise be impossible. Hatch (2007), believes that participant observation is a less intimidating method of data collection as it is commonly used in early childhood settings to collect information on children’s play and learning, and to evaluate adults’ teaching and learning procedures. Thus, I hoped to collect our ideas about cultural identities of each other, and how these are used in our daily interaction with participant observation techniques.

I planned to initiate topics especially with focus children (children with families from India) with whom I hoped I would be able to share knowledge and understandings of our ethno-linguistic experiences in Australia. For example, I thought that my interactions in Tamil with the focus children and families will give me relevant information about the understandings and pragmatics of overtly practising our shared linguistic background in such settings. Diaz Soto (2005) regards that this method allows the researcher to note children’s experiences and to express these through children’s voices, and Sun (2005) highlights the advantages of using participant observations especially with a small sample. Moreover, Reifel (2007) and O’Kane (2008) state that data collected using participatory technique should include conversations that transcribes children’s stories and enactments in a detailed manner. Capturing the voices of the researched and including their daily experiences enables the researcher to cross the barriers between the researcher and the researched and creates opportunities for deeper understandings (McDougall, 2004). Therefore, in order to capture the events as I perceived they happened, and to include their sequential nature, I hoped to record my observations in a detailed manner that I could later piece together to provide the necessary contextual information.

Authors have also cautioned researchers about the limitations of this method. It is dependent on the observer’s attention and memory, therefore, personal preferences on what is recorded and what is generated through active exchange of ideas can affect the validity and the generalisability of the study (Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). These authors add that this can be overcome by being highly attentive and consciously ensuring that daily events and happenings are recorded as descriptive field notes. I therefore, planned to collect large bodies of exchanges and events as they happened as field notes, and later selected the material that was pertinent to my topic. O’Kane (2008) and Pritchard (2002) state that the unpredictability of methods such as, participant observations and informal conversations, used in action research to collect data, makes it difficult to plan for consistency and transparency. Therefore, these authors recommend negotiating and re-negotiating methods, and topics of discussion. Cohen et al (2007), Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) too
suggest, field notes and participatory techniques that include listening, contributing, questioning and sharing as providing a wealth of information, enable the researcher to collect information about individuals’ enactments in social settings.

In what follows I discuss how I renegotiated and recorded descriptive field notes, in the form of narratives of daily events and exchanges when I enacted my action research in settings.

**Narrative inquiry - Informal conversations with Early Childhood Practitioners/staff and families**

Narratives can be politically powerful, as they can mobilise groups into action (Reissman, 2008). Since I was engaging in transformative action research, I decided to record all participatory observations and the informal conversations in the form of narratives. I believed that action research automatically involved collaborating with staff in order to share observations and interpretations; therefore, I initially kept my observational records separate from my field notes. However, as I actively interacted in the centre, within a week, I realised narrative inquiry was central to my study, as narratives, became descriptions of the dynamics involved in my action research cycles, and I recorded them as field notes. I not only recorded many informal conversations that included our voices, I included my own reflections and interpretation of events, as we exchanged our cultural understandings during our conversations. By doing so, I felt that I could analyse, interpret and make meaning of my voice with those of others, rather than keeping myself aloof from the researched.

I carried a small notepad and a pen in my pocket and jotted down the key texts within those conversations as triggers to be expanded later. During my lunch breaks and transition times, I completed them into descriptive narratives, as field notes. However, note taking at times hindered with spontaneous engagement with children, and a lot of what was recorded became dependent on my memory. I had informed focus children and families that they were most welcome to interact with me in Tamil or Hindi, and therefore I recorded what was exchanged in these languages. Translating these to English for purposes of analysis was very complex and difficult, as I found it difficult sometimes to find the corresponding expressions in English. The study hinged upon verbal exchanges and categorical identities that eventuated through linguistic representations; therefore, I had to find ways of translating what was exchanged consistently without moving too far away from the original meaning.
Action research methodology in combination with the above methods proved effective in not just collecting information about language expressions that influenced our cultural enactments, but also our layers that informed what was silenced and voiced with whom and why. For example, my exchanges with staff about television programmes on issues such as, asylum seekers or religion, provided me with information about the circulation of power, specifically in relation to who spoke as ‘Australian’ and what layers (their religious/ethno-linguistic backgrounds) enabled them to speak as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ in this society. Thus, narratives collected from my informal conversations with staff and parents, along with the participatory observations with children became critical points of further data generation or markers of an end or divergence of action research cycles.

As I began to engage in this form of narrative inquiry, I realised that I had to be prepared enough, yet be unprepared for many unforeseen turns in my study. According to Cortazzi and Jin (2006), this form of narrative inquiry poses 4 key issues, and they are as follows, and I faced and reacted to each of these issues in my study. Firstly, Cortazzi and Jin (2006) say that the researchers collect data using this method and it sometimes includes not just information about teaching and learning, but also about the lived experiences of participants from the past and the present. Quite frequently staff and parents spoke of their experiences from the past and present, for example, how they were treated by their in-laws to highlight their understanding of cultural influence. Although, these exchanges related to the topic that I explored, and they gave me permission to use that specific data, my dilemma was whether what was exchanged and permitted was due to their willingness to contribute to my study as they had consented to participate. Secondly, the above authors feel that the very subjectivity of the researcher influences what is said to whom, and these are usually the voices of the ‘others’, those who are silenced, and this voice can change with the listener. Mehra (2001) calls this the “you know how it is syndrome”, which is typically experienced when conducting research with participants who share similar ethno-linguistic background. Graue and Margaret (2005) too talk about the advantages and disadvantages of sharing similar cultural backgrounds as the participants, as sometimes they reveal information that usually are never shared, and sometimes they presume that the researcher would know already. Thirdly, Cortazzi and Jin (2006) say that narratives offer access to stories that are otherwise never accessible, and they question the right of the researchers to access those stories for research purposes. This was an issue that I found very difficult to grapple with, as stories laden with innermost feelings and emotions were shared, and I believed that I maintained ethical standards by asking them whether I could use that data for research before recording. Even when the participants very willingly gave consent, I
wondered whether it was their momentary decision, and whether I had the right to gather and use such information. Fourthly, the authors stress that the stories are still told by the researcher and the construction of stories without ‘othering’ the participants can be very tricky (Cortazzi and Jin, 2006). I repeatedly stumbled upon this problem, and I tried to alleviate this by including my own stories and my inner emotions and feelings as I collected and recorded the narratives and later when I analysed them.

Apart from above complexities, I also understand that fundamentally recordings of field notes and narratives pose the same limitations as those of participatory observations, as these heavily rely on researcher’s memory, and researchers may also choose to observe and record events that they regarded as being important (Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, they suggest the use of complimentary methods that support such techniques effectively.

Interviews support field notes and observations in qualitative research, as they provide multiple views to the interpretation of data by the researcher (Eder& Fingerson, 2002; Cohen et al, 2007), and audio-taping and/or video-taping such open-ended targeted conversations with children enable the researcher to collaboratively interpret these with children and teachers and gather voices of all participants (Day, 2002; Blaise, 2005a). According to Hatch (2007), data collected in the form of narratives interpret stories that people tell about their living experiences, and this compliments open-ended face to face interviews, and observations. Burns (2000) adds that participant observations combined with interviewing those involved can effectively eliminate observer’s bias and provide important insights. I decided to compliment my descriptive field notes or narratives with interviews. In the following I discuss how I planned to combine the above methods with face to face open ended interviews.

**Open-ended interviews-Focus children**

Jipson and Jipson (2005) and Blaise (2005a) recommend taking the interpretation of observations back to the children to minimise the researcher’s imposition of their reality into children’s world and to ethically engage in this process. Connolly (1998) confirms through his research conducted with children between the ages of 5-6 years of age, that they were able to express how they negotiated racialised and gendered identities during group interviews effectively. Connolly further argues that more research with young children should be conducted with young children, as much emphasis on such matters are placed on the role of the teacher with not much attention given to how young children negotiate such identities in their daily lives. Moreover, such interviews had been effectively used by other
researchers, especially to collect young children’s understandings of race and culture in Australia (see, MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Targowska, 2001; Skattebol, 2003). As my study centred on collecting information about one’s cultural identity, I hoped to conduct open ended interviews with children, to gather their understandings about cultural experiences in their settings.

I believed that open-ended interviews with focus children conducted in a non-threatening manner, as they engaged in their daily routine and play would enable them to share how they negotiated play spaces and the role of their cultures (ethno-linguistic background; common cultural knowledge) in making those choices. I decided to have these conversations after they get used to my presence and interaction at the settings. I felt this would make them feel at ease with me and would allow me to take a set of initial observations and interpretations to children, especially to gather their knowledge about transforming current early childhood practices with regards to practising cultures.

Therefore, I intended to conduct these interviews in a manner which was not very different to participatory observation methods, except that I would audio-tape these conversations rather than note taking. I hoped audio-taping will support later collaborative interpretation, reference and action. Thus, I designed an interview protocol that included responses that would stem from questions about their choices of play areas, resources and peers based on my observations, along with questions about how they would name their self and other (such as, peers, teachers etc.). I was unable to conduct the interviews with children, as every time I tried to conduct the interview with the tape recorder in hand, other children wanted to contribute as well, just for the sake of listening to their voices through the instrument. I did not have consent to audio-tape the voices of all the children in the group, as I had planned to conduct these only with the focus children. When I tried to do so, it was very difficult to pursue with the planned questions, as I had set out to implement. I did not feel comfortable in doing something exclusionary just to fulfil my research plans. I had permission to record the informal conversations of all the children in the group, therefore, I resorted to just compiling narratives of these conversations for later collaboration and analysis.

**Individual face to face open-ended interviews with Early Childhood Practitioners (ECPs/staff)**

I chose to compliment informal conversations with staff, which I recorded as narratives with open-ended interviews, as interviews are effective ways of collecting data on people’s understandings, values and backgrounds (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Thomas, 2003). According
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to Wenger (2008) identity is a negotiated experience that emanates from children’s interaction with those around, through participation and reification. In order to gather staff’s understandings of supporting children’s cultural identities, and their own experiences with practising cultures in Australia, I planned to interview staff. Moreover, Morse and Richards (2002) suggest that data collected from interviews can be used as trigger points for methods that follow and therefore, I believed that this data collected by interviewing staff could become a major resource that influenced action research cycles. Burns (2000) and Lichtman (2006) suggest the use of open-ended interviews to obtain subjective experiences of an individual, as these cannot be obtained through observation.

I planned to conduct open-ended interviews more like informal conversation with a list of broad open-ended questions on cultural experiences in Australia and specifically in early childhood settings. I intended to collect staff’s ideas on cultural identity and its impact in their daily interaction and behaviour with children and adults in their settings. Due to the flexible nature of this method, I designed a set of questions for staff’s (appendix 10) that would provide me a general guidance on the topics to be discussed with them. I hoped to record the interviews using an audio-recorder for unhindered conversation and ease of data collation for later analysis and. Stringer (1996) does comment that the use of tape recorders can make participants feel uncomfortable and I hoped to overcome this by reassuring the participants that audio-recording was not compulsory before commencing the interviewing procedure. In the following I discuss how I prepared for staff interviews and the hurdles that I encountered during this procedure.

I was able to conduct the planned interviews with only the staff at Centre 2, as Centre 1 withdrew from my study within weeks of commencement. I informed and reminded the centre director (centre 2) about planning and allocating time for staff to participate in these interviews. Once the schedule was arranged, I informed individual staff about the procedure and again stressed on the voluntary nature of their participation in this procedure. I conducted the interviews in spaces where the staff felt comfortable to have such a conversation.

One of the major drawbacks of this method is that it may be very difficult to gather factual information for the interviewee (Thomas, 2003; Cohen et al, 2007), and I tried to minimise the “staging” of our expressions, by engaging in a relaxed, highly open ended conversation. Power during interviews can manifest itself in many unrecognisable ways, and language use is outlined as one of them by Reinharz (2011). Like me, many staff in centre 2 spoke English as their Additional Language, and I was aware that I might have to
reword the questions accordingly. Yet, we struggled for words sometimes to express something specifically in English and would later end up saying something very close to what we wanted to express. As recommended by Habashi (2005), I specifically provided opportunities for interviewees to question me at anytime. This I felt would again reduce any tensions between the interviewer and the interviewee. Once the interviews were completed and recorded, I downloaded the interviews into my home computer to be transcribed later for analysis.

Sometimes our conversations followed in accordance to the intended format and topic. However, during most occasions, due to the open ended nature of the interview design, we would get diverted to talking about something else and I had to make a note to come back to what I had planned to discuss during the interview. I had to decide spontaneously on whether I should bring our conversation back to focus or allow them to continue to maintain that familiarity and informal nature of our relationship. I also observed that on some occasions, the participants would ask me to turn the tape recorder off, and then share something with me that they would like to be included as data. Face to face interviews, which I had imagined as a simple procedure of sharing information on our cultural understandings, became quite complex due to the intensity of what was shared, and it exposed many layers of our attitudes and understandings about enacting cultures in Australia. I discuss my next method of data collection and analysis in the following.

Document analysis

Stringer (2008) and Cohen et al (2007) comment, that action research includes the collection and analysis of documents, as the researcher is able to gather information on the context of the phenomenon in question. At the time I designed my study, I planned to collect documents used in educational care settings (policies, philosophy, resources, teaching and learning plans and aids) and analyse these to collect ideas about how and whose cultural identities are addressed, maintained and supported by these documents. I believed this was a critical component of my study, as it would enable me to identify their influence in daily practices and interactions of individuals in supporting children’s cultural identities. However, this was the very first year when Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being, Becoming, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) was introduced in most early childhood settings, and in both centres although the staff repeatedly mentioned this framework during our conversations, as they were attending the training sessions offered to implement the framework, they did not specifically use this to guide their current practices. I therefore, did not analyse this document with the intended purpose. However, I still
planned to engage with wider policies that were instrumental in establishing the identity of ‘Australian’, indigenous and migrant groups, and Australia’s multicultural identity (Grassby, 1973; New agenda for multicultural Australia, commonwealth of Australia, 1999; Multicultural Australia: united in diversity, Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). I felt such analysis will enable me to trace the origin of our attitudes and understandings about practising cultural identities in Australia, and whether and how these were reflected in our interactions. I planned to identify political language statements and recommendations that spoke about Australia’s national identity and the ethno-linguistic make up of Australia.

Sampling method, site and participants

Purposive sampling implies that the participants engaged in the study are chosen specifically to fulfil the purposes of the research (Cohen et al, 2000), and this usually is the sampling procedure predominantly used in action research models (Lodico, Spaulding, Voegtle (2006). McLeod & Yates (2003) reflect on their own white identities in creating spaces of discomfort and silences whilst interviewing a student from “other” background. Therefore, I chose purposive sampling technique was purposive, as I intended to conduct this study with focus children (aged between 3-5 years old) and families, who had migrated from India to Australia. Being a migrant with similar ethno-linguistic background as those of the key participants, I hoped to minimise such silences in my study. At that time, I believed matching my ethno-linguistic background with those of my key participants, would enable us to mutually reflect on the complexities and thereby propose and implement alternate methods of representing cultures in early childhood settings.

Walford (2001) expresses, that gaining access to settings can be a laborious process and needs to be well planned and set out. I had an idea about the distribution and concentration of migrants from India, in Melbourne metropolitan area. I planned to select early childhood settings from these suburbs initially with the use of telephone directory and/or the internet. I hoped to make contact with the authorised person, to establish the attendance of children from Indian background and the centres’ willingness to participate in this project. Following their expression of interest in the study, I hoped to arrange to meet the centre director and/or the room co-ordinator to further discuss the project and their participation and involvement. I had a set of plain language statement and consent forms to focus children and their families, and staff requesting permission to participate and become involved in the project (See, appendix 4-9). Moreover, I hoped to personally explain all processes and procedures of the research to focus children and their families in our first language if possible before I
obtained consent from them. In the following I discuss how I actually set about recruiting centres to participate in my study.

I intended to conduct my study in early childhood settings that provided educational care for children between the ages of 0-5 years with staff, who were willing to seek newer ways of engaging with cultures in their settings. I hoped to include some amount of variability in my study by choosing to conduct this research in at least two settings. I planned to enact my action research in 2 early childhood long day care settings with 2-3 focus children and 4-6 ECPs in each centre, in Melbourne metropolitan suburbs. I made telephone calls as I had planned, and out of the many centres that I contacted, 3 centres who had about 2-3 focus children in their setting agreed to participate. Out of the three two of them agreed to proceed immediately, and thus I finally began my study in two centres, which I named as Centre1 and Centre 2. Both these centres were long day care centres, offering kindergarten program in their 3-5 room. Centre 1 had 3-5 year old children in the same room, and Centre 2 had 3-4 year olds in one room and 4-5 year olds in another. There were 4 focus children (two 3 year old girls, one 4 year old boy and one 4 year old girl) in the same room at Centre 1, and 3 focus children (two 3 year old girls and one 4 year old girl) at Centre 2. Centre 2 had separate rooms for 3 year olds and 4 year olds and therefore I worked between the two rooms in this centre. Five early childhood staff, from Centre 1 and fourteen early childhood staff from centre 2 consented to participate in my study (see, appendix 1 & 2 for participants’ details). As soon as I commenced my study at the centre, I personally spoke to the staff, families of focus children, and children, explained my study to seek their consent to participate. I had twelve non-focus children and families from Centre 1, and twenty seven non-focus children and families participating from Centre 2 in my study. Many of whom became some of the key contributors to my study.

Out of the two centres that consented to participate in my study, one centre chose to withdraw from the project. I haven’t specifically elaborated on the details of their withdrawal here, as I felt that would make the centre become more identifiable. Although the centre withdrew from this study, I was allowed to use the data that I had collected with children, families and staff. I therefore include this particular narrative that evidenced the centre’s withdrawal within my analytical discussions (pgs. 117, 227) in the following chapters. Therefore, this did not have any major implications on the course of my study. Moreover, as I had designed my study to be conducted with a very small sample size, it did not affect the volume of the data collected. However, I became emotionally affected and became highly conscious of actively negotiating the prevailing boundary
(cultural/ethnic/race/religion) attitudes and understandings, and practices enacted in the centre here I continued my action research. I have chosen not to distinguish centres in my discussion chapters, to maintain the participating centres’ anonymity. Below I discuss how I negotiated equity and ethical engagement during the implementation of my action research.

**Equity and ethical considerations**

Pritchard (2002) and Denzin and Giardina (2007) contend gaining ethics approval from institutions to be difficult and complex especially with regards to conducting action research. They believe that in action research the design and objectives can never be fully formed, as expected by the review board, therefore, when participants do sign to participate at that time, no one can really predict the course of this research. Although participatory action research is a complex planned yet spontaneous procedure, I had to plan, explain and justify every step of my study in order to gain ethics approval. With an outline of my study’s intentions and purposes, I applied for ethics approval at the University of Melbourne and at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, State of Victoria, Australia. I gained ethics approval to conduct my study in early childhood settings, within the broad parameters of action research methodology.

I clarified my intentions and purposes of my study through plain language statements and I ensured the receipt of signed consent forms before beginning any data collection and analytical procedure. I was keen on seeking children’s assent to participate in this study, as I believed that they should be and are capable of expressing their willingness to participate in my study. Authors such as, Harcourt and Conroy (2005; 2009), Einarsdóttir (2007), Dockett and Perry (2007) highlight children’s ability to provide their assent, and they add that gaining children’s assent as every researcher’s ethical and moral responsibility. I designed a PLS which I would read out in simple language/s to the children and consent form that explained the processes that we would be involved and a space for them to choose a pseudonym and mark their assent.

As I engaged in my action research at the centres, I understood that the collaborative nature of action research make the maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality of participants very difficult and complex. Griffiths (1998), and Mills and Gale (2004) bring to note the embedded ambiguity in maintaining confidentiality in this form of research, as it involves the collection of descriptive contextual data, and the exchange of such information in a collaborative manner, not using participants’ names alone in discussion does not guarantee anonymity. Therefore, rather than avoiding this form of research, the above authors advise one to be reflexive and acknowledge the potential risks in exchanging any
information. Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006) on the other hand underline the importance of informing participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I therefore, specifically ensured that I made participants, including children aware of their right to withdraw from my study at any point in time.

Many authors strongly recommend the inclusion of reflexivity strongly not only to ethically engage in this process, but also to highlight the interaction of one’s subjectivity with everything that is exchanged, explored and evidenced. Although it has been recommended by authors such as O’Kane (2008), Blaise (2005a), and Reifel (2007) encourage researchers to reflect what was recorded with staff, I found it very difficult to do so, especially when what I shared was regarded as confrontational due to our subjective dispositions and our attachments to different theoretical paradigms. I had to sieve what was shared to reveal what I believed would not be detrimental to the participant’s (staff and families) continued involvement in the centre, and my study. Therefore, what was collected as baseline data to inform all participants to engage in collaborative action, sometimes remained being unheard and unsaid.

Due to the very small sample size, when participants shared narratives that included the disclosure of their backgrounds, I found it very difficult to decide whether to use them as they were designated or use alternate terms and nationalities. I felt that either way I was compromising on my ethical and moral standards, especially when the participants willingly wanted me to use such information. For example, a non-focus child insisted on naming her ethnicity in a particular manner, and although I began my analysis by using a wide geographical terminology to reflect her background, I began to wonder whether I was colonising her in particular ways by usurping her identity. Thus, this process continued to present hurdles as we negotiated this together and at times I critically questioned my presence and interactions, as I recorded my own responses and silences, and later analysed and interpreted these with those of others.

**Duration of data collection**

I had originally planned to collect data from two centres by spending alternate weeks of 2-3 days (8 hours a day) in each centre, beginning from February till the end of November during the year 2010. However, as my study’s ethic’s proposal was approved only around mid May, I initially spent 2 days a week in each centre, collecting data. However, with Centre 1’s withdrawal from my study, I spent 3 days (8 hour days) a week in Centre 2. In this centre I spent 2 days at the 3-4 year old room and 1 day at the 4-5 year old room, each
week for 7 months (May 2010 to November 2010), as my focus children were distributed between the two rooms. A data log from both centres is included in the appendix section.

**Limitations of my study**

Generally qualitative study includes multiple realities and is subjective and is constructed by the observer, and the subjectivity of the researcher needs to be included as the researcher is conducting this study (Flick, 2002; Lichtman, 2006). Criticisms on action research have termed action research as being less reliable as it does not adhere to scientific traditions and practices that have been approved, and decisions are made by individuals at that time and therefore, does not produce new knowledge (Norton, 2009). Lichtman (2006) and Reifel (2007) state that researchers who work under the postmodern, poststructural paradigm do recognise the role of their subjectivity and their theoretical underpinnings in their research and yet, they effectively link data with wider social issues. Therefore, I have exposed my subjectivity right from my study’s title, as it says much about my postcolonial subjectivity, my approach, and my theoretical base. While Griffiths (1998) argues that any research that is concerned with the critical exploration of identity enactments is always less objective, Blair (1998) argues that it is impossible to eliminate the subjectivity of the researcher from influencing any form of research.

My study had been heavily influenced by my subjectivity right from its conception; therefore, I acknowledge that it is highly unlikely to guarantee the generalisability of its findings. Norton (2009) too admits that due to the contextual nature of action research, as it responds to specific issues faced in the setting, it is less generalisable. Moreover, as highlighted by O’Kane (2008) the highly reciprocal nature of collecting data using narrative inquiry limits the uniformity of gathering information, therefore, I admit that the research cannot be replicated. However, Norton (2009) suggests that the outcomes of action research can be utilised for future research in similar settings, and by building a community of action researchers who continue the work, the validity can be strengthened. I am aware that my study is less transferable, as it is highly subjective, interactive and contextual, as Denscombe (2010) comments action research methodology is usually not generalisable, due to its participatory and site specific nature.

Ezzy (2002) too argues that such researchers study and interpret situated meanings, and such situations cannot become replicated and therefore, rigour and generalisability can never be assured. The interactions and conversations that emanated due to who I am and what I believe in and how I conduct myself is very difficult to replicate. Therefore, I planned to practice reflexivity and record my reflections, during every step this procedure,
and this self-monitoring almost became an obsession due to my self-doubt. I acknowledge that the small sample size, and the very subjective nature of my research makes it less possible to guarantee rigour, validity and generalisability. According to Cortazzi and Jin (2006) and Lichtman (2006), one’s cultural background influences the whole research experience, and they believe that this allows varied worldviews to be expressed and therefore, should be recognised and embraced. I hoped that my study will bring in that varied worldview that creates newer possibilities to engage with cultures in early childhood settings.

Although it has been repeatedly acclaimed that Australia is a multicultural nation, and early childhood is critical to their development of collective identity, including cultural identity, there isn’t much literature that informs how cultures are practised in early childhood settings and how the interpretation of such practices are influenced by our subjectivities. By discussing my theoretical disposition and my subjectivity under most aspects of my study, I hoped to bring in another way of interpreting how cultural identities are enacted and propagated in early childhood settings. Before I go any further with my plans for analysis of my Ganga-the data, I would like to share some of my tensions as I began to get ready for this procedure.

**Our boundaries: the researcher and the researched**

I became even more aware my tensions between my colonised roots and my postcolonial realities as I planned to analyse my Ganga-the data. I was always conscious of how we collectively initiated and exchanged these interactions as boundaries were arbitrated, yet these are interpreted by me. Moreover, such interpretations that heavily hinged upon my subjectivity created and recreated further exchanges as data. Through my study, I speak of what I spoke with ‘others’ and it had never been my intention to do so, because I question my rights in legitimising this act. As a postcolonial subject, I have been groomed to challenge acts that speak for and about ‘others’, as I see these as colonising acts that signify dominance of ‘self’ over ‘others’. Reinharz (2011) says that the researcher needs to be conscious of her layers, the research self, personal self and situational self, and question how one was labelled and was labelling. For me, this was beyond these labels, as I had the power to record and analyse the emotions and feelings felt by all involved, with the use of my theoretical and experiential learning. Mills and Gale (2004), urge one to explore the space between the researcher and the researched, especially while writing, as this is when the researcher has the power to eliminate ‘self’, to engage in the colonising act of ‘othering’. To me every research act seemed like a colonising act, as the data from the
‘researched other’ was collected by the ‘researching self’ with a quest to uncover truth. The ‘researching self’ dissected what was said, and unsaid in the name of analysis and wrote for and about the ‘researched other’ to be divulged with the outer world. I wanted to expose my ‘othered self’ and my ‘othering self’ and how this influenced my generation, interaction of and with data. Hence, I hoped to write about my ‘self’, by situating my ‘self’ amongst and with the ‘researched other’.

I began to introspectively have such conversations during every point of engaging with data. Conversations with my own ‘self’ became integral to my study to bring forth the constant clashes and twists within myself. Such endless, silenced, internal conversations erupted as ‘boundary speaks’ were exchanged between boundary speakers and later during documentation and contemplation of daily events and even now as I embark on externalising these. These sometimes trace the source of our exchanges or the end of them.

The nature of any research and especially action research is very closely linked to the consciousness of the researcher (Walford, 2001; Zeni, 2001). Therefore, in my initial analysis, the narrative inquiry of our ‘boundary speaks’, I included my conversations with not just the participants, but also with my ‘self’; my dialogues with my consciousness as footnotes. Yet, I would like to acknowledge consciously and unconsciously I still own the power to choose those exchanges that would speak to me and convey what I want to speak and the paradigm that I have chosen to embed my ‘self’ in. I would like to say that all those I perceive as being meaningful to me are spoken and written about and with, in the following chapters.

My plans and themes for analysis

Culture is a very difficult concept to define, as it is made up of certain values, practices, relationships amongst many other noticeable markers, such as language, food, clothing and many more (Walford, 2001; Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht & Lindsley, 2006). In my study, I use the term ‘boundary’ and ‘boundary identities’ to name the margins with which we defined ourselves and our belonging in relation to our cultural or ethno-linguistic background. Following from that, I name the extracts from my data in what follows as ‘boundary speaks’, as I have chosen to write about exchanges between ‘boundary speakers’ the participants in my study (the children, staff, families and I) that signify or which I perceive is of significance in enacting our boundary identities. I would like to stress that every utterance, act and silence of each individual involved is vital and valid. However, I confess that I have selected and used those utterances, acts and silences that I perceive as being significant to answering what I aim to seek.
My study is about inquiring how cultural identities are negotiated in early childhood settings, and I began by using the term ‘boundary’ to signify our collective identity in relation to culture, ‘race’ and ethnicity, and thereby avoided using any of those constructs. As a postcolonial subject, I found using those constructs highly problematic, as they simplified the realities of those who embody these concepts in their daily lives. However, my data did signify that we, as cultural enactors ‘spoke’ of our distinctions very loosely, and therefore I am using ‘boundary’ as the central theme with which we distinguished our collective identities in relation to all those constructs. I use the term ‘boundary’ as follows, ‘boundary identities’ – cultural/ethnic/race identities; ‘boundary speakers’ – cultural/ethnic/race enactors; and ‘boundary speaks’ – cultural/ethnic/race narratives. The following are some of the key metaphors that I used stemming from this focus, ‘boundary’.

**Boundary streams** are some of the predominant themes embedded in boundary speaks around which boundary speakers frequently enact boundary identities of self and others. Streams were central to data, as these are the many layers that we as boundary speakers, used to depict the boundaries and persona each other. The boundary streams identified in this study are **complex(ions)**, **forbidden Fs (Food, Faiths and Festivals)**, **tongue tied and terra strikes**. Although the streams were entwined in defining identities, I organised and discussed each main stream around which sometimes other streams merged. I used these as the basic themes around which I analysed and organised my discussions accordingly in all my discussion chapters. I give a brief explanation of how and why I used these titles to designate our boundary streams.

**Complex(ions)** - The strongest stream **complex(ions)**, skin colour was used by boundary speakers, children, including focus children and adults, in boundary identity enactments. There was a time when I wanted to challenge what can be much more superficial than one’s skin, as it is the outer most feature of one’s mortal self. Complexion, literally means one’s skin colour or the natural tone of one’s skin, however, in my study I name this as complex(ions), for it played in complex ways and was during many times closely affiliated to one’s innermost emotions and feelings.

**Forbidden Fs (Food, Faiths and Festivals)** - The three aspects namely food, faiths and festivals were frequently included and interpreted by boundary speakers as features of one’s cultural attributes, closely related to the daily enactment of one’s boundary identities. If the stream, Complex(ion) opened up the conceptualisation of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ at a glance, this stream entrapped us within the boundaries of these identities. Yet, it seemed
to be considered by many boundary speakers that it needed to be left excluded within the realms of public, everyday discourses. Therefore, I sensed that legitimising any open discussion was closely linked to whose boundaries were represented and how. Our understandings were intense, deep and sometimes unresolved. I discuss the three Fs, Food, Faiths and Festivals as one stream, because during many occasions they were inextricably woven directly and indirectly by us, as boundary speakers.

**Tongue ties** - Tongue ties, one of the smaller streams that contributed to Ganga’s boundary course through its boundary flows. This stream was most significant in establishing the language of ‘Australian’. I named this stream as ‘Tongue ties’ because the boundary ‘speaks’ to me indicated the restricted enactments of one’s linguistic identity within Australia, because of what was considered as ‘Australian’.

**Terra strikes** - This boundary stream was abounding with the boundary speakers’ commitment to their borders, ‘terra’, the nation and national identity. Thus, this stream exposed the interplay of fear and desire for multiplicities within what was considered as the space of ‘Australian’. The boundary ‘speaks’ to me depicted their desires, fears and challenges and their sense of ease in challenging or being challenged.

**Boundary courses** are the pathways the streams, which are the layers that the boundary speakers take, to etch their boundary identities for self and others. These varied courses provide glimpses into how different meanings are attached to each stream, in a given society for individuals and groups at that time. I use these in the following chapters, as I centre my discussions under boundary streams and courses using examples from boundary ‘speaks’.

**Boundary sources** are situated under each of the boundary courses recognised under each boundary stream. Boundary sources are the origins of courses and their paths, leading to our impressions of the boundaries of each other, and they further lead to Boundary re-sources that could be continuous and/or discontinuous.

**Boundary re-sources** are the reactions that were triggered by sources. I see these as being purposeful on most incidents, especially due to the nature of action research methodology. However, at times these were also the unintended outcomes that unintentionally precipitated as boundaries were ‘spoken’. I grouped examples of boundary sources and re-sources to illustrate a specific course and its stream. In the following chapters I discuss how I made meaning of what I saw, heard and perceived.
I use my Ganga’s courses (theoretical frameworks) to engage with my Ganga-the data. Therefore each course leads me to a discussion chapter, which in turn leads to another analysis led by the next course of my Ganga and so on. There are three analysis and discussion chapters each. I now use ‘Ganga’ to symbolise my data, and in the following analysis chapters with the key theme ‘speaking boundary identities’, I describe, how I have followed along each of my Ganga’s courses, to ‘speak’ with/about and as my Ganga-the data. I use ‘speaking’ to denote the specific, interactive and communicative nature of my analytical interpretations of ‘boundary speaks’.

Thus, I released and realised my Ganga-data, and she ‘speaks’ in my forthcoming chapters, in her colonised, colonising and postcolonial voices and forms.
Chapter 4

Speaking boundary identities with Ganga

‘Speaking’ with Ganga: my initial approach

The first stage of analytical interpretation consisted of lengthy narrative inquiry, which included the sequential analysis of events as they unfolded. The interpretations were influenced not just by theories of social psychology, but also by my subjectivities, my colour, ethno-linguistic-identity and experiences, and my affiliation to my critical theories of poststructuralism and postcolonialism. According to Creswell (2007), “Restory” is a process of recognising and analysing narratives in an orderly fashion, and a postmodern writer adds deconstructive elements to analysis, to expose dichotomies, examine silence to identify disruptions and contradictions. Reissman (2008) stresses that narrative analysis is ideal to examine how “selves” are constructed, and identifies four methods of such analysis, namely thematic, structural, dialogic/performance and visual. I used the method, dialogic/performance analysis, as it is recommended by Reissman (2008) to examine how interactive talks viewed as performances are influenced by the context, especially the researcher, and it deeply contends with the purpose of those utterances. Reissman (2008) adds that it pushes boundaries about what can and what cannot be added in narrative analysis, and takes into account the presence of the researcher as a strong influence on data.

My study was concerned with the cultural identities, especially within the socio-political context of Australia’s multiculturalism was enacted. I was deeply conscious and was made aware of my background from the very beginning of this procedure. From the very start, I felt compelled to include my influence on my Ganga-the data produced and on all speakers, and the influence of my Ganga on me. Moreover, collaborative action research methodology required the illustration of reciprocal interactions and reactions. Therefore, I chose dialogic/performance analysis of my Ganga’s sources-field notes, narratives (N) and interviews (I) and organised my Ganga thematically (boundary streams) to commence the process of “restory” (Creswell, 2007). To engage in this process, I alphabetically coded the daily field notes, and I chose boundary ‘speaks’ from Narratives (N) and interviews (I) that I identified as reflecting how we ‘spoke’ of our boundary identities, and colour coded these under each boundary stream. Many of the ‘boundary speaks’ exchanged between focus children and their families were in Tamil and I translated these later to use in analysis and discussion.
The dialogic/performance narrative analysis of ‘boundary speaks’ encompassed how I made meaning of our interactions using all theories and frameworks that I had engaged with in relation to this topic, and my own emotions and feelings, as I collected and interpreted data. My Ganga’s postcolonial voice strongly surfaced in these writings and her colonised voice remained submerged. However, this was raw, and I found it very difficult to distinguish the varied courses of my Ganga (theoretical frameworks), and I was unable to proceed to provide a cohesive and comprehensive discussion that particularly outlined my ability to engage with my research questions and literature. Moreover, the complexity of my discussions were compounded due to my Ganga’s primary source, participatory action research methodology, as we were interpreting consciously and unconsciously and were reacting to the ‘boundary speaks’ of each other as we spoke and made meaning of the events.

‘Speaking’ boundary identities with Ganga: the socio-psychological ‘self’ and ‘other’

Reissman (2008) too contemplates that the very fact that narrative analysis tells stories, it has been challenged as being a performance for specific audience. However, Reissman adds by considering alternative interpretations, by including specific texts and interactive contexts, researchers can overcome those challenges. Therefore, I moved to the second stage of my analysis, in which from the identified narratives and interviews, I chose specific language statements with texts that reflected how ‘boundary speakers’ enacted their cultural identities in early childhood settings.

I would like to bring to focus my Ganga’s first course-theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2, which I used in this stage of analysis. I used theories of social psychology to interpret the role of ‘othering’, in distinguishing the boundary identities (collective/cultural/national/ethno-linguistic/race) of ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Hall, 2003; Crisp & Turner, 2007). I used this to make meaning of the language statements, which I identified as conveying relationships between ‘self’ and ‘other’ and in categorical attribution of our boundary identities.

With a quest to decolonise my postcolonial beginning, I still used my Ganga’s colonising voice below and in this stage of analysis with tables, columns and rows.

- According to Crisp and Turner (2007), ‘self’ consists of ‘personal identity’ (one’s personality and temperament) and ‘social identity’ (the social groups such as ethnic, occupational, sports etc. that we consider we are a part of). For Lacan, the ‘other’ plays a critical role in constructing the identity for ‘self’ with
the use of language (Easthorpe, 1999; Lacan, 2002). Moreover, Hogg and Abrams (2007) state that others have a great influence on the construction of our identity, both personal and social and thus, the development of one’s identity is inextricably tied to the identity of others to establish, what one is (self) and what one is not (other), in order to differentiate self from the other (Hall, 2003). The above authors (Crisp & Turner, 2007) also add that prejudices between groups can be reduced by bringing groups together, by creating a common identity through re-categorisation and by using other ways to categorise people that brings members from both groups to these new categories.

- Australia’s socio-political structures have strived to engage with multiculturalism to manage varied cultural groups within its national boundaries and the construction of national identity has become a major political agenda (Stokes, 1997). Thus, the creation and the maintenance of ‘Australian’, and the re-categorisation of diverse groups to fit this identity can be seen as one way of reducing tensions between cultural groups in Australia.

Driven by the above understandings, in this stage of analysis I focused on how ‘self’ and ‘other’ were named as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ and how these identities were attributed by the process of ‘othering’ by children and adults in early childhood settings. Dominated by my Ganga’s colonising voice, I tabulated and organised statements for ease of analysis, which I illustrate with an example later. This form of tabulation and organisation of analysis in a highly simplified manner was not without its complexities, which I highlight as follows.

Hall (2003), and Crisp and Turner, (2007) specify, when we say what we are, we are also saying what we are not both personally and collectively. This stage of analysis was to engage with my first research question, and I focussed on who and with what attributes did the boundary ‘speaker’ specify ‘self’ as ‘Australian’ and therefore, ‘not Australian’ and vice versa. For example, when the speaker said, “We are just Australian” (N: 28/07/10-a), I interpreted this as an expression of their collective ‘self’, ‘Australian self’, and who they are not ‘not Australian other’. When the speaker said, “You know Sri Lankans eat different types of food, you know the food we eat. We eat rice and curry. He [my son] has Australian food too and Sri Lankan, so he knows both cultures and adapts to it and won’t be afraid to say he is Sri Lankan” (I: 8/07/10). As the speaker did not identify ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, but used another identifier, ‘Sri Lankan’, I interpreted this as the speaker expressing their
collective ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’, and their ‘other’ as ‘Australian’ using the identity
attribute, food to distinguish the categories.

There were also instances when the identities of both ‘self’ and ‘other’ were
distinguished with specific attribute. For example, “I am white, I am Australian. You are
Black, you are not Australian” (N: 1/09/10-c; 15/09/10-d; 13/10/10-i). The analysis in this
case was straight forward, as both ‘self’, ‘other’ and their distinguishing attributes were
directly expressed with skin colour. Although my study was concerned with how
Australia’s nationalism and multiculturalism intercepted in the enactment of cultural
identities, due to layers such as colour, language, food, faith and festival with which we
expressed our cultures, it became vital to include these layers in the analysis and
interpretation of our collective identities. For example, when a ‘Muslim’ staff said, “Some
staff here hesitate to say they are Muslims. You know what Australians think of Muslims”,
(N: 1/09/10-b) it was important to include the religious layer of her identity that intercepted
in categorising her ‘other’ as ‘Australian’, and therefore regarded ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’.
Moreover, because she had chosen to share this with me, I also gathered that she regarded
me as ‘not Australian’, as she spoke about ‘Australian’ and their attitudes towards Islam.
Thus, it seemed imperative to me that I included these complexities when I discussed the
enactments of cultural identities in early childhood settings, hence, my narrative inquiry and
my tabulated analysis contributed to my discussions in chapter 5.

I tabulated the analysis using spreadsheet application individually for each flow under
each boundary course and stream, and retained the interactive nature of the conversation
and the contextual information, and how I made meaning of them as complete as possible. I
also had a separate spreadsheet that provided definitions for the codes and tabulated
headings. I chose specific statements from narratives (N) and staff interviews (I), which I
understood as those that reflected how we used categorical language to construct the
identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Due to the path that theories of psychoanalysis and social
psychology, this course of Ganga offered, the use of categorical language to express one’s
collective identity is significant to these theories. Sometimes when the collective identity
was not overtly defined by the speaker at that time, it became difficult to analyse and
interpret for the following reasons. Moreover, as we responded to each other’s conceptions
about the identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ we conscious of our backgrounds, and this could
have influenced how we named our categorical identities. For example, the adult speakers,
who were ‘white’, seldom highlighted this layer of their identity, and at times this was
expressed covertly. Sometimes the boundary ‘speakers’ did not express their background
identifier in that narrative. I then used the background identifiers that they had used within the collection of our boundary ‘speaks’. I include the tabulated codes and headings followed by a sample of my tabled interpretation below.
Table 1: Headings/definitions/codes (Australian/not Australian-collective self/other)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statements</th>
<th>Background identifiers – (Focus) Boy/Girl followed by age. Staff/Parent/ W/A – Those who are shades of white, identified by the speaker as white Anglo Australian, using one or all of the following attributes, skin colour, religious or geographic and ethno-linguistic identifiers.</th>
<th>Identifying self</th>
<th>Identified other</th>
<th>NE</th>
<th>Framing self</th>
<th>Framing other</th>
<th>Re-framing self/other</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These are statements that were used by the boundary speaker to either directly express self/other identifiers or became significant in the identification of self/other.</td>
<td>The identifier as used by the speaker to identify ‘self’</td>
<td>The identifier as used by the speaker to identify ‘other’</td>
<td>NE – when the speaker does not exactly express identification of ‘self’ or of ‘other’.</td>
<td>What is spoken or silenced to construct the attributes of self</td>
<td>What is spoken or silenced to construct the attributes of other</td>
<td>What is spoken or silenced to re-construct the attributes of self with other</td>
<td>Specific contextual information in bold. Questions asked, the response, the method of data collection, audience. This information may or may not directly pertain to identities, yet is included to provide continuity and consistency in analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus) Boy/Girl/Staff/Parent W/NA - Those who are white identified by the speaker as ‘not Australian’, using one or all of the following attributes, skin colour, religious or geographic and ethno-linguistic identifiers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Focus) Boy/Girl/Staff/Parent C/NA - Those who are not white and identified by the speaker as ‘coloured and not Australian’, using one or all of the following attributes, skin colour, religious or geographic and ethno-linguistic identifiers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Focus) Boy/Girl/Staff/Parent
C/A - Those who are not white identified by the speaker, as 'Australian or western', using one or all of the following attributes, skin colour, religious or geographic and ethno-linguistic identifiers.
Table 2: Sample analysis (Australian/not Australian-collective self/other)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statements</th>
<th>Background Identifier/s</th>
<th>Identifying self</th>
<th>Identified other</th>
<th>Framing self</th>
<th>Framing other</th>
<th>Re-framing self/other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am Australian, but I am not like See, ‘cause me, and my mum and dad speak in Spanish sometimes” (Cheela)</td>
<td>Cheela girl C/A, 4</td>
<td>‘Australian yet not Australian self’</td>
<td>‘Australian other’</td>
<td>Cheela was framing ‘self’ against her ‘other’ by distinguishing her ‘Australian’ identity with languages spoken. Thus, she was ‘Australian’, yet ‘not Australian’, like See, her ‘white Anglo Australian’ peer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am Australian, I am from Melbourne, but my mum and dad are Indian like you Prasanna” (Pookey)</td>
<td>Pookey focus girl C/NA, 4</td>
<td>‘Australian self’</td>
<td>‘not Australian other’</td>
<td>Pookey used geographic identifiers to categorise ‘self’ as ‘Australian’. Simultaneously Pookey collectively categorised her parents and me as her ‘other’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“But, Pookey you are Indian like Prasanna and your mum and dad, because see you have brown skin like her” (Cheela).</td>
<td>Cheela girl C/A, 4</td>
<td>‘Australian self’</td>
<td>‘not Australian other’</td>
<td>Cheela corrected and named Pookey’s collective identity with use of our brown colour, as ‘Indian’, therefore, ‘not Australian’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Complexion - Black and white: coloured nationalities - Source 2 (Source: ”No, I don’t have brown skin, I don’t, I am not Indian. I am white”)

96
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statements</th>
<th>Background Identifier/s</th>
<th>Identifying self</th>
<th>Identified other</th>
<th>Framing self</th>
<th>Framing other</th>
<th>Re-framing self/other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No, I don’t have brown skin, I don’t, I am not Indian. I am white” Pookey asserted.</td>
<td>Pookey girl C/NA, 4</td>
<td>‘Australian self’</td>
<td>‘not Australian other’</td>
<td>Her geographical constructions of ‘self’ as ‘Australian’ was corrected by her peer with the use of skin colour. Pookey displaces her skin colour to claim the ‘Australian’ identity, and declares, that she is ‘not brown’, ‘not Indian’, and is ‘white’ and ‘Australian’. Thus expressing, ‘white’ is Australian.</td>
<td>Pookey therefore has established her ‘other’ as ‘brown’ and ‘Indian’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Look, I have brown skin too, but lighter, but yours is darker like Prasanna” (Cheela).</td>
<td>Cheela girl C/A</td>
<td>‘Australian self’</td>
<td>‘not Australian other’</td>
<td>Cheela now negotiates using shades of dark brown, as she has brown skin. This lighter colour makes her ‘self’ more ‘Australian’ than Pookey.</td>
<td>Cheela’s ‘other’ is ‘not Australian’ and ‘dark brown’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Okay, then I have brown skin like my mum and dad and Prasanna. I am Indian” (Pookey).</td>
<td>Pookey girl C/NA</td>
<td>‘not Australian self’</td>
<td>‘Australian other’</td>
<td>Pookey accepted being ‘not Australian’ with ‘brown skin’ like mine. Pookey re-framed her identity, ‘self’ is ‘not Australian’ and ‘brown’, like me and her ‘Australian other’ is ‘white or lighter brown’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting tabled narratives

The above table included interactions between two children. Initially, one child the ‘self’ spoke as ‘Australian’ and used the skin colour of ‘self’ and ‘other’ to establish not just the attributes of her personal identity, but also our collective identities, as ‘Australian’ or ‘not Australian’. Here she used shades of brown to classify ‘self’ as ‘Australian’ and her ‘other’ as ‘Indian’, therefore, ‘not Australian’. The focus child, who was framed as ‘not Australian other’, tried to resist the process of ‘othering’, by naming ‘self’ as ‘white’ and ‘Australian’. However, after some negotiation, she reframed her identity as ‘brown’ and ‘Indian’, and therefore, ‘not Australian’, and although the agency of ‘self’ was evident, the ‘other’ who spoke as ‘Australian’ was able to control identity denominations.

Thus, I identified, how categories of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ were established for each other by ‘othering’, and how they were attributed accordingly and whether this resulted in framing or reinforcement of the identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. A collection of such analysis provided me with a body of interpretation with which I could discuss the two major categories within which we identified the collective identities of each other, under the themes identified earlier. Thus, I was able to explore how cultural identities were enacted in early childhood settings, by us (boundary speakers, children/staff/parents/me). In the following chapter, I discuss how I made meaning of my Ganga-the data with this theoretical course of my Ganga. The following chapter again reflects my struggles with embracing my aspirations of decolonisation with this course of Ganga, as my postcolonial voice surfaces intermittently as I try to discuss our ‘boundary speaks’ in an objective colonised voice.
Chapter 5

Ganga ‘othering’ to enact boundary identities

My Ganga—the data unfolded, and our boundaries were spoken. The ‘othering’ analysis of my Ganga revealed that we, as ‘boundary speakers’, consciously and unconsciously ‘spoke’, who ‘self’ was in relation to their ‘other’ bound by categories of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. In the following, I engage with my first research question, and I specifically focus on the role of ‘othering’ (the process of identity development, as outlined by psychoanalysis, and social psychology) in enacting boundaries of national identity, ‘Australian’, and the rest of the cultures ‘not Australian’ within early childhood settings. I discuss with the strongest boundary sources under each boundary stream.

- How are cultural identities enacted in early childhood settings?

Complex(ion) enactments of boundary identities in early childhood settings

The following illustrates how skin colour was used by ‘boundary speakers’ to ascertain ‘self’ and ‘other’, and I have named it as ‘Complex(ion)’ due to the complex ways in which this was circulated by children and adults. As one of the major boundary streams that established boundaries of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, it resulted in five different courses. The initial two courses, namely, Black and white: coloured speaking and Black and white: coloured silencing reflected children, staff, parents, and my experiences and knowledge about skin colours in Australia. These became very significant in directing and maintaining the three boundary courses that followed, namely, Black and brown: undeniable, yet undesirable; and Black and white: deniable and desirable; Black and white: coloured nationalities. These not only spoke of which colours were seen as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, but also those that were seen as undesirable and desirable. I begin with the first two courses, with which we spoke or silenced our Complex(ion) experiences and understandings in Australia.

Complex(ion) enactments of Black and white: coloured speaking

Source 1 reflected coloured speaking by children on colour permanence. During pretend play, Leo (boy W/A, 4) asked, “How come you and Pookey are brown and me and Debbie are white”? Thus, he collectively categorised ‘self’ as ‘white’ with Debbie (staff W/A), and ‘other’ Pookey (focus girl C/NA, 4) and I as ‘brown’. Pookey had said she was ‘white’ and had told me that she hated ‘brown’ skin (see, Black and brown: undeniable, yet undesirable, source 3). However, this time Pookey allowed being named as ‘brown’ by her ‘other’ and accepted her identity attributes “I have brown skin like Prasanna”. I passed on Leo’s
question to Debbie, who was sitting on the same bench. Debbie replied, “Don’t worry, brown is good, and they don’t get sun burnt like you and me.” Debbie attributed ‘brown’ as good, and ‘white’ as less desirable, and hastily ended the conversation. I explained, “Actually Leo, it is because we have more pigments in our skin and because my parents and my family also have more pigments in their skin and are shades of brown.” Leo immediately asked, “Can you become white, like us?” Again Leo expressed his collective identity as, ‘white like us’, and I reinforced my colour permanence. Leo touched my cheeks and said, “You are okay”, as if he had to ensure that my brown skin was okay (N: 20/07/10-a).

Repeatedly Leo tested his perceptions about my brown skin colour, “Your hands are rough, can I touch your cheeks, will they be rough too”? I asked, “Why do you think they would be rough?” “Mmm…’cause you are brown” touched my cheek to reaffirm his acceptance, “No, they are okay, I think you are okay” (N: 4/08/10-c; 1/09/10-e). This source and its re-source to me highlighted Leo’s use of ‘othering’ not only to categorise and name ‘white’ and ‘brown’ collectively, but also to test his preconceived attributes, ‘brown’ as ‘not okay’ and ‘rough’, repeatedly with a ‘brown’ adult.

In the second source, just after a few weeks at this centre, Thora (focus girl, C/NA, 3) identified an image in the book, “look, Prasanna, she is like me”, “This girl is brown like me”. She later began to associate her colour with mine and through ‘othering’ named her collective ‘self’, “This is our colour, our colour. Read this book. I like reading this book, because it is about our colour”, and almost every day she identified and spoke ‘our colour’ with me (N: 7/06/10-h, i; 10/06/10-d; 17/06/10-b). Her best friend Sidya (focus girl C/NA, 3), always remained silent when Thora ‘spoke’ colours. I spoke to Thora’s and Sidya’s parents’ to gather their opinion on having discussions about skin colour with children. Thora’s parents gave their consent by saying Thora was talking about what was important to her, and that they wanted her grow up with a strong sense of self identity (N: 17/06/10-f; 21/06/10-a).

Sidya’s mother too consented, however, this was drawn from her family’s experience, “You know what in this country someone has to talk about colour. I will tell you what happened in my son’s school. A few weeks ago, a boy had called my son “blacky” and said that he won’t play with him. My son was so upset when he came home and he refused to go to school the very next day”. She continued, “The teacher said that she won’t believe my son, as the other boy could not have said something like that”; “I think if you can make Sidya feel that it is okay to stand up for herself and it is alright to be who you are that is all
I ask of you” (N:17/06/10-g). There was so much anger and frustration in her voice. Here, the process of ‘othering’ and stereotyping with skin colour as the identifier had resulted in prejudice, and this parent wanted to change this for the future by ‘speaking’ colours with children. Despite recognising the staff’s reluctance to do, I decided to engage in colour ‘speaking’ with children.

In Source 3 Amelia’s, (staff W/A) classification of ‘self’ with the language of the ‘other’ was evident. “I worry about Plafe and Moo, Prasanna”, “I cuddle these children and I protect them. But the outside world is cruel. I know it is different out there. I am from that world Prasanna. I am white, like you say”. Amelia named her collective ‘self’ as ‘white’, the category that I had used in ‘othering’ her identity. Having experienced a lot of resistance from ‘white’ staff earlier to being named as ‘white’, I immediately observed that she had not only accepted my ‘othering’, but used it to establish the ‘difference’ in the ‘outside world’. Amelia recollected, “I used to bring home all sorts of friends from varied backgrounds. My mum and dad were okay with it. But you should have heard my grandpa, grandma and other relatives. They say terrible things against people of colour. I just bend my head down and am too scared to say anything. Can’t they realise we are all Australians?” Amelia spoke as an ‘Australian’ from the ‘white world’ and how people of colour can be excluded as ‘not Australian’ in this society. She added, “We first had Sri Lankans and then Indians, they were slowly seen as similar to us [Australian] and then they were not a problem. Now there are Sudanese and Somalians and that seems to bother everyone, they are right in front of their faces, dark as, and so they don’t know how to cope” (N: 11/06/10-g). She thus problematised the process of ‘othering’ based on skin colour identifiers, and that similarities had to be established to be accepted as ‘Australian’ within Australia. Jan (staff C/NA), Amelia and I collaborated to change children’s conceptions of ‘Australian’ identity. Amelia continued with strategies for change, “I will start this by describing my family history, not just as Australians, but as you say, white Anglo Australians and how we came here many generations ago. Otherwise families will just write about like ‘normal’ (using her fingers as quotation marks) family” (N: 15/06/10-k). Again, Amelia used my categorisation of her ‘self’ and used this not only to name her identity, but to acknowledge her history, so that families would do the same. Thus, she named and categorised her collective ‘self’ as ‘white Anglo Australian’ and ‘spoke’ of the non-indigenous nature of ‘whiteness’, and how this has been ‘normalised’ as national identity. Jan re-framed ‘the Australian’, “I want to write it down, white Anglo Australians. I thought they were the Australians” (N: 13/07/10-g). This example was critical to me, as my ‘othering’, the process with which I categorise my ‘other’ as ‘white Anglo Australian’ was
not challenged by Amelia, who classified ‘self’ as ‘white Anglo Australian’. I questioned my power in categorising and distinguishing my ‘other’, and whether this was fair and justifiable, in my quest to reconceptualise ‘Australian’ identity.

The above examples to me represented children’s ability to categorise collective ‘self’ and ‘other’ using skin colour attributes, and they positioned and spoke with adults using their own collective identity as a reference point. Adults’ interest in ‘speaking’ colours with children reflected their own skin colour experiences in Australia, and we used our personal experiences to make decisions about ‘speaking’ colours with children in early childhood settings.

**Complex(ion) enactments of Black and white: coloured silencing**

Source 1, of this course began with my conversation with the room leaders in the centre, and I explained the aim of my study, as questioning the role of culture in children’s peer selection (N: 20/05/10-a). Sheri, (staff C/NA), “We don’t have a problem, Thora and Sidya always play together. We encourage this to happen, so that they can have each other. Maybe they feel comfortable because they are the same background, like in looks and they speak the same language and it is the family too”. Thus, Sheri outlined Thora’s and Sidya’s (focus girls C/NA, 3) similarities as the reasons for their peer selection. For me these very same reasons were problematic, as they were excluding and being excluded by those who did not share those similarities. Although skin colour was not mentioned in our conversation till now, Katherine, (staff W/A) brought this up, “But children don’t see colours, they are innocent. They may do in some countries where there is a lot of trouble, but Australia being the lucky country such things don’t happen. It is individual choice, they should be able to choose whom they want to be friends with”. Thus, she saw children as innocent, did not distinguish the skin colour of each other, and might do so only in troubled countries, but not in Australia. Most of all, she insisted that children’s peer choices should not be intervened. Although, this conversation had little to do with cultural identities, it outlined her reasons for not having conversations about skin colour with children.

A few days later Sheri recollected her childhood experiences, “I never thought about this, until you started talking about colour. You know I had always dreamt about marrying a white man and I am married to one. Right since I was young, I only wanted to marry a white man. I don’t know why I don’t like dark skin. May be, it was because I was teased here at school because of my skin colour when I was young” (N: 28/05/10-h). Sheri had been teased and this had affected her attitudes towards skin colour. Having been teased about her “dark” skin colour, Sheri had developed a dislike for dark ‘self’ and a desire for
‘white’ other. We understood each other as I shared my children’s childhood experiences with her. Sheri continued, “But I didn’t think that really did affect me, but may be it did”, “but you know you can do what you want in the room, change anything, talk about anything with children. I understand”, and gave me permission and freedom to change and talk about anything with children. We were both ‘brown’ but our experiences with our ‘brownness’ were similar, yet different, due to the differences in our social contexts, and I failed to see our layers. I seriously began to question the nobility I imagined in action research, of active collaboration and action. I shunned my power and my postcolonial lens, and I decided not to expect Sheri to ‘speak’ colours with children.

The second source began as a trickle but collected momentum soon. Bikky (girl W/NA, 4) asked in a very low voice, “Why did god give you black skin and gave me white skin” (N: 4/08/10-i). Bikky’s question illustrated that Bikky was ‘othering’ her ‘self’ and ‘other’ with the use of our skin colour, and dichotomous language ‘black/white’. I mentioned pigments and ancestry to her as reasons for our skin colour differences, and agreed to read the book, ‘All the colours we are’ with her. This children’s book is written in English and Spanish and lists the varied reasons for all the different colours we are, in simple language. Gina (staff, W/A), who was listening to our conversation agreed to read this book with the whole group of children that afternoon. Gina read and was surprised to find words such as, ‘melanin, ancestors and pigments’ and asked me what they meant, “mmm.... that is surprising, I don’t know why they say that in children’s book”. Gina concluded the book with a moral about sun protection, “It depends on how hot it is where you live. The sun can make you go very dark, see you have to protect yourself from the sun, it is very hot in Australia. Katherine you don’t stand a chance, you are stuck with your skin colour” (N: 4/08/10-j). I observed Gina’s discomfort and reluctance in ‘speaking’ colours. All Gina gathered and concluded was that sun can change one’s skin colour and Australia being very hot, one had to protect oneself and added that Katherine (staff, W/A) had no possibilities of becoming darker.

Lisa the zebra (girl, W/NA, 4) diverted this source by asking, “But, how come Australians are white, when it is hot here, because sun makes us go brown doesn’t it?” Lisa the Zebra, having classified ‘Australian’ as ‘white’ asked about this origin by drawing upon Gina’s theory on the sun, Australia and protection from becoming ‘dark’. This was an

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1 Kissinger, K. (1994). All the colours we are: the story of how we get our skin colour. New Jersey: Red leaf press.
exciting moment for me, as I felt Gina was being pushed to ‘speak’ the history of ‘white Australian’. Katherine diverted this conversation, “Hey, I dare you to read those words at the bottom, go on read it” and Gina was dared to read the Spanish words, Gina tried and giggled. Gina quickly dispersed the children, “I give up, okay where do you get your skin colour from? Say it in one word and you can go to wash your hands”, and children said, “Paint” and “bright”. Gina compared the similarities of these responses with those of her own, “I would have said the same thing” and concluded, “No worries, can you see children didn’t still quite get it. I would have been the same when I was four” (N: 4/08/10-j). Gina expressed children of 4-5 years of age were not developmentally ready to engage with the complexities of skin colour differences and similarities, and she drew upon her own childhood innocence. I was unable to challenge Gina, especially because she had been instrumental in my continued presence there, and I wanted to protect my study. However, I thought children got it because Lisa the Zebra specifically named the colour of ‘Australian’. I silently continued ‘othering’ and I saw Gina and Katherine, as my ‘white other’ who silenced colour ‘speaking’.

Thus, although the above Complex(ion) boundary sources, did not directly express how we enacted our boundary identities within categories of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, they indicated our attitudes and understandings towards children’s colour ‘speaking’ and the varied origins of our understandings. The following Complex(ion) ‘speaks’ slowly surfaced our emotions along with those categorical boundaries.

Complex(ion) enactments of Black and brown: undeniable, yet undesirable

Seaweed (focus girl, C/NA, 3), told me the very first day I entered her room, that she didn’t like her brown skin, her personal ‘self’, the feelings connected to her self-identity (N: 1/06/10-b). That evening her mum expressed that she had been advised by the staff to ignore this, as this was Seaweed’s way of gaining undue attention (N: 1/06/10-h).

Next week, Seaweed, again spoke aloud, “I don’t like brown skin” and I reminded, “but your mum has brown skin and I do too”. Seaweed adeptly changed her statement, “I like my mum, you have brown skin too. But I don’t like my brown skin. I like white skin” (N: 8/06/10-e). She spoke beyond ‘othering’ ‘self’ and ‘other’ as ‘brown’ and ‘white’, as she revealed her desire for her ‘white other’. Jan (staff, C/NA) was quite shocked, “But you can’t say that, you should like your own, whatever colour. I love my yellow skin, or that is what they say I have and I love it. I am shocked to hear this, you should like your skin Seaweed”. Jan not only stated the love of her colour, but her awareness of how she had internalised the political categorisation of ‘self’ as ‘yellow’, and insisted one should love
that ‘self’, no matter what. Jan hugged Seaweed to show her acceptance of Seaweed’s ‘brown self’. I questioned Seaweed about painting her self portrait, “What colour would you use to paint your picture”, and she replied, “White”. Seaweed paused, looked at Jan and said, “No, purply white skin colour, alright”. I knew Seaweed’s desire for ‘white’ was deep, deeper than paints and words, and she knew how to nurture this desire with the conversion of ‘white’ to ‘purply white’ for the sake of Jan. Again the power of ‘white’ desire was able to overcome all ‘othering’ that categorised and positively attributed ‘brown’ skin colour.

Many weeks later, Seaweed’s mum shared her observations of Seaweed’s colour ‘speaks’, “You know Seaweed has always said that she doesn’t like her brown skin. I used to ignore because I was asked to by the staff, but now I keep telling her that it is okay to have brown skin, like her aunty and cousin and she is beautiful. I talk about it and it is okay to talk about it I think, because, she now says that she loves her brown skin” (N: 13/07/10-i). Seaweed’s mum had deliberately been reinforcing the acceptance of personal ‘self’ by drawing similarities with those who were ‘brown’, thus building a strong collective identity in Seaweed with members of that group. However, Seaweed had also conceptualised that ‘brown’ was ‘not Australian’ and ‘white’ was ‘Australian’, which I discuss later. Although Seaweed now had developed a liking for her ‘brown’ skin, her ‘othering’ understandings about ‘Australian’ as ‘white’ and ‘not Australian’ as ‘brown’ remained undisrupted. Therefore, I concluded that disrupting the identity of ‘Australian’ was as important as nurturing a strong sense of ‘self’ in young coloured children.

The second source shocked every one of us involved. Moo (focus girl, C/NA, 3) sat in my lap facing me and said, “Prasanna, I don’t like you because you have brown skin” (N: 14/07/10-b). There was a stunned silence, and I soon recovered, “You hurt my feelings by saying that. You are sitting in my lap and you also have brown skin”. I, as Moo’s ‘other’ named her as ‘brown’, but Moo resisted and chose to name her ‘self’, “No, my mum is white and I am white too”. Amelia (staff, W/A) corrected Moo, “We can ask your mum Moo, I am definitely sure she is brown, may be a little lighter than Prasanna, but is definitely brown”. Moo replied, “No, don’t tell my mum. But I am white”. The hatred for ‘brown’ and perception of ‘self’ as ‘white’ was strong in Moo, that even the ‘white Australian’ stood powerless. Hearing this, Seaweed, her ‘brown’ peer immediately engaged in ‘othering’ their collective identity, “Moo, I am brown and I love my skin. You are brown and you should love your skin too”. Moo got very upset, and yet she snuggled into my arms sobbing. I presumed that this was triggered by what Pat (child, W/A, 3) said about roti last week (N:
The next morning during outdoor play Amelia angrily said, ‘What does Katrina (staff, WA) know about living in this white world? She is white and lives in this white world, but for children like Moo and Seaweed what they feel and go through day after day is a reality. I hope we are able to continue to work on skin colours consistently even after you leave” (N: 16/07/10-d). Amelia expressed our powerlessness in confronting ‘whiteness’, a daily reality of many coloured children. I was deeply hurt by this event, and I began to seriously reconsider the unpredictability embedded in this research, and what it meant to especially work against coloured perceptions, with coloured children, as a coloured adult in a ‘white world’. I could not separate my subjectivity from what I was and am doing, a reality that I experienced with Moo and Seaweed. I was deeply scarred by this incident, and I still worry about Moo and Seaweed.

The third source was another colour ‘speak’ that expressed as above, dislike for ‘brown self’ and desire for ‘white other’. Pookey (focus girl, C/NA 4) “I don’t want to play with that brown doll. I don’t like brown skin. I am white” (N: 28/05/10-a). I later informed Katherine (staff W/A) and she replied, “It couldn’t have come from here. Her teachers are white. Maybe it is from the family, they probably buy only white dolls for her” (N: 28/05/10-d). It seemed to me that Katherine defended her silence, by accusing the family of not buying brown dolls for Pookey. I was dismayed when I heard this, because I saw a ‘brown’ child, from a ‘brown’ family with ‘brown’ family and friends expressing her distaste for ‘brown’ skin and all Katherine could think of was that the family bought only white dolls for her to play with. I recognised how as ‘white’ and ‘brown’ we saw the world differently. Katherine saw only ‘white’ kinder teachers, and I saw more coloured staff than ‘white’ in this centre. I became aware of Katherine’s reluctance and through my process of ‘othering’, I defined her identity with ‘whiteness’ that rationalised and reduced the complexities inherent in Australia’s social context.

I decided to ask Pookey’s mum about Pookey’s dislike, and she replied, “Someone here has told Pookey that she is black and yucky, so they won’t play with her. She was so upset when she came home. But how do I say this to the staff here. I haven’t said anything” (N: 21/06/10-j). Pookey’s dislike of her personal ‘self’ stemmed from how her identity was negatively attributed by her peers. Months later, Leo (boy, W/A, 4), who had always been curious about our ‘brown’ colour asked, “Hey, Prasanna, are you brown?” Pookey’s mum
who was there to pick up Pookey asked, “What about me and Pookey, are we brown?” Leo identified our collective identity, “Hey, look Prasanna, you, Pookey and her mum, you are all brown”. For Leo, ‘othering’ our collective identity seemed very important and he reinforced this many times. Pookey accepted Leo’s ‘othering’, “Yes, I am brown like peanut butter, yum” (N: 2/09/10-1). Pookey’s mother was thrilled with this change, and we exchanged smiles and children’s books on colour².

This boundary course was and still is the most difficult one to analyse, discuss and write, as I am tied to this physically and emotionally. Repeatedly, most children who were ‘brown’ rejected and portrayed an intense dislike for ‘brown skin’, and most ‘white’ staff were reluctant to engage with this, even as they directly observed and encountered such behaviour. I had to work with silenced understandings about colour in Australia to save my study.

Complex(ion) enactments of White and brown: deniable, yet desirable

This course seemed like a reactionary behaviour to ‘brown’ children’s behaviour and my concern about their dislike and displacement of their personal ‘self’. This specific source happened before all the previous ones in which children overtly exchanged colour ‘speaks’ with Gina, Katherine and I. I entered the staffroom to meet Cathy, Katherine and Gina (all staff W/A), to re-explain the purpose of my study. Cathy had arranged for this meeting, as Katherine felt that I was being discriminatory, and I met Gina for the first time. Gina didn’t wait to ‘speak’ colour as ‘Australian’, “You know, we are both just Australians. Why do you have to call us white? How do you think we would feel when you call us white”. Gina named their collective national ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, and challenged how I ‘othered’ them as ‘white’. Their feelings were attached to being named by their colour, and objected to my ‘othering’ of their collective identity, ‘Australian’ with ‘white’. Katherine added, “I don’t know why you have to tell Pookey is brown, when every other kid in the room is Australian. You tell her she is brown and that she is different.” Katherine was angry that I named Pookey ‘brown’, as I made her feel different, therefore, ‘not Australian’, when the rest of the children in the room were ‘Australian’. Thus she indirectly conveyed ‘brown’ categorically was not included as ‘Australian’. I argued, “But the problem is, she is brown and she says she doesn’t like brown and that she is white”. However, Katherine continued,

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Kissinger, K. (1994). All the colours we are: the story of how we get our skin colour. New Jersey: Red leaf press.
“Yeah, I understand all that. But telling her she is brown is discrimination. You are making her feel that she is different. You know every other child in the group is white and we are both white teachers, but you make her feel that she doesn’t belong” (N: 28/07/10-a).

Katherine and I saw the children in the room through our colours. Katherine felt every other child in the group was ‘white’ and every other child was ‘Australian’. Katherine was ‘othering’ the identity of ‘Australian’ as ‘white’. The child’s sense of belonging was only linked to perceptions of ‘sameness’, and therefore, to develop the collective identity of ‘Australian’ all children had to perceive that they were ‘white’. Thus, Katherine justified Pookey’s dislike for ‘brown’ and desire for ‘white’. My strong desire to protect my study clashed with my theoretical disposition, as I silenced my reactions that stemmed from my concurrent interpretation of what was being exchanged. Children continued to ‘speak’ colour in front of all the staff, as they compared our skin colour and named our nationalities as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’.

Weeks later, Katherine spoke aloud one evening. “You know, I hate it when people call me white, because I go to great lengths to get a tan. I love tan and I get very angry when people say I am white” (N: 1/09/10-g). Katherine dispensed my coloured concerns, by saying like Pookey, who desired her ‘white other’, Katherine yearned to be her ‘brown other’. These again revealed the power to ‘other’ and maintain, what was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, was only held by those who ‘spoke’ as ‘white Australian’, and I did not have the power to disrupt this.

Gina’s excuse for silencing her colour ‘speaking’ was different to above, “But it is difficult to talk about colour? If a child comes and asks me, why are you white, I wouldn’t know what to say. You say pigments and stuff about your skin when children ask you about colour, but what can we say, nothing” (N: 4/08/10-p). Gina found it difficult to talk about colour, because, as a ‘white’ individual she had ‘nothing’ in comparison to what I had, ‘pigments and stuff’. I silently thought that we both have the same stuff, but I have more of that stuff than you do. During the interview, Gina continued, “I remember, last year, you know the hip hop singer, Eminem; he sang this song with the word, Negro in it. That became the buzz word with all the boys in the group. They asked me what does Negro mean. I just said that it is a word used to call people who are dark and didn’t make a big issue about it, you know they are just curious. We had a boy who was dark as, and the rest of the boys started calling him Negro. Oh my god, we didn’t know what to do, we just were shocked and said don’t use that word here” (I: 8/09/10). This highlighted how Gina and I saw the world through our colours. I concluded that Gina’s reluctance to speak colours with
children had resulted in children adeptly using the word ‘Negro’ to engage in prejudiced ‘othering’.

Thus, Gina and Katherine defended their difficulty in ‘speaking’ colours with children, although they became aware of children’s colour ‘speaking’ that expressed prejudice. Later Gina explained why children spoke colour with me and not with any other ‘brown’ staff in the centre, “Children will never talk about colour with Aruna. She wants to be white and she has always said this. When I put my legs out in the sun for a tan, she says, oh you have such beautiful skin and she wishes she was white. She says in front of all the children that she likes only white babies. What luck would one have with her, children will never ask her” (I: 8/09/10). I concluded that Gina had accepted this, as it was laden with Aruna’s desire for that ‘white other’. I respected Gina for accepting my presence in that room, therefore, I remained silent, although I saw her as my ‘white other’, who contributed to the perpetuation of ‘white’ as ‘Australian’ and a desire for ‘whiteness’.

The second source started as pretend play, Batman (boy, W/A, 3) pretended that he was my baby, and Thora (focus girl, C/NA, 3) said, “He can never be your baby”, “Because he is white, like Doggy and you are brown like me”. Thora was categorising ‘self’ collectively by comparing the skin colour of personal ‘self’ collectively with mine and in relation to her ‘white other’. Batman corrected himself, “I know, I was just kidding, I know I am white. I really do”. After weeks of working with ‘brown and white’ data in this study, I wanted children to see shades of white and brown, and therefore, I said, “Why do you say you are white? See (showing a white piece of paper) this is white. Are you this colour? Can I say you are peachy white colour or creamy white?” But Batman resisted, “I know I am white, ‘cause see, my skin is white” (N: 2/09/10-b). Batman did not take on the categorical ‘othering’ that I, his ‘other’ proposed, and instead chose to name ‘self’ as ‘white’.

Doggy (girl, W/A, 3) accepted my shades of white, “But, I can be creamy white or peachy white Prasanna, just like you”. Despite Thora’s affirmation of our collective ‘self’ as ‘brown’, Doggy accepted being shades of white, by classifying my collective identity as the same as hers. This exposed my own power as the ‘brown other’ in fuelling her desire. Did that mean my concerns about Moo, Seaweed and Pookey were insignificant? I critically thought and compared the desire for ‘other’ expressed by Doggy, who was ‘white’, and by Moo, Seaweed and Pookey, who were ‘brown’. Doggy never said that she disliked her ‘white self’, she just expressed a desire for ‘brown other’, while Moo, Seaweed and Pookey always expressed their dislike for ‘brown self’ first and their desire for ‘white other’. For Thora, who was ‘brown’ Doggy’s desire was her source of power, as she repeatedly
engaged in conversations that recognised our collective identity, “You can’t Doggy, look same hair, same skin, same India” (N: 24/08/10-d; 26/08/10-a; 31/08/10-b). I spoke to Cathy (staff, W/A) on how staff and children propagated a desire for ‘brown’, and my concerns with such practices, and during the staff meeting, Cathy spoke about similarities and differences between ‘black/white’, by establishing dichotomies, and the staff did too (N: 6/09/10-a; 23/09/10-b,c).

Tina (staff, W/A) expressed her desire to be ‘brown’ like me in front of all the children, “I wish I had skin like Prasanna’s, see I am all white with freckles” (N: 14/09/10-b, c). Repeatedly, Cathy expressed how she had conceptualised ‘self’, “I am boring. I am nothing. There is no colour, no food or celebration. I am just ordinary, nothing to talk about. No, don’t try and defend me, I know I am not there anywhere compared to what you all have. Just greys and blacks. I am nothing. What do I have? My culture is white, middle class Australian. There is nothing, no colour” (N: 3/08/10-h; 1/09/10-h; 8/09/10-d). Cathy’s ‘othering’ of personal and collective ‘self’ not only established the attributes of ‘self’ but in doing so, she ‘othered’ the attributes of ‘white, middle Anglo Australian’ as ‘nothing, ordinary, and possessed no colour’ in comparison to everything that her collective ‘other’ possessed. Nothing I said changed Cathy’s conceptions of the attributes of her ‘white self’. Children’s colour ‘speaks’ became concretised with nationalities as follows.

**Complex(ion) enactments of Black and white: coloured nationalities**

The first indication of coloured nationalities began the very first day I met Seaweed (girl, C/NA, 3). Seaweed introduced ‘self’ as ‘Indian’ and recognised me as ‘Indian’, and took me around the room to introduce Plafe, Moo and Tin whom she classified collectively as ‘Indian’. I was curious to find out about the origin of this national categorisation and Seaweed replied, “Indians have brown skin”, and she further clarified, “No silly, she can’t be Indian. She has white skin. Australians have white skin” (N: 1/06/10-d), as she pointed to Blob (girl, W/A, 4). Thus her process of ‘othering’ included categorising national identities by our skin colour, therefore, the collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. I shared my observations and interpretations with Amelia (staff, W/A) and Jan (staff, C/NA). Jan wanted to know more about my concerns, and Amelia explained, “We were taught about this at school. White people came and took the land away and Aboriginal land ownership was not recognised until 1990’s. I do indigenous studies in the 4th term. Don’t worry, I do talk about Aborigines with children by saying, there were only plants here in the beginning, and then came animals and then the Aborigines” (N: 15/06/10-g). Although Amelia spoke histories, I felt that she constructed a primitive image for the original owners of this land, and I
challenged immediately, “But, isn’t this true for all human beings in the world, why only use this theory when talking about indigenous Australians. I think it is disrespectful that we are linking a particular group of people with flora and fauna”. Amelia apologised, and we collaborated to engage with the complexities of Australia’s dark past and present with children. The above outlined the process of ‘othering’ in constructing the collective national identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ with skin colours, and I continued to recognise how my own ‘othering’ prejudices were influencing my conceptions of ‘white boundary speakers’, and my ‘othering’ power in influencing the categorisation of ‘white Anglo Australian self’.

The second source openly ‘spoke’ the collective identities of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. It began with Cheela (girl, C/A, 4), “I am Australian, but I am not like See, ‘cause me, and my mum and dad speak in Spanish sometimes” (N: 7/06/10-g). Cheela confirmed her collective identity as ‘Australian’, but distinguished ‘self’ from See (girl, W/A, 4), by referring to her language as the distinguishing attribute. Pookey (focus girl, C/A) responded, “I am Australian, I am from Melbourne, but my mum and dad are Indian like you Prasanna”. The above exchanges reflected the categorisation of collective ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, and unlike Cheela, for Pookey, our identities were distinguished by our geographical origins and not marked by the language we spoke. Cheela continued to ‘other’ Pookey, “But, Pookey you are Indian like Prasanna and your mum and dad, because see you have brown skin like her”. Cheela ‘othered’ Pookey as ‘not Australian’ with the use of skin colour, and by saying Pookey was ‘not Australian’ because she was ‘brown’, she also conveyed what was ‘Australian’ was ‘not brown’ silently specified as ‘white’. Immediately, Pookey corrected, “No, I don’t have brown skin, I don’t, I am not Indian. I am white”. Cheela now distinguished our shades, “Look, I have brown skin too, but lighter, I am Australian. But yours is darker like Prasanna. You are Indian”. Cheela was ‘brown’ and she knew she was not ‘white’, yet she wanted to retain her ownership of ‘Australian’ identity. Cheela used of shades of brown and its relevance in claiming the identity of ‘Australian’, and ‘othering’ Pookey as ‘dark brown’, ‘Indian’ and therefore, ‘not Australian’. Pookey accepted this ‘othering’ categorisation of ‘self’, “Okay, then I have brown skin like my mum and dad and Prasanna. I am Indian”, and named ‘self’ as ‘brown’ and ‘not Australian’. Pookey’s re-framing, from ‘Australian’ to ‘not Australian’ to me reflected the power of ‘other’ and ‘whiteness’ that enabled some to ‘speak’ as ‘Australian’, and thereby control what was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’.

This boundary source took unexpected turns to reveal how ‘Australian’ ‘spoke’ colours, as children categorised coloured nationalities. Gina (staff W/A) introduced me to the group,
“This is Prasanna and do you think she is a teacher like me?” and the children named our coloured and national identities, “She is black, you are white”; “No, hey she is not like you, you are white, Australian, and she is brown, she is not Australian” (N: 18/08/10-c). And this continued, as children ‘othered’ ‘Australian’ with ‘white’ and ‘not Australian’ with ‘brown/black’. This was children ‘speaking’ for the identity ‘Australian’; therefore, this wasn’t about their personal or collective identities, but ‘othered’ ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ through the process of categorisation.

Gina was overwhelmed and apologised, “I didn’t expect. But it does stand out I suppose. Don’t get me wrong, skin colour is obvious. I wish I had a book” (N: 18/08/10-d). I had brought in the book, ‘The colours of us’ that enabled children to name their skin colour outside the binaries of ‘white/brown’. The book did not mention ‘white’ and ‘black’, and instead had palatable terms such as ‘peachy tan’, ‘honey’, ‘peanut butter’ and ‘cinnamon’ to signify our skin colour shades. I read it with a small group of children including Pookey and Pookey’s attitudes about her ‘brown self’ changed, “I love my peanut butter” and licked her forehead. However, what was more noticeable for me, was how Feeniyan and See (girls, W/A, 4) responded to this book. Feeniyan and See commented, “We can’t find our colour. What about me?” I replied, “Of course you can, you are peachy tan aren’t you?” Feeniyan and See denied, “No, see we are white, not peachy tan”, and left. Gina was at hearing distance, “It is tricky isn’t. There are usually two colours with skin colour, like black and white” (N: 18/08/10-g), said Gina. Gina observed children ‘speaking’ colours, but reinforced the dichotomous ‘white/black’. Children’s ‘othering’ continued, and the book or I did not have the power to re-frame Feeniyan’s and See’s collective identity.

As I read the book again and again with children it took another surprising turn as Feeniyan categorised our colours, “I am white, so I am Australian. Pookey is black not Australian. Like you she is Indian” (N: 1/09/10-c; 15/09/10-d; 13/10/10-i). Feeniyan’s repeated ‘othering’ revealed personal ‘self’ was distinguished as ‘white’ and collective ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, against her ‘other’. Pookey was alienated as ‘black’ and because of which our collective identity was ‘Indian’, and ‘not Australian’. To me this explained Feeniyan’s earlier reluctance to rename her ‘whiteness’, as relinquishing ‘white’ was giving up her ownership of ‘Australian’ identity. Pookey clung to ‘white’ and ‘Australian’ again, “No, I am white, I am Australian”. I was more concerned with Pookey’s dislike for ‘brown’, therefore, I reminded that her colour was ‘peanut butter’ and not ‘white’ or ‘black’. Feeniyan continued, “No, Australians are white, you are black”. Pookey replied, “Okay, I am Indian like Prasanna and I am from Melbourne. I am both and so I am a bit white”.
Pookey allowed the ‘other’ to construct ‘self’ and yet, retained ‘Australian’ as her collective identity with ‘bits of white’. Thus, the process of ‘othering’ went beyond the construction of collective identities, to ‘othering’ the identity of ‘Australian’ as ‘white’ and those who were otherwise as ‘not Australian’. Moreover, this again revealed the power of ‘white Australian’ in constructing those identities for ‘self’ and ‘other’.

Feeniyan continued with her ‘othering’, “Bikky is white, she is Australian” “cause she is white, Australians are white”. However, Bikky replied, “No, I am not. I am Turkish. I am white, but I am not Australian, I am only Turkish” (N: 1/09/10-c; 15/09/10-d; 13/10/10-i). Bikky distinguished personal ‘self’, ‘white’, from her collective ‘self’, ‘Turkish’. Bikky’s collective identity (ethnic boundary) could not be influenced by ‘white Australian’. Bikky’s behaviour seemed to contradict most studies and my observations of other children, who usually gravitated towards ‘white other’ to claim the national identity, ‘Australian’. I spoke to her mother, ‘This girl, right from when she was young she knew she is Turkish, but her sister calls herself Australian. What do you do? But, you know we are Muslims and she knows that” (N: 1/09/10-j). Bikky identified her ‘self’ as ‘Turkish’ and ‘not Australian’, due to her awareness of her religious identity. What did Bikky know? Did she also establish that the identity of ‘Australian’ did not include ‘Muslim’ and therefore resorted to ‘othering’ ‘self’ as, ‘not Australian’?

Thus, the above examples in this course indicated most children’s ‘othering’ constructions of personal and collective ‘self’ and ‘other’ by binding our skin colour with national identities, ‘white’ as ‘Australian’ and ‘dark/brown/black’ with ‘not Australian’. This also highlighted how children negotiated their personal and collective identities depending on how they had conceptualised these.

Thus, Complex(ion) remained very complex with the boundary courses twisting and turning till the very end. Yet, most courses maintained the ‘othering’ of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ with ‘white’ and ‘brown/black’, and kindled a strong desire for ‘whiteness’ in ‘brown’ children. My Ganga’s colonised voice prompted me to summarise below some of the key understandings that I drew from our Complex(ion) ‘speaks’.

- Similar to what many authors have underlined (Easthorpe, 1999; Targowska, 2001; Kowalski, 2007; Crisp & Turner, 2007; Bennet and Sani, 2008; Epstein, 2009), children in my study used ‘othering’ language of ‘white’ and ‘black/brown’ to categorise and name skin colour of both their personal, and collective ‘self’ and ‘other’. Due to historical links between ‘Australian’
identity and ‘whiteness’, children seemed to regard being ‘white’ as ‘Australian’ and ‘not white’ as ‘not Australian’. The dichotomous constructions of national identities were identified by MacNaughton (2001) in her research with 5 year old children in Australia. Moreover, MacNaughton (2001) adds that ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australian’ was emotionally linked for these children and children used this to define migrant and non-migrant identities. I gathered that not all children accepted being ‘othered’ by peers and adults, as their skin colour and national identities were named and linked. Most ‘white’ children wanted to retain their naming as ‘white’. However, ‘brown’ children wanted to become ‘white’, and also expressed their dislike for ‘brown’ skin. The silence, dislike and denial by children who were ‘brown’ themselves had been identified by many researchers who have conducted studies with young children (see, Tacagni, 1998; MacNaughton, 2001; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Targowska, 2001; Skattebol, 2003; Derman-Sparks and Ramsay, 2006; Epstein, 2009).

Many ‘brown’ parents, with ‘brown’ children welcomed conversations about skin colour, because of their children’s experiences of discrimination, or because of their children’s dislike for ‘brown’ skin.

Authors caution that practices that leave ‘whiteness’ unnamed and unexplored, in combination with acting “colour-blind” leaves discriminatory beliefs about certain differences to be left unchallenged (Hayes, 2001; de Freitas & McAuley, 2008). However, most staff who were ‘white’ believed that children did not and should not see colours, because they were innocent, and they should regard everyone the same. They too classified their collective ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, but did not accept being named as ‘white Australian’. Therefore, they believed ‘brown’ children’s dislike and denial of their colour should be considered as a sign of their sense of belonging as ‘Australian’. Thus, children’s ‘othering’ conceptions of ‘white, as Australian’ and ‘not white, as not Australian’ were either ignored or left unchallenged. Only one ‘white’ staff accepted how I named her as ‘white Anglo Australian’. By naming her collective ‘self’ as ‘white’ and recognising the centrality of its role in perceptions about ‘Australian’ identity, she made decisions to work against nationalising and normalising ‘white’ as ‘Australian’ identity.

I began to question my role in ‘othering’ those who were ‘white’ and my reflection of my dominance and discrimination. My own experiences and my family’s experiences and my theoretical disposition repeatedly intercepted with what was generally perceived about
children’s understanding of skin colour and adults’ role in developing such understanding. I became very disturbed when ‘brown’ children overtly expressed their dislike for ‘brown’ skin and believed that they were ‘white’. If early childhood is critical for the development of one’s self-identity, and if children’s identity is constructed by ‘other’ and through ‘othering’, then as an ‘other’ I felt we all had to take responsibility for ‘brown’ children’s conceptions of their undesirable ‘self’. The most critical understanding that surfaced from my Ganga-the data in this stream was that I realised that the identity of ‘Australian’ was strongly attached to ‘whiteness’. I silently questioned,

Why did the ‘Australian self’ talk about ‘Australian’ identity when Ganga ‘spoke’ complex(ion)?

I move to my next boundary stream to discuss how we ‘spoke’ our boundaries with food, faith and festival.

Forbidden Fs enactments of boundary identities in early childhood settings

The following is a discussion of enactments that established boundaries using Forbidden Fs namely, Food, Faith and Festivals. These attributes were usually linked strongly with cultures, and my study brought forth food, festival and faith layering the ‘othering’ of one’s cultural identity, as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. I named these as Forbidden Fs, as I very soon understood I had to avoid disrupting these layers in early childhood settings. The courses that I identified are Forbidden Fs: patented matters, Forbidden Fs: privatised matters and Forbidden Fs: permitted matters.

Forbidden Fs enactments of patented matters

This course was about how cultures were named and marked with food, faith and festival practices. With source 1, I discuss how children as ‘boundary speakers’ began with conceptualising food and complex(ion) and how it was linked with ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ by adults. We were at the lunch table and Plafe (focus boy, C/NA, 4) was pushing the food on his plate around. Annie spoke from the kitchen, “Stop talking and eat. Don’t worry about him, he has been doing this since he was 6 months old. He talks too much and he doesn’t eat his food”. I worried about him even more, as she said that he had been evading food since he was a baby, and so I asked him what would make him eat. Plafe replied, “I will if I can have rotis. I love roti” (N: 28/06/10-b). I wondered whether he said this because he had constructed our collective identities with roti. Moo and Tin (focus girls, C/NA, 3-4), simultaneously expressed their love for roti and Jan (staff C/NA) wanted to make it just for them.
I became concerned that this practice would categorise and mark the ‘difference’ in Plafe, Moo and Tin. Therefore, I opposed, “I don’t think we should just make it for Moo, Tin and Plafe, all the children in the group can have it. Then they won’t feel different. We have bread and similarly we can have roti one day a week in the menu”. I wanted to keep roti as casual as possible, by offering it to all the children regularly. Pat (boy, W/A, 3), immediately objected by saying, “I don’t want to have it, I won’t like it”. Pat’s ‘othering’ surfaced, “No, you can’t make me. I have bread. Roti is for brown kids. I am not a brown kid. I am white” (N: 28/06/10-c). He categorised his ‘self’ as ‘white’ and attributed this with eating bread, and his ‘other’ as ‘brown’ and attributed this with eating roti. I was very upset when he spat at me saying, “No, I haven’t tried it, I don’t want to, I know it is yuck”. At that time, I saw Pat as my ‘white other’ who only ate bread and was worried about becoming ‘brown’ like ‘us’. I felt that he was not just rejecting what we ate, but our ‘brownness’, a reality that is permanent. I expressed my unconscious feelings of ‘othering’, “I have roti, and bread like you”. Jan and I left this and waited for Amelia (staff W/A) to return from her holidays.

The next day, Pat again ridiculed roti, “Oooh, stinky poo, smelly” with Princess (girl, W/A, 4) and giggled together holding their noses and waving their hands. Moo watched us from the playdough table where she usually made roti almost every day and said, “I am having rice tonight” (N: 13/07/10-e,f). I concluded that Moo was saying this because Pat and Princess characterised roti with negative attributes. I cringed with shame and discomfort, and felt helpless, as I could not predict and direct the exchanges in participatory action research.

Amelia returned from her holidays, and that morning became the turning point for all of us, as our boundaries became slashed with complex(ion). Moo sat in my lap and said that she didn’t like me because I was ‘brown’ and insisted that she was ‘white’ and ‘not brown’. I spoke to Amelia about ‘roti incident’, “Oh, gosh we have to do something. Can we make them here and what do you have it with” (N: 14/07/10-d) and suggested ways of including varied food regularly with all children. Amelia spoke to the other staff at the centre about our decision. Annie (staff, W/A) who heard Pat’s remark about roti later said, “That is him, I heard him when he said that. He has always been like that”, and laughed. “I spoke to Amelia and she suggested cooking experiences and making rotis for everyone” I added. “You know rotis can be expensive, I don’t know about the budget. If you ask me, I would suggest lots of pictures of varied food. You can just download them from the internet, print and laminate and have them around the room. I used to do that when I was running the
room” (N: 14/07/10-f) Annie suggested. I felt overwhelmed and I began to further grapple with the nature of participatory action research, and how I was reacting with what was happening. I could sense that making roti to reconceptualise ‘white’ and ‘bread’ was difficult, and I remained silent, with feelings of guilt, thinking this wasn’t supposed to happen, and perhaps I should have remained silent even as Pat ‘spoke’ ‘whiteness’ against roti.

My next day at the centre, Katrina (staff W/A) stopped me as I was walking out, “Did you say Santa was not real? That is so wrong” (N: 16/07/10-g). I recalled the incident that happened a week or two ago, when Plafe and two other children were at the pasting table. Plafe and his friends were arguing about Santa at the shopping centre and Plafe turned to me and asked, “He is only a man wearing a costume. Isn’t it Prasanna” (N: 25/06/10-b), and I agreed. When the other boy continued to argue, I advised him to speak to his parents. Katrina continued, “It is a family value. It is religion and you can’t change what 98% of Australians believe to be true”. Thus, by conceptualising the identity of ‘Australian’ as Santa believers, Katrina constructed the collective identity of ‘Australian’. Therefore, she also constructed my identity as ‘not Australian’, the ‘other’ as I said otherwise. Most of all she did not want the attributes of ‘Australian’ to be changed by the ‘not Australian other’.

I tried to explain that Plafe and I were only contending the Santa at the shopping centres as ‘not real’. Katrina was not convinced, “It is St. Nicholas, yes, the man in the shopping centre wears a costume and is not real Santa, you are right. It is true and I know you spoke the truth, and that is a big mistake. It is wrong”. She explained why Santa should be left as ‘real’ by drawing upon children’s innocence, “Let children be innocent. Why make them think otherwise. It is so nice, when we have Santa every year. All the children adore him”. Katrina questioned my attitudes towards my faith to assert Santa’s existence, “What about your gods and goddesses?” and I replied that Plafe had already said that ‘Rama and Krishna’ were not real. “What if I say, you can’t have roti to you? How would you feel about it? It is like that. You have to leave things as they are sometimes. Nothing has to change. For some minority Australia does not have to change” (N: 16/07/10-g). Katrina’s ‘othering’ extended to linking roti, as she guarded Santa and the national identity of Australia from the ‘not Australian minority’, who tried to induce change. Katrina sent me an email to ring her and when I rang, “I am sorry we have to pull out of the project”, “You spoke the truth and that is very wrong. It is a big mistake” (N: 23/07/10-a). Thus, this example brimmed with our emotions and ended by linking roti/bread with ‘white/brown’, and Santa, with ‘Australian/minority’ (not Australian). I felt that I was ill-prepared for this
form of research. I still haven’t identified whether I was excluded because I spoke, complex(ion), food, faith or festival with children, because at this juncture, Ganga-the data merged all of these.

In source 2, the boundary course began as conversations with ‘not Australian’ boundary speakers frequently ‘othering’ their collective ‘self’ against their ‘Australian other’ using food, faith and festival. Selma (staff, W/NA) expressed, “But we have Aussie stuff too, we go to Bosnian clubs a lot but Aussie restaurants too” (I: 17/06/10). When I interviewed Sheri (staff, C/NA) said, “You know we are Sri Lankan, we eat rice and curry. He [her son] has Australian food too and Sri Lankan, so he knows both cultures and adapts to it and won’t be afraid to say he is Sri Lankan” (I: 8/07/10). Sheri not only categorised the food of her collective ‘self’ as ‘Sri Lankan’, but while doing conceptualised ‘Australian’ the food of her ‘other’. She remarked that it was important that her son had both, as this signified his bicultural adaptation, including a strong sense of his Sri Lankan identity. I did not know how to react to ‘Australian food’ and ‘Aussie stuff’, however, this indicated that they spoke as ‘not Australian’ and regarded me as ‘not Australian’ too, as they ‘spoke’ about their integration with ‘Australian’ identity.

Pookey’s parents (parents, C/NA) used Cindy (a teddy bear sent with children on weekends) to promote Pookey’s bicultural identity. They had images of Cindy the bear at the temple, eating Pookey’s favourite food, poori, and going to birthday party and having cake. They said, “we have to show everyone she is both, because she thinks that she can be only one, which is Aussie. But it is okay to be both. That is our wish” (N: 20/07/10-h). Thus, for all those who saw their collective ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’, by othering ‘Australian’, it was also important to show that they had integrated ‘Australian’ into theirs and were enacting both cultures.

I remembered Cathy had always named her collective ‘self’, as ‘white middle class Anglo-Australian’ and was willing to embrace cultures, “I just don’t understand why we can’t celebrate who we are. It is not that it is not there, when I attend weddings and celebrations of staff like Selma’s and Fatima’s they are so rich and colourful and vibrant. So different and interesting. But they come in here and it all goes pear shaped” (N: 7/07/10-f). Cathy’s ‘othering’ defined and glorified the ‘difference’ in her staff, and she expressed her disappointment in the non-celebration of ‘difference’ by her ‘other’. As Cathy did not ‘speak’ much about her ‘self’, I asked whether she acknowledged who she was with her staff. Cathy replied, “I think of myself as just Australian, so I don’t really wonder about that much. But when you ask what it is to be an Australian, like you did once, it is
confronting. But I know I have a history. We have to celebrate who we are”. I interpreted, that although Cathy named her collective ‘self’ as ‘white middle class Anglo Australian’, she still believed that she was ‘just Australian’ and felt confronted when asked to unravel its layers. She expressed her ‘othering’ by differentiating her ‘other’ as being different from ‘self’ with colour and vibrancy. Cathy added, “If you can bring the cultures of the staff and families to help them celebrate who they are I would much appreciate that. I want this place to be buzzing with joy, colour and celebrations. I hope that your study can do this to us” (N: 8/07/10-a).

Cathy suggested that I should design and circulate a questionnaire to staff and parents on cultural inclusion. I designed a questionnaire, which I thought would critically enable all families and staff to talk about the influence of cultures in our daily lives. The questionnaire was distributed, and Cathy came back, “I was trying to answer this and I couldn’t answer anything in it. But what culture do I have to talk about. I am boring, I am nothing. There is no colour, celebration or food. Tell me about it. I am just ordinary. Nothing to talk about” (N: 26/08/10-c; 2/09/10-k). However, ‘not Australian’ ‘spoke’ of what their ‘Australian other’ stood for.

Ant’s dad (parent, W/NA) not only spoke as a ‘not Australian’ by ‘othering’ ‘self’ as ‘Italian’, but spoke of his past experience with his ‘Australian other’. “You know we Italians, like you Indians make everything from the scratch, like pasta sauce and salami and my parents hung salami in the garage. When I brought my Aussie friends home, they used to laugh at them and say ‘you eat rotten stuff. Eat stuff that is 20 years old’. What do these Australians know? They eat pasta from cans. But Australians think they know everything. It is not about telling me who I am, we know that and we keep it strong in our family. Hey that is what it is all about. It is about teaching the Australians who we all are. That is what I would say is needed. They have to recognise all of us and feel lucky that we are here and not the other way around” (N: 7/09/10-f). I observed that he too had categorised my identity as ‘not Australian’ by calling me ‘Indian’, and spoke about ‘Australian’. I concluded that he was ‘speaking’ through his early experiences, and therefore, he distinctly ‘othered’ ‘Australian’ who had teased him with what he ate. His opinion about constructing multiple identities was different to those of Sheri, Selma and Pokey’s parents. For him, cultural education was about teaching ‘Australian’ about the rest of the groups in Australia.

Ant’s dad continued that such education should focus on teaching ‘Australian’ the acceptance of cultural diversity. Ant’s dad continued by outlining the observable change in educational settings, “You go to any school you hardly see Aussie kids, just 1,2,3,4. They
are from India, Vietnam, China everywhere”. By ‘othering’ the identity of ‘Australian’ as ‘Aussie’, he categorised the rest of the groups around this identity, and he highlighted the quantifiable change in the social make-up of Australia. I asked by specifying the identity of ‘Aussie’, “So do you think the white Anglo Australian identity has changed”. His reply recognised why and how the identity of ‘Australian’ was maintained, “No, they are powerful, like I told you”. Thus, he spoke of the ‘power’ of ‘Australian’ in maintaining this identity and resisting change. As I interpreted all of the above, I wanted to change the ‘not Australian’ perceptions about ‘Australian’, how they conceptualised something as eating ‘Australian’, and most of all the power of ‘Australian’ that kept this identity intact. The purpose of my study was about how multiculturalism and nationalism influenced our cultural identity enactments, and the possibilities of bridging boundaries. I could not act to realise this purpose, as the ‘Australian self’ believed ‘Australian to be nothing’.

Aruna (staff, C/A) came back with the questionnaire, and ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’, “No, but what do I write, I have no culture. I am just an Australian” (N: 22/09/10-a). Mary (staff, C/NA) insisted how she planned to teach children their cultural roots, “I have been thinking about this, so I have asked Sidya’s mum to come and make Indian bread with us, it will be a good experience for Sidya and Thora, reflecting who they are. Then children will know this is Indian, this is Turkish and so on. Children need to learn what everything is” (N: 12/10/10-b). Thus, the boundary identity of ‘Australian’ was conceptualised by ‘boundary speakers’, who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. While the ‘Australian’ ‘othered’, by distinguishing its absence and its ordinariness, those who ‘spoke’ as ‘not Australian’, ‘othered’ what was ‘Australian’ as being adoptable and powerful.

Forbidden Fs enactments as privatised matters

This source was triggered by ‘not Australian’ ‘boundary speakers’, who expressed their religious ‘self’ as Muslim. It began with Selma’s (staff, W/NA) interview, as she spoke about her perceptions of culture, “Culture is who you are. Who you are, you want to keep private. When I came to this centre no one asked me whether I am Muslim or this, they just take me. It is because how I present myself” (I: 17/06/10). Selma verbalised her ‘self’ as being constituted by her culture, and followed this by saying that she kept her religious ‘self’ private. This she believed was instrumental in being accepted at the centre. Selma then spoke of how she embraced and practiced bicultural identities of ‘Bosnian and Australian’ (see the course above). Just before we concluded she asked my ideas about what culture was and I said, “But if we keep things private how will others know about many ways of being in this world and accept many ways of being and thinking. This is where I
struggle. Imagine you have a grandchild and you want to send this child to this centre, do you think he or she will be able to grow up knowing who they are?’ and we concluded. My final comments had disrupted Selma, “You know after the conversation we had, I am seriously thinking about this. But Prasanna, I feel you can’t change anything here. You have to change once you are here” (N: 17/06/10-h).

Selma expressed her powerlessness as the ‘other’ in influencing what was here, and therefore, she had resorted to changing ‘self’ to fit into the society. A few days later reasons followed, “Otherwise they [Australians] will say, go back to your country, go back to where you came from. So we get used to leading two lives. One for home and one for outside. That is how you manage. You have to forget who you are when you come out. But maybe I can change this for my grand children. They can then say with pride, I am so and so” (N: 21/06/10-e). I interpreted that as a ‘not Australian’ migrant, she felt accepted by ‘Australian’ only by hiding her ‘self’ and by maintaining dual identities. Later, as before, her conversation continued with enacting her religious identity in Australia, “You know people never knew I was a Muslim here. Even now I don’t talk about it. You know how it is if you say you are a Muslim... They [Australian] think if you are a Muslim, you know you have to cover your face, this and that and I am not a Muslim like that” (N: 22/07/10-f). On one hand, she spoke of how well she masked her ‘Muslim’ identity, because she was never recognised as being one, however, she also added that this was due to how her collective ‘self’ was perceived or ‘othered’ by her ‘Australian other’. Thus, repeatedly her conversations veered to speaking as a ‘not Australian’ about ‘Australian’, their perceptions about who she was and how this had resulted in silencing her identity. I gathered this in the boundary ‘speaks’ of most Muslim staff at the centre.

Fatima (staff, W/NA) expressed why she wouldn’t read the book that promoted religious tolerance, ‘God’s dreams’, “But I won’t do it, I am a Muslim, I shouldn’t talk about it. But you should talk about god with children” (N: 3/08/10-g). I immediately remembered Fatima’s interview, “You know this is not my real name. My husband has changed his name too. We gave our children Christian names, because we did not want them to be different from everyone here”. Fatima’s ‘othering’ was evident in how her family changed their names by establishing ‘difference’ in them in comparison to the attributes of their ‘Australian other’. Fatima continued, “You know, my husband says, in this country [Australia] you can’t look different or be different...You know, the same as like the people

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here [Australians]. We even named our children with Muslim names and gave them normal, Christian names, so that people do not discriminate them and they don’t get hurt” (I: 10/6/10). Thus, for Fatima and her family, not exposing their ‘difference’, their religious identity, which was identified as ‘not Australian’ was important. Moreover, the faith identity of ‘Australian’ was also attributed as ‘normal’ and ‘Christian’. Thus, Fatima and her family silenced their ‘Muslim’ identity, by categorising their collective ‘self’ in relation to their ‘Australian other’.

Varuna (staff, C/NA) too, like Selma and Fatima privately spoke of why being a ‘Muslim’ had to be suppressed, “Yes, that is why some people even hesitate to say they are Muslims. You know what Australians think of Muslims” (N: 1/09/10-b). By ‘othering’ ‘you know what Australian’s think’, she categorised ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’, and her ‘other’ as ‘Australian’, and this ‘othering’ was specifically in relation to her collective identity, ‘Muslim’. Varuna sealed any further conversations on religion by whispering, “You know you shouldn’t talk about religion with others in Australian society”. Thus, Selma, Fatima and Varuna, as ‘not Australian’ ‘spoke’ of how they had learnt to privatise their collective ‘self’ in specific ways, because of how their ‘Muslim’ identity was ‘othered’ by ‘Australian’.

Cathy (staff W/A), had always wondered why the staff and families hid their colour and celebrations. I understood from above that for all the ‘Muslim’ staff, celebrating their festivals would mean being identified as not just ‘Muslim’, but also as ‘not Christian’, ‘not Australian’, ‘different’ and ‘not normal’. For many, this meant they would be less accepted, or discriminated by ‘Australian’ within Australia. I felt compelled to act. My re-source began by requesting Cathy to find ways to celebrate Id at the centre with ‘Muslim’ staff. Cathy replied, “Selma is taking the day off to celebrate Id but the rest are coming to work....But what will I share or pass on, we have nothing. We [Australian] are so blah. Not like you, the food, the celebrations, we are just there” (N: 2/09/10-I). I recognised that Cathy’s ‘othering’ still focused on the emptiness of ‘Australian self’, therefore, she also believed that it was non-transferable, and for Cathy her ‘not Australian other’, possessed transferable and attributable cultural elements. This had become a pattern with Cathy, as I concluded that every time I ‘spoke’ to include practices that changed the daily practices of ‘Australian’, Cathy ‘spoke’ about the nothingness of ‘Australian’.
A few weeks later, I was showing children’s books on faiths and festivals to Cathy. She flicked through the pages, “Look at these pictures. See this is what I was telling you. This is culture, colour and celebrations. But what do I have?” (Cathy). “But Cathy, you do. But your culture is normalised and sometimes made to be seen as scientific that you don’t see it. I see your culture as an outsider and I see that your celebrations have colour, like red, green and gold associated with Christmas. The sound of bells and carols everywhere you go” I added. I engaged in purposeful ‘othering’ and as a ‘not Australian’, I overtly named the faith and festival of my ‘Australian other’. Cathy replied, “But, what is the point, it is not special. There is nothing special about it. It is always there” (N: 8/09/10-d). My ‘othering’ was unable to categorically attribute the identity of ‘Australian’, as repeatedly the ‘Australian’ was able to control this identity. “True, Cathy you are right” I said. I felt powerless, as a participatory action researcher, and as a ‘not Australian’, my efforts on identifying and influencing what was ‘Australian’ remained insignificant, and the categories remained stringently bound.

This continued as Mary (staff, C/NA) ‘spoke’ faith, “Lucky for me, I am not varied. Because it is not very questionable. I haven’t experienced resistance as a part of my culture. I can go to church, I can pray whenever I want. I can eat Asian food, I can buy in the Asian shop. Luckily the culture I believe in and all the values I bring is acceptable by, by ...by the Australians. So I don’t have a problem, being restricted in my culture. I am sorry for that”. Mary’s ‘othering’ classified ‘self’ as ‘Asian’, ‘not Australian’, as she spoke of how her faith identity was accepted by ‘Australian other’. She continued, “Yes, just like the Muslims”; I don’t have much resistance I say, because what I do is not very different. Like it is not different from Australian way, it is not difficult for me. But like Muslims, if they have to pray in a certain time, have Ramadan they have more resistance by having practices that are so different from the norm, common practices” (I: 15/09/10). I now gathered that she regarded her religion as the critical layer that guaranteed being accepted by ‘Australian’. In doing so, she attributed the religious identity of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, by ‘othering’ ‘not Australian’ as ‘Muslim’. The ‘difference’ identified in ‘Muslim’ was not ‘Australian way, norm and common practices’, and therefore, she attributed ‘Australian’ as ‘norm’ and ‘common practice’. Thus, ‘Muslim’ as was recognised as ‘not Australian’ by Muslims and non-Muslims, by ‘othering’ the power, the perception, and the faith of ‘Australian’. The

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‘othering’ by ‘Australian’ however, established ‘self’ as empty, mundane and colourless, and ‘not Australian’ as rich in culture, colour and celebration.

Forbidden Fs enactments of permitted matters

This course enabled me to understand on what conditions Forbidden Fs enactments were permitted by ‘Australian’. This source began on my very first day with Gina and Katherine (staff, W/A) in the room. Gina gave me a pamphlet on the incursion planned for the day, “We are trying this Chinese lady for the first time, as we are doing multicultural stuff this term” (N: 4/08/10-e). Gina’s ‘othering’ began with just categorising and naming the visitor as ‘Chinese’, therefore, as someone ‘not Australian’. With what followed, the ‘Chinese’ lady ‘othered’ the identity of ‘Chinese’. The multicultural activity showed children how ‘Chinese’ people danced and used their fans and umbrella as weapons, how they celebrated Chinese New year and how much they liked the colour red. Thus, the ‘Chinese’ lady engaged in the process of ‘othering’ the collective identity of ‘Chinese’, with which she reinforced its attributes repeatedly as uniquely ‘Chinese’ therefore, ‘not Australian’. I had certain understandings about cultural inclusion, informed by particular literature that challenged sporadic, stereotypical splurge of patented cultural bursts, and I felt particularly uncomfortable as I watched these acts in silence.

Later that evening Gina took me aside and asked, “What do you think of this morning’s Chinese performance?” I almost said something about my discomfort in watching such blatant acts of essentialising ‘Chinese’ culture, but Gina continued, “We were shocked we didn’t know she would be talking about weapons and everything. Will the children start using fans and umbrellas as weapons? We don’t want them fighting with each other” (N: 4/08/10-k). Gina’s concern was completely different to mine, she was worried about the violence promoted by these acts and I silently worried about the violation of my basic tenets on cultural recognition. I was in that room because of Gina’s support after all the disagreement with Katherine, and I refrained from reacting to what was happening. In the evening Safeeya’s (girl, C/NA, 4) mum stormed in, “I am very upset. What is this thing Chinese dance? Safeeya has been very worried and upset for the past few days. She has been asking what is it mum, what should I do? I am Chinese but I am not dancing every day. I just said, just go there, it is nothing Chinese” (N: 4/08/10-m). Safeeya’s mum contested cultural enactments that essentialised the collective identity of ‘Chinese’, by still distinguishing ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’. Gina apologised, as Safeeya’s mum continued, “I am Chinese but I can’t dance. Look at me, do I look like I can dance?” I heard my voice in
Safeeya’s mum, and I wondered why Gina could not understand the shortcomings of such practices.

Gina later philosophised, “We used to tell Safeeya’s mum that we are coming to her house to have Chinese. She used to tell us that she usually makes Lasagne. You can never generalise” (N: 4/08/10-m). Gina took me to the staffroom to ‘speak’ about ‘self’, “You know when you asked us, who is an Australian a week ago, I was totally confronted. I was thrown back. Then I stopped and thought what it is to be an Australian, I couldn’t find an answer. It is confronting, because being an Australian is something we take for granted” (N: 4/08/10-n). Gina admitted the difficulties that she faced in unpacking the identity of ‘Australian’ by declaring how as ‘Australian’ this collective identity was just accepted unquestioningly by them. I was moved by her honesty, and I confessed my stance on speaking ‘differences’ with children, and I explained how I might contest cultures, especially within the Australian context. A few days later Gina again expressed her difficulty, “You know it is hard for me. How do I do this, I am only Australian. Like I told you about Safeeya’s mum and when I asked her whether she cooks Chinese, she said lasagne. Debbie is an Australian and I am Australian. I know what we eat. It is easy for me to talk about it. I don’t know about you and Safeeya’s mum. Don’t worry, we will find a way” (N: 18/08/10-h). This time her ‘othering’ identified the attributes of her collective ‘self’, the food of ‘Australian’, as a knowable entity, and at the same time expressed how she grappled with knowing and talking about her ‘other’. I wondered why ‘Australian’ could not find ‘Chinese’ and ‘Indian’ within what was regarded as ‘Australian’, as Australia professed multiculturalism.

The following source 2 in this course ‘spoke’ of whose cultures can be celebrated publically without being attached to a specific group. Cathy (staff, W/A) and I had collaboratively challenged faith celebrations at centres and specifically about celebrating Christmas (N: 24/08/10-b), a narrative she said we would share with staff and we never did, due to many excuses that Cathy highlighted after every staff meeting (N: 6/09/10-b; 21/09/10-e). The month of November came and every room had a Christmas tree, we had been meticulously practising ‘Jingle bells’ and ‘We wish you a merry Christmas’, and I understood why we never bothered to debate Christmas celebrations with staff. Pookey (girl, C/NA, 4), Bikky (girl, W/NA, 4) and Santa (boy, C/NA 4) dragged me to the Christmas tree to show me their photos, hanging on the Christmas tree as stars, nestled between red, green and gold tinsel, “You know we never have a Christmas tree in our house”, “Because we are Muslims, shhhhh… We only have Bairam, and it is fun” Bikky
whispered her collective identity, ‘Muslim’. I asked her why she was whispering and she explained, “I have to, because everyone has a Christmas tree here”. I gathered that she had conceptualised ‘difference’ in ‘self’, because Christmas was celebrated without ‘othering’, it was the festival of everyone. Children were not informed about its origin, its relationship with particular faith or its tradition. I collectively identified our ‘difference’ with Pookey and Santa to inform Bikky that Christmas tree need not be in every house. Santa explained, “We have Bairam for Christmas. My mum says our Christmas is Bairam. Christmas is Bairam for Australians, my mum says”. Thus, his family explained Christmas by ‘othering’ Christmas celebrants as ‘Australian’, and thereby excluding their collective identity as ‘not Australian’ (N: 24/11/10-a).

I compared this with how we celebrated ‘Vietnamese moon festival’ with Kitten’s mum and ate ‘Vietnamese moon cakes’ (N: 23/09/10-d). We also celebrated Ganesh Chathurthi with Pookey’s mum during multicultural week. It was named as ‘Indian’ festival, celebrated by ‘Indians’ (N: 14/10/10-d). These festivals were categorised and named as, ‘not Australian’. This was my last day at this centre, and I concluded that I failed as an action researcher, moreover, my own ‘othering’ intensified. I felt more and more as ‘not Australian’, and began to consciously and unconsciously compare and contrast everything I was, my ‘self’ in relation to what I was not, my ‘Australian other’. I now understood why Fatima and Mary regarded the faith of ‘Australian’ as ‘Christian’ and ‘normal’ and established ‘Muslim’ as ‘different’ that needed to remain hidden.

This boundary stream surfaced our involvement in ‘othering’ food, faith and festival of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. The boundary enactments distinctly categorised ‘Australian’ and its ‘other’ ‘not Australian’ (Chinese, Indian, Italian, Muslim). Both categories were named, attributed, and spoken or silenced with particular meanings attached to it. Reluctantly, in my Ganga’s colonised voice I summarise the key points that surfaced from Forbidden Fs enactments.

- The ‘othering’ of food, faith and festival as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ was layered by complex(ion) and religion. Food, ‘roti’ and ‘bread’ were ‘othered’ with ‘brown’ and ‘white’ by children. The ‘Australian’ either overtly rejected change by ‘othering’ this identity with specific attributes, or ‘spoke’ of this as ‘nothing’, to sporadically include what was also named as food, faith and festival of ‘not Australian’. Authors, who speak for anti-bias and/or critical multicultural educational practices recommend educationalists to view culture as an abstract phenomenon, beyond symbolic items, such as food, attire,
language, religion and celebrations (see Pang, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006; Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

I noticed that as ‘boundary speakers’, the food and festival linked with ‘Australian’ was enacted by everyone, and preserved by ‘Australian’. What was linked with ‘not Australian’ was enacted privately, or included intermittently by ‘Australian’ to reflect multicultural practices. Thus, both were essentialised in particular ways.

- The ‘not Australian’ staff and children, who were also ‘Muslim’ recognised the influence and power of ‘Australian’ in privatising and restricting their boundary (religious) enactments, and they therefore, silenced themselves. Moreover, as ‘not Australian’, with conceptions of what was ‘Australian’ they specifically ‘spoke’ of their movement between the two identities. Thus food, faith and festivals were selectively forbidden and permitted by ‘Australian’.

I became more and more aware of my identity as a ‘not Australian other’, and I struggled with my role as a participatory action researcher, as I worked against my philosophy, and what I believed would eventuate from my study. Had I resisted completely, my notions of participatory research was least collaborative. Therefore, I regretfully resorted to ‘celebrating’ multicultural festivals and food of ‘not Australian’, and distinguished what was also celebrated as the festival of everyone. The literature that I engaged with spoke of my practices as being less conducive to promoting equity. Tacagni (1998) argues that multicultural curriculum that includes play spaces with specific cultural resources and artefacts, and presents cooking experiences to represent minority groups do not effectively overcome racism, as these still leave the groups excluded and outside from what is practised daily. Gorski (2009) outlines how such practices are presented for cross-cultural understanding in most educational settings, and brings to note the inadequacies of such approaches in challenging power. Gorski (2009) adds that such practices only highlight the difference in non-dominant cultural groups, and thereby making these groups vulnerable to being dominated. Even if ‘Australian’ culture was ‘nothing’, and the culture of ‘other’ was colourful and rich, I noticed that the proclamation of Australia’s multicultural identity had not resulted in influencing the ‘Australian’ to adopt the colourful ‘other’.

However, the ‘other’ was consciously identifying and conceptualising what was ‘Australian’ to make this theirs. These thoughts remained silenced, as I had much regard for Cathy and Gina, my ‘Australian other’.

I silently wondered,
Why did the ‘Australian self’ epitomise ‘not Australian’ to nullify ‘Australian’ identity, when Ganga ‘spoke’ food, faith and festival?

I proceed to discuss the next layer of our boundary identity, Tongue ties.

**Tongue ties enactments of boundary identities in early childhood settings**

The following are language enactments using which we, as boundary ‘speakers’, ‘spoke’ ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, and I felt tongue tied due to the complexities this surfaced. The identified courses are Tongue ties: linguistic ambiguities and Tongue ties: linguistic anxieties.

**Tongue ties enactments of linguistic ambiguities**

The first source in this course revealed our linguistic boundaries marked with our anxieties. Amelia (staff, W/A) introduced my focus child, “This is Plafe, he speaks two languages and he has recently been to India”. Plafe (focus boy, C/NA, 4) replied, “I speak only Australian, like Sheep” (N: 1/06/10-a). Sheep (boy, W/A, 4) was his best friend and he was a monolingual, native English speaker. I spoke to Amelia and Jan (staff, C/NA) about Plafe’s expression, ‘speak Australian’, as I believed that it established a monolingual identity for ‘Australian’ and the rest of the ethno-linguistic groups as ‘not Australian’. We decided to engage in practices that informed being ‘Australian’ as speaking many languages and English, “You know the library bag that you send books for children to read at home, we can include books in many languages. Even if families can’t read those languages, they might be able to discuss with children about the presence of many languages in Australia” I suggested (N: 11/06/10-h). Even before we acted, Plafe began to share his bilingual background with staff and peers, “I said utla”, and “I do both [speak Hindi and English], I also watch Hindi movies with my mum and dad” (N: 15/06/10-b, c).

Days later, I heard open assertions of Australia’s linguistic identity by children who called themselves ‘Australian’, “I am from Australia, I speak Australian” said Princess (girl, W/A, 4) and “I am Australian, I speak Australian too” said Sheep. Moreover, this led to attributing ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ by Plafe, “I know how Australians speak, ‘Hey mate’” and “G’day mate” (N: 25/10/10-c) he commented. From calling ‘self’ as ‘Australian’, he resorted to ‘othering’ ‘Australian’ by attributing what was ‘Australian’. Plafe’s sudden exhibition of what was ‘Australian’ indicated that he was ‘othering’ ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’. The established dichotomy continued, “I don’t. I am not Australian. I am from India actually” and “I am from India too” said Tin (focus girl, C/NA, 4) and Plafe. Children, with their conceptions of language called ‘Australian’ engaged in ‘othering’ their
collective national identities. Those who categorised ‘self’ as ‘Australian’ said they also spoke ‘Australian’ and those who spoke English as their additional language categorised ‘self’ as ‘not Australian’. I became concerned once again, and Jan said that she could read and sing in Chinese with children during group time, to highlight that we speak many languages in Australia.

Jan read a book in Chinese and children responded, “It is funny”. Princess jumped, screamed and fell on others. Jan firmly said, “No, please listen. I feel very sad, that you scream when I read a book in Chinese. I am Chinese, that book was in Chinese. You know we all speak different languages”. Jan’s ‘othering’ resulted in defining what she spoke as Chinese and that she did so because she was ‘Chinese’ ‘not Australian’. Children began to distinguish language and their collective ‘self’, ‘Australian’ ‘spoke’ again, “I am Australian, I only speak Australian” and “I speak Australian too, like her” (N: 29/06/10-d) said Princess and Sheep again. Thus, our efforts with regards to exposing children to linguistic diversity, seemed to construct and frame English speaking as ‘Australian’, and only those who spoke English as their first language as ‘Australian’. Jan and I became anxious as children’s categorisation of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ became exaggerated, as that was not our intention. It seemed as speakers of English as additional language, whatever we did that ‘spoke’ of our linguistic background, resulted in ‘othering’ our collective ‘self’, as ‘not Australian’, with children simultaneously distinguishing their identity as ‘Australian’ and speaking ‘Australian’.

The second source again showed children using languages to identify collective ‘self’ and ‘other’ and to exclude peers with fears of losing ‘not Australian self’. On my first day, Sidya asked, “Are you India or Australia. You are India. (Sidya smiled and added) Because, you speak Tamil, like Thora and me” (N: 20/05/10-c). Sidya and Thora (focus girls, C/NA, 3) began to caution me against speaking English, by saying, “Don’t speak in English, you will become Australia” (N: 17/06/10-a; 7/07/10-g) and “I won’t play with Puppy, because she doesn’t speak Tamil” (N: 10/08/10-b; 17/08/10-f). I decided to collaborate with staff to find ways of enabling children to understand that we can speak many languages as ‘Australian’. Most staff sympathised, but spoke about their own difficulties as speakers of English as Additional Language in Australia, and they said that they secretly admired the way Sidya and Thora loudly spoke Tamil in the setting. I could see that linguistic grouping supported first language development in children, however, this also resulted in children naming and remaining in segregated ethno-linguistic groups.
Tongue ties enactments of linguistic anxieties

The following source in this course revealed the anxiety of losing what was ‘Australian’. It began as I spoke in Tamil as soon as I met Pookey (focus child, C/NA, 4) for the first time, “No, don’t speak to me like that. Tamil only for home and car. Only English here” (N: 27/05/10-a). When I mentioned this to her parents, they said that her reluctance to speak Tamil had resulted in her lack of communication with her grandparents, and they wanted me to speak Tamil at the centre with her, to revive her Tamil skills (N: 21/06/10-b; 20/07/10-g). I alerted the staff about Pookey’s refusal to speak Tamil. During the meeting (this meeting was the continuation of the one mentioned in Black and white: deniable and desirable) with Gina and Katherine, Cathy (staff, W/A) empathised, “I went to Singapore, although it is cosmopolitan, and everyone spoke English, I was dying to hear someone who spoke Australian” (N: 28/07/10-b). Cathy began by saying that she longed to hear someone speak ‘Australian’ when she was overseas, implying those who spoke English as ‘not Australian’ and ‘othered’ her ‘Australian self’ by conceptualising a unique linguistic identity as ‘Australian’.

Gina and Katherine continued, “We are both Australians and the rest of the children speak English. We [Gina and Katherine] are both Australians and we will never be able to talk in your language”. Thus, Gina excluded their collective ‘self’, ‘Australian’ and distinguished what I spoke outside the identity of ‘Australian’, as ‘not Australian’. I again brought to note by saying, “But I can and I am here, yet she doesn’t want to speak Tamil with me”. Gina defended, “But, you know when you speak in your language with her mum looking back at Katherine, you can’t do that. You are talking about her and isn’t that wrong to speak in a language that everyone can’t understand. How do you think she would feel” (N: 28/07/10-c). The re-categorisation and unification of language speakers in Australia was important for Gina and Katherine, as my ‘difference’ was seen as a threat that had to be curtailed. I reflected on my languages experiences in India, a multilingual space, and I apologised. Gina replied by underlining their collective identity, “We are both Australians and we treat everyone the same. This is big. What you are raising is complex. But you have my support. You can do group times with children do some cooking experiences with them” (Gina). Gina’s ‘othering’ served two purposes, firstly to distinguish their collective identity, and secondly to characterise what was ‘Australian’, and this was tied to treating everyone the same. I remained silent although I did not agree with what was being stressed, as we were different as monolingual and multilingual speakers, and I felt it was important to recognise this, especially to keep one’s generational ties. I also silently contemplated with
how the process of ‘othering’ specifically focused on establishing the identity of ‘Australian’, when I raised my concerns about Pookey’s loss of Tamil speaking skills.

I was disturbed after the meeting, and I did not know how to engage in any collaboration, when we were distinctly different, in the way we made meaning of events. I went into the other room after the meeting to gather Selma’s (staff, W/NA) opinion, “Selma, I speak in Tamil and cuddle children here. You will tell me if it is not okay to speak in Tamil with families and Thora and Sidya or cuddle them won’t you” I requested. “We were told off too, been there Prasanna. That is why I tell you nothing will change. They have the power. Although the Australians are migrants and come from somewhere, they think they own everything. It is to do with power. Otherwise they will say like I told you, ‘go back to your land’. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t want to say I am finding it hard or I have been treated badly, but my experience is just move on. See you need to change” (Selma) (N: 28/07/10-d). Selma’s ‘othering’ categorised ‘Australian’ as ‘migrants’ with power, and ‘not Australian’ too as ‘migrants’ but without the power to initiate change. I felt defeated as a participatory action researcher, who designed my study with aspirations for change. I concluded that we were invariably controlled by how we perceived what ‘Australian’ was, and this seemed to control the boundary identity enactments of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ speakers.

I strategically spoke Tamil with Pookey, and after many weeks Pookey began to speak Tamil at the centre, and her peers acknowledged their bilingual identities with Pookey and spoke of their bilingual backgrounds with peers (N: 17/08/10-g). I shared my observations with Pookey’s mum and she replied, “Actually at home too we are noticing that change, she speaks more Tamil. She calls herself Indian Aussie and not just Aussie” (N: 17/08/10-k; 31/08/10-a). Thus, for Pookey’s parents, Pookey’s languages development in Tamil and English had changed her classification of ‘self’. Pookey had started to include multiplicity in categorising the identity of ‘self’ as ‘Indian Aussie’.

Staff’s awareness on developing bilingualism in children increased. With many staff being speakers of English as additional language, Bella (staff, W/NA) expressed, “We can sing songs, like I beg of you one thing. Each staff if you could translate one song in the child’s language it is so good for the child who is speaking that language”. Cathy (staff, W/A) ‘othered’ Australian’ and ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’, “Songs, you know we nowadays don’t sing those typical Australian songs in centres anymore. We used to all the time when I was teaching. Not anymore, it is not fashionable”. As a ‘not Australian’, I could not understand what was typical ‘Australian’ and I asked, “Would I know?” Cathy replied,
“No, you wouldn’t know, ‘Road to Gundagai’ and many more like that. It is really very Australian. For me I miss that, I wish we would start singing those again, we are losing what is Australian with all this new stuff” (N: 22/9/10-c). I realised, the ‘othering’ process was more focused on preserving what was ‘Australian’ by ‘Australian’. It did not include simultaneous language experiences of many groups in Australia. I silenced myself again, and I did not fulfil my role as a participatory action researcher, as I did not know how to respond to constructions of ‘speaking Australian’.

Everytime I had to move ahead with my understandings, I accepted my Ganga’s colonised voice urging me to outline some of the key understandings that I gathered from that discussion.

- Grace (2008) had frequently observed children strongly linking their linguistic with ethnic backgrounds in her study that she conducted in Hawaii. However, due to Australia’s history of colonisation and migration, such links seemed to lead children believing in the existence of a language ‘Australian’. Exploring linguistic diversity as migrant, multilingual speakers was complex, as we invariably included our ‘difference’, our ethnic background as ‘not Australian’, and this resulted in perpetuating dichotomous identities in children, ‘Australian’ spoke ‘Australian’, and ‘not Australian’ spoke their respective languages. Chantler (2004) believes that when children’s friendships remain restricted to their own group, it is the power of the dominant language that remains unchallenged, and that segregation does not result in equity.

- Many authors caution early childhood practitioners about the loss of generational ties with first language attrition, and therefore, recommend working closely with families to keep the linguistic ties alive (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000; Arthur, 2001; Clarke, 2005). However, the ‘Australian’ staff accepted the loss of first language in children as a response to their English only speaking social environment. As soon as I raised my concerns about loss of first language, the identity of ‘Australian’ was established and characterised as treating everyone alike, with feelings of suspicions about hearing a language that wasn’t understood by everyone. Hearing, speaking and singing ‘Australian’ was attached to being ‘Australian’, and therefore, the influence of change was perceived as a loss of what was ‘Australian’.

My Masters thesis was on the inclusion of linguistic diversity in early childhood settings, yet, I still felt less prepared and Tongue tied, to contest the language of Australia.
The critical understanding that Ganga, the data unearthed for me was that it seemed very important to those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’ to establish and maintain what they believed was ‘Australian’. This was another stream that highlighted my own propensity to engage in ‘othering’ ‘Australian’. Again, because of my subjectivity, I sympathised immediately with Pookey’s family, as soon as they expressed concerns about her reluctance to speak Tamil with her grandparents. However, the staff felt that my concerns were trivial or too complex to address. Thus, I repeatedly felt that the collaboration in participatory action research was almost impossible for me, when my loyalties were divided.

I questioned silently,

Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain ‘really Australian’, when Ganga ‘spoke’ of loosening Tongue ties of bilingual children?

Carrying my silenced questions from above I proceed to discuss my final boundary stream that encapsulated all the layers of our boundary identities.

**Terra strikes enacting boundary identities**

The following ‘boundary speaks’ reflected what we, as ‘speakers’ of identities considered to be our core values. The courses, Terra strikes: desire for one, fear of many and Terra strikes: desire for many and fear of one, revealed to me our deepest desires and fears constructed around ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ identities.

**Terra strikes enactments of desire for one, fear of many**

I met Katrina for the first time and she introduced her staff in the staffroom, “Remi is Indian, she is Sri Lankan and they are as Australian as I am. I think we are all the same”. Katrina’s ‘othering’ initially named her ‘not Australian other’, as ‘Indian’ and ‘Sri Lankan’, yet she also expressed her acceptance of these identities as ‘Australian’ by re-categorisation. Thus, she used her personal ‘self’ as a representative of that collective identity, ‘Australian’. “See, I told you. Australia is like an umbrella we are happy together. We are okay, nothing needs changing. It is in other countries. We are lucky. We don’t have what happens in other countries, no one is dropping bombs on us. Like Iraq and Afghanistan.” Katrina continued to designate the attributes of other countries, in relation to that of ‘self’. Through her comparison, she concluded that ‘self’ could be symbolised as an umbrella, with positive attributes such as, ‘happy, lucky’, and the ‘other’ was war torn and dangerous. I challenged, “So, who is dropping bombs”. Katrina replied, “This is what I don’t like. When you come to Australia, you have to take on Australian values. You can’t try and change us....Like the Muslim girls who want to swim in our community want the swimming pool closed for men
on Tuesdays. They can’t do that, and that is not fair” (N: 8/06/10-g). Thus, Katrina conceptualised the collective system of ‘self’, and that this had to be protected from outsiders, the ‘not Australian other’, like me who challenged this system. She implied that all groups and individuals had to recategorise ‘self’ and function within what was ‘Australian’.

I asked, “But what are Australian values? Who determines this is what it is to be an Australian”. I again questioned the nature and the origin of the identity ‘Australian’. Katrina replied, “I think we are okay. You know Greeks keep to themselves, Italians keep to their own community”. Katrina’s ‘othering’ characterised ‘Australian’, her collective ‘self’ as ‘okay’, and simultaneously accused her ‘not Australian other’, ‘Greeks’ and ‘Italians’ of maintaining insularity. I named her collective ‘self’, “However, in countries like America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, most number of people are Anglo-white people. Isn’t this because this group came in large numbers together and kept together?” My ‘othering’ that classified and linked the collective identity of Australia, and many other countries to their colonial past was not internalised and Katrina continued with ‘othering’ and maintaining the collective identity of ‘self’, “I know colonisation and all that. But we can’t go back in history.... I really don’t think we should let everyone come in to our country. People in boats, can be terrorists”. The process of ‘othering’ diverted to distinguishing outsiders as a threat to Australia’s solidarity. “We can’t let everyone in, this is our country shouldn’t we have a choice. Like I told you Australia is an umbrella. We live together as Australians” (N: 8/06/10-g). Thus, Katrina, ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’, and through ‘othering’, she established what ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ was and wasn’t, and how the identity of ‘Australian’ and Australia had to be protected. However, she also expressed that with the re-categorisation of all groups as ‘Australian’, functioning within what has been established as ‘Australian’, it was possible to live together. Thus, there was a desire for unity, with traces of fear of ‘other’.

Within few hours the unintentional re-source eventuated, as Jan (staff, C/NA) and I exchanged with Amelia (staff, W/A), especially our concerns about Seaweed’s (focus girl, C/NA, 3) consistent expressions of dislike of her ‘brown’ skin colour. Amelia said, “I know we had white Australia policy up until the 1970’s” and Jan wanted to know more. Amelia continued, “Like people who were not white were not allowed into Australia. People like you [Jan] and Prasanna were kept out of Australia with deliberate policies by the government” (N: 8/06/10-h). Amelia’s ‘othering’ ‘spoke’ the history of her collective ‘self’, and she named her ‘non white other’ to explain who was excluded from being and
becoming ‘Australian’. Jan recollected, “Oh, I can’t believe that really. No wonder, when I walk down the streets or shop, I am always seen as not normal. No one has really attacked me but I know Aussies think I shouldn’t be here. They think Australia is just for them. But we are all here. I work and my son goes to school and we do everything like you but”. Jan’s ‘othering’ brought to note that she was regarded as ‘not Australian other’ by ‘Aussies’, and she drew upon similarities between the two groups to highlight the irrelevance of such distinctions. Amelia agreed, “See the media doesn’t show that. They always say things like ‘Unaustralian’ and that is usually a migrant or an aborigine”. Although Amelia’s response had little to do with identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’, she specifically named which groups were excluded as ‘not Australian’.

With the discussions that followed, Amelia, Jan and I engaged in what seemed the inevitable process of ‘othering’ when we ‘spoke’ to reconceptualise the identity of ‘Australian’. Jan ‘spoke’ of her trials, “I sang in Chinese the other day, you were not here. Some children sang. Princess asked me, why are we singing this. I told her that this song is Chinese and it is my language. She said immediately, ‘oh, Chinese make everything’. I was hurt”. Jan exchanged the ‘othering’ that bothered her, and was hurt by how her collective identity was characterised by Princess (girl, W/A, 4). Our reactions to this statement reflected our categorical identities or subjectivities with which we made meaning of that statement, ‘Chinese make everything’. Amelia could not understand why Jan was hurt, as she couldn’t see anything wrong with what was said. I understood what the statement implied and empathised with Jan’s feelings. Jan explained why she was hurt, ‘you know how everyone goes on and on about how everything here is made in China and Chinese are taking over, it is that”. “See, I would have never thought that being what I am” Amelia ‘spoke’ her subjectivity. My ‘othering’ surfaced, “You are white, how can you like us, your experiences are different” I added. “Yes, I was hurt. I told her, Yes, Chinese make everything because we are clever” said Jan. I was ashamed of my outburst and I apologised, “I hope it is okay to say you are white Amelia. I don’t know otherwise how to say you are different from me, and we are different. I am not the same and I don’t want to be accepted only if I am like you. Please let me know if you don’t like being addressed like that, we can think of something together” (N: 8/06/10-h). I ‘othered’ Amelia by her colour, named and categorised her as ‘white’ and that had never been my intention, as I had consciously tried to submerge my visions of ‘black and white’ with my decolonising aspirations. However, I did not know how else to express our experiential differences in Australia. I wanted to be accepted as I was, not categorised nor recategorised. Amelia’s response implied that such
‘othering’ was necessary to bring about change in practices. Thus, we began as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ to disrupt the practices in early childhood services.

**Terra strikes enactments of desire for many, fear of one**

In this course the ‘not Australian’, staff and parents, expressed their fear of ‘Australian’, by constructing attributes of collective ‘self’ as being distinctly different to those of ‘Australian’. The following are samples of such statements.

“Aussies don’t do that. They are different. Your culture, my culture in all Asian culture, we teach them to respect their parents and grandparents.... I hope Kitten [her child] understands we are there for her” (Parent of Kitten, (girl, C/NA, 3) (N: 2/10/10-b). More parents, Pookey’s mum C/NA (N: 21/06/10-h); Sidya’s mum C/NA (N: 25/08/10-a, b) expressed similar views about the collective identity of ‘self’ in relation to their ‘Australian/white other’.

“I got the Chilean’s ideas about the family. The way we live, the food we eat and how we relate to one another. We are very family focus....Yeah, like the Americans the Australians more independent. They are not so family focused they take their own way very early and that is alright with them” (Prue, Staff C/NA (I: 10/06/10). More staff, Fatima W/NA (I: 10/06/10; Mary C/NA (N: 17/8/10-e) expressed similar views.

Most ‘not Australian’ parents and staff categorised the collective identities of ‘self’ by distinguishing their values of love and respect against values of independence and individuality of ‘Australian other’. The attributes of ‘Australian’ was distinguished as ‘different, less caring, individualistic, less family friendly’, and simultaneously the attributes of ‘not Australian’ were outlined as ‘caring, family friendly, warm, sharing’. I felt compelled to change these imagined constructions of ‘not Australian’ and ‘Australian’. I decided to share these with Cathy (staff, W/A), who saw ‘self’ as ‘white middle class Anglo Australian’, and with whom I never felt silenced as ‘not Australian’. I began, “Cathy, can I tell you something. I am worried about how the white Australian culture is perceived by those who think they are not Australians. They are scared of their children taking on these values, but these are not real, as these images are propagated by the media. This is from staff and families. I really think we need to do something to change that” (N: 2/10/10-g; 6/10/10-g). Again, it seemed to me that my ‘othering’ was inextinguishable to bring about the union of cultures in Australia, as I distinguished, named and categorised the culture of ‘white Anglo Australian’ and ‘spoke’ about it as a ‘not Australian other’, by not naming my collective ‘self’ within ‘Australian’.

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We sat together to discuss the final staff meeting, and Cathy began to talk about collective ‘self’, as ‘white middle class Anglo Australian’, “You know the funny thing is since you came here I am much more aware of many differences. I am white middle class Anglo Australian and I took that for granted. This society fits my values”. I felt humbled as she was ‘othering’ by particularly categorising and naming her collective ‘self’, and recognised the privilege of owning a culture that this society represented. I made use of this opportunity, as this was my last chance to collaboratively engage with staff, “But, many staff and families don’t think about it as white Anglo culture and values about independence, they think Aussies don’t care about their children and it is not that. It is just a different way of caring about children”. I outlined the importance of naming and categorising what is now seen as, ‘Australian’, so that many cultures can be practised within multicultural Australia. Cathy continued, “You know how you asked me about my otherness, I became aware of it when I was very young. I grew up with a Nigerian [Changed nationality] neighbour and I was friends with their daughter. I used to walk into their house thinking that my family and I are so different because of all the arts and artefacts they had in their house. I knew I was different the ‘other’ as I had nothing”. Cathy came back to ‘othering’ ‘self’ as nothing, and her ‘not Australian other’ as everything she was not, thus her constructions of her identity always required the presence of ‘other’. Cathy continued to speak about our final staff meeting, “Staff will never feel comfortable enough to practice for cultures if they don’t feel they own this place or belong to this place. It is ownership, listening, responsibility, critical reflection and action” (N: 6/10/10-K; 7/10/10-email). We again digressed and I clung to our discussion, my final chance.

We again talked about ‘othering’ what is ‘Australian’, and Cathy spoke of the discrimination she suffered, “You know, talking about discriminating white Australians, I should tell you this. This Indian shopkeeper never serves me. She just ignores me and I have to wait to be served” (N: 12/10/10-f). Cathy continued, “I was discriminated today at the shops, in my own country. She wouldn’t serve me. I felt discriminated. But that is okay”. Cathy named ‘self’ as ‘white Australian’, and ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’ about the discrimination she endured in her country, by an ‘Indian’, a ‘not Australian other’. Cathy could not stop wondering, “I know all that, but why should I be discriminated, I don’t know. You are anyway more comfortable with someone who is visually similar and I am not like her. I know looking at the shop I know that I am someone who clearly doesn’t belong there. Don’t get me wrong. It is a glorious shop, the sequence, and the workmanship was all exquisite. I was relating to my own culture. There is nothing, it is blah like I always say” (N: 13/10/10-k). Again Cathy, distinguished the ‘difference’ between ‘self’ and ‘other’ and
attributed the culture of ‘Australian self’ as nothing, in comparison to her ‘not Australian other’. We left it there, as we completely digressed from naming and reconceptualising ‘Australian’ identity.

Repeatedly, Cathy highlighted the inadequacies in staff training and I persevered, “Yes, I agree it is to do with training, but were you taught differently that you are now thinking differently Cathy? You say white Anglo, middle class Australian when you talk about yourself “ (N: 19/10/10-e). The ‘Australian’ agreed, “Why can’t staff see their cultures? Staff do not have the time and are not trained, so they just prod along. Anyway we will make them see cultures ” (N: 26/10/10-c).

During the staff meeting Cathy named her cultural practice, “I know it is the white Anglo culture to say ‘you’ll be right mate’ to a child who is crying or needs help and it is so white, because we think we all have to.....”, (N: 27/10/10-c) but paused as she ‘heard’ the silence, that ‘spoke’ the anger and resistance to be culturally named, as something other than ‘Australian’. Cathy moved to Asthma management, and we ended the meeting. Later, Cathy recollected, “Do you know, I don’t think the staff liked it when I said white-Anglo culture. I know the staff, especially Tina is sensitive. They are Australian and they keep it like that” (N: 27/10/10-d). The next day, as we shared lunch together, Cathy regretted, “No, no. This is what it is. I should not have said it. That took away all the warmth and cosiness we had at the start...but the staff here are tired. You have to train them at uni to think critically” (N: 28/10/10-d). Thus, we came back to where we started, as an ‘Australian’ who ‘othered’ her identity and as a ‘not Australian’ who ‘othered’, and was ‘othered’ by ‘Australian’. We stood powerless due to our fear of ‘One’, the ‘Australian’. I jump to my colonised voice to summarise my key understandings from Terra strikes below.

- The boundaries of Australia were repeatedly constructed and unified by ‘Australian’ staff as unattached to its histories, with maintaining ‘Australian’ as possible and desirable. Although ‘othering’ resulted in naming collective ‘not Australian other’, they were also accepted as ‘Australian’ in comparison to that personal and collective ‘Australian self’. Arber (1999) too comments on such contradictory attitudes usually conveyed by the media, where people who are seen as ‘different’ are portrayed as “Australian and yet not quite Australian” (p.317). Any individuals or groups that challenged such constructions were not only seen as ‘not Australian other’, but were excluded as a threat to the nation and its national identity. The acceptance of ‘other’ was determined by how close they were to ‘Australian’.
Alternatively, the collective identity of ‘Australian’ was recognised by ‘Australian’ staff, and was linked with its history of ‘white’ supremacy, to relate to current experiences of discrimination and prejudice. Our collaborative ‘othering’ resulted in the recognition of our subjective identities, (Australian, Unaustralian and our colour) playing a role in how we made meaning of events. Rather than engaging with the abstractness of cultural attributes, and how this was resulting in designating ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, we engaged with the realisable representations of many cultures within the context of Australia.

The ‘Australian’ staff also wavered between ‘othering’ to ‘speak’ the history of privilege of collective ‘Australian self’, and ‘othering’ to attribute that collective ‘self’ as ‘nothing’ and the collective ‘other’ as ‘everything’. Therefore, the ‘self’ was ‘spoken’ as something on some occasions and as ‘nothing’ during others.

I, personally grappled with my own ‘othering’, who I saw as ‘Australian’, how I named and designated the colour and culture of this identity. At the same time I also recognised it as an inescapable reality, in order to negotiate the equitable enactment of all cultures. Most ‘not Australian’ staff and parents, including me segmented the culture of this unattributed ‘Australian’. This identity was fought and tugged between ‘Australian’, Ganga-the data and I. I silently questioned,

Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain the ubiquity of this identity, when Ganga ‘spoke’ the origin of Australia and ‘Australian’ identity?

From my analytical engagement with our ‘boundary speaks’, I concluded that ‘othering’ was a process that was common to all of us, when we ‘spoke’ and enacted our boundary identities. The process of ‘othering’ seemed inevitable for the following reasons. Firstly, we engaged in ‘othering’ to name, categorise, and attribute the collective identity, ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ and positioned ‘self’ and ‘other’ accordingly. This form of ‘othering’ has been highlighted as being most critical to the development of ‘self’ (Hall, 2003; Hogg & Abrams, 2007; Epstein, 2009). Secondly, ‘othering’ by most ‘not Australian self’ on what was ‘Australian other’ resulted in the inclusion of that ‘other’ within ‘self’. I could gather, as Crisp and Turner (2007) suggest that they were recategorising to belong to a bigger group, ‘Australian’. Thirdly, and most importantly, the ‘othering’ by most ‘Australian’ on what was ‘Australian’ resulted in the reinforcement of who they were, ‘different’ from their ‘not Australian other’. Ganga-the data or I were unable to act as the ‘other’ who could name and categorise this identity, as the ‘Australian’ took control of it by ‘othering’ this identity.
As I came to the end of discussing every boundary stream, I felt that most of what we ‘spoke’ centred on ‘Australian’. My first research question was to engage with how cultural identities were enacted in early childhood setting, and I concluded that our cultural identities were enacted through the process of ‘othering’, which essentialised ‘Australian’. Most of our boundary/cultural enactments hankered after what was ‘Australian’ and what was ‘spoken’ by ‘Australian’ about ‘Australian’.

I could not escape my Ganga’s colonised voice promptly listing my silenced questions that emerged from channelling Ganga-the data, along her first course.

- Why did the ‘Australian self’ talk about ‘Australian’ identity when Ganga ‘spoke’ complex(ion)?
- Why did the ‘Australian self’ epitomise ‘not Australian’ to nullify ‘Australian’ identity, when Ganga ‘spoke’ food, faith and festival?
- Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain ‘really Australian’, when Ganga ‘spoke’ of loosening Tongue ties of bilingual children?
- Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain the ubiquity of ‘Australian’, when Ganga ‘spoke’ the origin of Australia and ‘Australian’?

With these latent questions, I struggled to understand why my Ganga-the data within each boundary stream was received and responded through the establishment of this identity, ‘Australian’. My Ganga’s postcolonial voice took over and she urged me to seek a critical stance and I listened to her, by beginning with some critical literature. Bennett and Sani (2008) outline, when exploring children’s constructions of identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ it is also important to address their “subjective identification”, and not many studies have done so. On the other hand Kowalski (2007) states that teacher’s behaviour play a crucial role in children’s development of their identity, and teachers need to become aware of their own behaviour that contributes towards children’s identity development. Moreover, Weedon (2004) and Wenger (2008) suggest that the staff should focus on the development of flexible cultural identities in children, especially in current multicultural society. As loudly as my Ganga’s colonised voice pushed me to conclude here, my postcolonial Ganga prompted me to delve deeper into my Ganga-the data to seek the origin of this identity, ‘Australian’.

I revisited my literature review written by my Ganga in her colonised voice slightly tinged with resistance to capture an overview of historical and current political context of Australia within which the identity of ‘Australian’ was conceptualised. Historically, the
policies of Australia (Immigration Act, 1901 or White Australia policy) established the
Australian identity as English speaking, white subjects, by overtly prohibiting individuals
and groups from its borders on the basis of their colour and language (Tavan, 2004; Holmes
et al, 2007). It was around 1960s, when Australia faced severe criticism from all around
the world it reluctantly made plans to allow Asian refugees (Tavan, 2004). However, only in
1973, under Whitlam labour government did Australia overthrow ‘White Australia Policy’
(Arber, 1999; Young, 2001; Aveling, 2003), and Al Grassby (1973) declared Australia as a
multicultural nation in his famous speech to outline its political stance towards cultural
diversity.

Grassby (1973) spoke as an ‘Australian’, for and about ‘Australian’ identity, by taking
ownership of the nation and its identity, and asking “Who are we in Australia”. This critical
moment should have aided the shift from the maintenance of homogenous, ‘white Anglo-
Saxon image’ as Australian identity to one that included cultural diversity. However, the
following authors bring to note that this hasn’t resulted in overtly challenging Australian
identity being centrally defined in terms of white, Anglo-Saxon culture, with the rest of the
groups seen as ‘other’ or outsiders (Arber, 1999; Aveling, 2002; Tavan, 2004; Leeman &
Reed, 2006). I could sympathise with their concern, as Grassby (1973, p.2) opened his
speech with the redefinition of the term, ‘lucky country’, and rather than talking about how
and why it had been ‘unlucky country’ for many due to its discriminatory ‘White Australia
policy’, he stressed that ‘lucky country’ was realised and realisable through “re-order” and
“new nationalism”. Thus, re-categorisation of groups through nationalism has been central
to Australian politics, since it openly declared the inclusion of many cultural groups. This
led to my second research question, and I tease this out by slightly modifying this question.
To explain my reasons for this modification, I discuss ideology, hegemony and language, as
these elements are seen as being critical to the construction of one’s identity by Marxist
theorists. I use these theories to speak about the construction of ‘Australian’ identity by
‘Australian’.

**Ideology**, is defined by Althusser (2008), as a set of ideas that dominate the mind of
groups and individuals. Althusser (2008) adds that ideology is propagated by Ideological
State Apparatuses (ISA), institutions such as, state, school, church and families. The
institutions repeatedly penetrate individuals with linguistic messages of categorical
behaviour that individuals become subjects. Subjectified individuals begin to believe that
this is a necessary concept within which they have to bind themselves, and are unable to
operate outside these ideas. My colonised Ganga commanded me to consolidate my
understandings with each concept that I now sought to unravel our identity enactments again.

- Within the context of Australia, the categorical identity ‘Australian’ can be argued as a set of ideas, propagated by an ideology that has come to occupy the minds of individuals, who have become committed to this categorical behaviour as subjects. Ideology therefore, can engage in ‘othering’ controlling the identity behaviours of ‘Australian’ subjects, who in turn are consumed by this idea that they are unable to think outside this category. The Australian government’s primary agenda has been to develop a strong sense of national identity amongst its citizens (Stokes, 1997), especially after the introduction of multiculturalism to manage diversity. Therefore, the national identity ‘Australian’ is ‘othered’ by political ideology circulated by state, and the ‘Australian’ subjects who are occupied by these ideas, ‘speak’ for and about this identity ‘Australian’. I now name this ideologically conceived identity ‘Australian’, as ‘Othered’, and the process of shaping ‘Australian’ subjects as ‘Othering’.

**Hegemony**, on the other hand is defined as the power and control that is made accessible by some through ideological propagation (Loomba, 2005; Camara, 2008). Weedon (1987) adds, that it is the individuals’ connection to this subject position that gives them emotional power.

- In relation to my silenced questions above, it can be argued that it is due to this hegemonic control of this ideological identity, the emotional power the ‘Australian’ subjects experienced, they constantly reverted to ‘Othering’ their identity when challenged by Ganga-the data and I.

**Language** is seen as the platform using which our subjectivities are expressed, mapped, arbitrated, contested and organised (Weedon, 1987; Gee, 2010). Therefore, the language statements that are drawn by institutions have the power to influence subjective enactments of identities.

- With regards to Ganga-the data, language statements used by political institutions dictate the behaviour of subjects, especially the ‘Australian’ subjects, and the language used by ‘Australian’ subjects in turn, reflect how this identity is expressed, organised, mapped, arbitrated and contested.
After having recognised that our enactments of cultural identities in early childhood settings, centred predominantly on the categorical establishment of ‘Australian’, by those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’, I now focus on the conversion of individuals into ‘Australian’ subjects. I particularly become involved with whether those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’ were influenced by the ideological ‘Othering’, and how they in turn shaped this identity by ‘Othering’, speaking for and about ‘Australian’. In my next chapter, I discuss my analytical procedure, Ganga’s course, which I navigated to later ‘speak’ about ‘Australian speaks’, the narratives of ‘Australian speakers’ that emerged as they encountered Ganga—the data.
Chapter 6

‘Speaking’ boundary identities about Ganga

‘Speaking’ about Ganga – Othered Australian, Othering Australian and Ganga

I concluded from the previous chapter that we, as ‘boundary speakers’, ‘spoke’ by ‘othering’ with the binary category, of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. Thus, we spoke or were spoken to as ‘Australian’ or ‘not Australian’ with the identity of ‘Australian’ as our reference point. The critical understanding that the previous chapter surfaced for me was that the maintenance of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ identities was controlled by those who spoke as ‘Australian’ in particular ways, and everytime Ganga-my data and I tried to name or unpack the identity ‘Australian’ with those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’. In this chapter, I am now influenced by the voice of my colonised Ganga, to ‘speak’ about the political language statements that conceptualised and further maintained the identity of this nation and the national subject. I now prepare to take my Ganga-the data through a different course for the following reasons.

Firstly, binary constructions of identities are seen to be problematic, as they not only result in hierarchical power relationships between the two identities, but result in fixing their boundaries and thereby perpetuate dominance and oppression (Weedon, 2004; Connolly, 2008; Davies, 2008). Secondly, identity enactments gain power and dominance when they are attested and recommended by institutions or structures (Weedon, 1987). Thirdly, since the demise of ‘white Australia Policy’ (Immigration Act, 1901 or White Australia policy) in the 1970s, the Australian government’s primary agenda has been to develop a strong sense of national identity amongst its citizens (Stokes, 1997). Therefore, most socio-political institutions including educational settings have primarily aimed to promote the national identity along with exposure to cultures for cross-cultural understanding (Aveling, 2002 & Leeman & Reid, 2006). Having engaged with my Ganga’s streams (literature) and courses (theoretical framework) that underlined the role of ideologies (Loomba, 2005; Althusser, 2008) in the construction and maintenance of one’s categorical identity behaviour, I now seek whether and how the identity statements of ‘Australian’ are linked to political constructions of the identity ‘Australian’.

As discussed in chapter 2, Fairclough’s model of CDA (Fairclough, 1992), enables me to link individual statements to institutional statement. This method of analysis initially requires the identification of specific identity statements of institutions and individuals, to methodically find links between the two. I briefly analyse some of the key political
statements, that I regard as relating to how the identities of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ were ‘spoken’ in my study, specifically by those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’. I use extracts from the famous speech by Grassby (Grassby, 1973), that launched Australia’s multicultural stance, and the Australia’s current Immigration policy, ‘A New Agenda for multicultural Australia’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999) and ‘Multicultural Australia: United in diversity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). These documents have been discussed by authors (see, Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004; Leeman & Reid, 2006), as those that were developed by Australian political structures with intentions of promoting a strong sense of national identity in all individuals in Australia, to address cultural diversity. In the following I discuss how I make meaning of these statements and use this as a basis to trace whether and how they influenced the language with which ‘Australian speakers’ shaped the identity of ‘Australian’. I have particularly chosen statements that I understand as those that ‘speak’ about the categorical attributes of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ and the nation, Australia.

I begin with selected statements from the historical speech that declared Australia’s multiculturalism.

*Something of a conspiracy of silence persists in many quarters about the social impact of other than Anglo-Saxon influences on our national life.......The image we manage to convey of ourselves still seems to range from the bushwhacker [bushwalker] to the sportsman to the slick city businessman. Where is the Maltese process worker, the Italian concrete layer, the Yugoslav miner or – dare I say it – the Indian scientist?*

(Grassby, 1973, p. 2)

Grassby firstly spoke for the identity of ‘Australian’ as an ‘Australian’. Grassby, in his eagerness to expose the presence of many cultures, essentialised the groups with stereotypical images and ethnic categories. Firstly he painted the image that reflected an initial image of the ‘Anglo Saxon’, as a bushwalker, to sportsman to a city slicker. And secondly, by speaking of the influence of all the ‘other than’ groups on ‘our’ national life, he refrained from acknowledging the impact of Anglo-Saxon culture on the national life, and on ‘other than’ groups in Australia.

*The concept I prefer, the ‘family of nation’, is one that ought to convey an immediate and concrete image to all......The important thing is that all are committed to the good of all.*

(Grassby, 1973, p. 3)
With the image of the nation and its unity symbolised as a family, Grassby, played on the “commonsense” (Loomba, 2005) of the subjects to highlight that such national commitment is for our own good. Althusser (2008) specifically outlines how the interpellation of “Ideological State Apparatus” (ISA), makes subjects believe that such behaviour is for the wellbeing of all, and with the use of specific language “committed to the good for all”, Grassby was able to extract loyalty from all subjects.

They have brought with them a common history and culture, an ideology different from the Anglo-Saxon. They perceive different goals and pursue them in their own traditional ways. In short, they lead a way of life which, while in living touch with its ancient forms and impulses, is imperceptibly coming to terms with – or at least learning to co-exist.....in our society. 

(Grassby, 1973, p. 6)

The above attributed specific characteristics and personalities to those who came from outside of Australia as migrants. For me, the key terms such as ‘traditional, ancient forms, impulses’, portrayed an image of primitiveness, and set the scene for migrants to be seen as deficits and threats needing to learn to live with those who are already here, ‘Anglo-Saxon Australians’. Although Grassby exactly does not name who or which group represents the identity ‘Australian’, he covertly mentions ‘Anglo Saxon’ as the reference point with which ‘other’ groups are compared.

The flowering of a truly national spirit in Australia is not an optional extra, but a major objective to be sought in the next few decades.

My personal ambition is that all Australians of all backgrounds will always be proud....to say... ‘I am an Australian’.

(Grassby, 1973, pp. 8-9)

Thus, fundamentally the above statements conceived the identity of ‘Australian’ against all ethnic groups, whose major goal is to become ‘Australian’ for many years to come. Thus individuals and groups were encouraged to subscribe to this ideology, to remain subjectified and become committed to upholding this ‘Australian’ identity. The key aim of Grassby’s speech at that time concentrated on fuelling the ‘Australian’ desire by conceptualising this unique national subject.

I now move to current political statements that address the values and languages of Australia. ‘A New Agenda for multicultural Australia’ (1999) re-laid the platform for Australia’s cultural diversity, and ‘Multicultural Australia: United in diversity (2003)
updated this vision. Although there is little difference between the two, I begin with the former and then move to discussing the latter.

Recommendation 20 from goes ahead to centralise the very same ‘Anglo Saxon’ heritage by reinstating colonial control over Australian subjects as follows:

*Acknowledging the contribution of all Australians to the success of our multicultural society, and in particular the heritage of Great Britain and Ireland from which our democracy has evolved.*

(Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 20)

The above statement recognises multicultural contributions, yet it centralises the colonial heritage as the pillar that upholds this nation.

In the following, recommendation 28 below nationalises the linguistic identity of Australia, as an English only speaking nation to universalise many ethno-linguistic groups, without tracing the origin of such monolingual compulsion.

*English is Australia’s national language. Because it is a significant unifying influence and the ability to speak English is fundamental to full participation in Australian society....*

Recommendation 29, that follows above outlines the values of being proficient in Languages Other Than English (LOTE), not for their intrinsic value of cultural transmission, but for economic gains.

*In a multicultural society such as ours, proficiency in a language other than English is more than desirable; it can be a business or social imperative. If we are to engage in global marketplace and derive maximum benefit from it......particularly the major languages of our region and the world.*

(Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 27)

The above notion that nationalises and centralises the language identity of ‘Australian’ is also stressed by the latter document, ‘Multicultural Australia: United in diversity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). This document further elaborates the attributes of ‘Australian’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003) as follows.

“*Australian multiculturalism recognises, accepts, respects and celebrates cultural diversity*”; “*all Australians are expected to have an overriding loyalty to Australia and its people*” and “*Our commitment to and defence of Australian values of equality, democracy and freedom unite*
The above specifically highlights “all Australians”, to accept and celebrate diversity within the parameters of their commitment that defends the nation and national values, thus, this commitment precedes all other aspirations. It prescribes individuals to ‘accept, respect and celebrate diversity’ within what is considered as practices that are non-threatening to the solidarity of the nation and its subjects. Thus, it covertly allows subjects to silence practices that are regarded to be disrupting what is already here as ‘Australian’. By defending ‘Australian values’ as unique principles of equality, democracy and freedom, it again leaves it for subjects to control a set of values that they regard as uniquely, ‘Australian’, and most of all to universalise diversity under the realm of ‘Australian values’.

I summarise below how ideas about the identity of ‘Australian’ and Australia are circulated by ideological statements, and I make reference to these in my next chapter for ease of discussion.

1. An identity that should be the aspiration of all individuals in Australia.
2. An identity that is influenced by “ethnic groups” (migrants), who are traditional, impulsive and learning to adapt to modernity, that Australia is.
3. A subject who upholds the democratic values of the colonial past, and yet acknowledges the contributions of multiculturalism.
4. A subject, who must speak English for her/is daily social participation, and who may learn an ‘other language’, for economic betterment and benefit.
5. Most of all, an identity that should be central to the commitment of all ‘Australians’, for the wellbeing and harmony of all subjects, and Australia.

In the following chapter, I work with CDA (Fairclough, 1992), and rather than using individual statements, I revisit my narratives in which the identity of Australia and ‘Australian’ was shaped. I select and name the key speakers, who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’ about this national identity, as ‘Australian speakers’, and the narratives, ‘boundary speaks’ as ‘Australian speaks’. I name this process that shaped the identity of ‘Australian’ as ‘Othering’ in order to distinguish this from the process ‘othering’ that was commonly used by all to distinguish the collective identity of ‘self’ and ‘other’. In the following chapter, my Ganga-the data ‘speaks’ about ‘Othering’ that shaped ‘Australian’ identity.
Chapter 7

Ganga ‘Othering’ to shape boundary identities

The ‘Australian speakers’ responded to shape the identity of ‘Australian’ especially when they recognised this identity was being disrupted by my Ganga—the data. They immediately distinguished what ‘Australian’, their collective identity stood for to reinforce the attributes of this identity. In this chapter, I establish the influence of ideological ‘Othering’ on ‘Australian speakers’, and how this is evidenced in how they shaped or ‘Othered’ the identity of ‘Australian’. I address my following research question by slightly changing the term ‘othered’ with ‘Othered’, to represent specifically the ideologically conceptualised identity of ‘Australian’, now shaped by ‘Australian speakers’.

- What are the meanings of such enactments in shaping othered (‘Othered’) identities?

In addressing the above, I attend to my silenced questions that surfaced from my previous discussion in chapter 5. I refer to the key points that I summarised at the end of my chapter 6 to make connections between structural and individual ‘Othering’ statements. The ‘Australian speakers’ are ‘Australian’ subjects, who ‘spoke’, as and about the identity ‘Australian’. I collate samples of ‘Australian speaks’ under boundary streams namely, Complex(ion), Forbidden Fs, Tongue ties and Terra strikes, and I embed my concurrent subjective postcolonial interpretations, as I make meaning of how ‘Othered’ identities were shaped by ‘Australian speakers’. In this chapter, although my Ganga’s colonised voice dictates much of my discussions, my Ganga’s postcolonial voice gets stronger as she is troubled by the responses of ‘Australian speakers’ repeatedly.

Complex(ion) meanings that shaped ‘Othered’ identities

The following are samples of responses of ‘Australian speakers’, Gina and Katherine to their encounters with my Ganga’s complex(ion) ‘speaks’.

Ganga encounters Gina and Katherine

Gina, the ‘Australian speaker’, called herself a peacemaker. She was instrumental in my continued presence in this room, and within a week she acknowledged the complexities, “You know when you asked us, who is an Australian weeks ago, I was totally confronted. I was thrown back. Then I stopped and thought what it is to be an Australian, I couldn’t find an answer. It is confronting, because being an Australian is something we take for granted”
Although I shared my observations of children with her, we both understood that to trial any action in the room was difficult, and she was always apologetic about this. Katherine, was also an ‘Australian speaker’, who worked in the centre. To explain my study, I simply said that I was going to ask why some children play together, and some don’t. Katherine replied, ‘It is individual choice, they should be able to choose whom they want to be friends with’ (N: 20/05/10-a). Usually children played, as Katherine supervised them from a distance and would respond to children and staff if approached.

The following meeting with Katherine and Gina was arranged to explain what my study involved again, as Katherine was concerned that I was discriminating.

I was there to explain my study, however, I was immediately accused with the statement that stressed their ‘Australian’ identity, ‘You know, we are both just Australians. Why do you have to call us white?’ The “re-order” now reinscribed with “new nationalism”, (Grassby, 1973) was evident in their denial of their category, and my ordering of their ‘whiteness’ hurt their feelings. This recategorised ‘Australian’ existed for Gina and Katherine, and Katherine’s very next statement established that.

I am meeting Gina for the first time. ‘You are most welcome to ask me any questions about the study and thank you for your time’ I started. ‘You know, we are both just Australians. Why do you have to call us white? How do you think we would feel when you call us white? (Gina). ‘I don’t know why you have to tell Pookey is brown, when every other kid in the room is Australian. You tell her she is brown and that she is different.” (Katherine). ‘But the problem is, she is brown and she says she doesn’t like brown and that she is white”, I added. ‘Yeah, I understand all that. But telling her she is brown is discrimination. You are making her feel that she is different. You know every other child in the group is white and we are both white teachers, but you make her feel that she doesn’t belong” (Katherine). (N: 28/07/10-a)

‘I don’t know why you have to tell Pookey is brown, when every other kid in the room is Australian. You tell her she is brown and that she is different.” As telling Pookey (Brown, Indian Australian, girl, 4 yrs) who was ‘brown’ as ‘brown’ when she denied this as being ‘white’ was wrong, because saying so alienated her from belonging as ‘Australian’. For Katherine what I said was discrimination, because every other child in the room was ‘Australian’ followed by every other child being ‘white’. Did that mean being ‘brown’ automatically meant ‘not Australian’? Similarly, initially they were both ‘Australians’ and now they were ‘white teachers’. I felt that they were struggling with the recognition and the recategorisation of their identity origins. I concluded that the ideological recategorisation of many cultural groups under one national identity, ‘Australian’ had only resulted in
‘Othering’ ‘white as Australian’, and Katherine was still shaping this identity through her visions of that image. Thus, she was subjectively responding to ideologies of nationalism still bound by ‘whiteness’. Therefore, to belong as ‘Australian’, children had to feel they were ‘white’. I was concerned that Pookey’s desire to belong as an ‘Australian’ had also resulted in her dislike for ‘brown skin’. Gina’s and Katherine’s acceptance of this desire to me indicated their desire to shape all individuals as ‘Australian’, thus fulfilling the duties of a loyal subject. Unsurprisingly children too ‘spoke’ nationalism and ‘whiteness’.

“This is Prasanna and do you think she is a teacher like me?” (Gina). “Am I like Gina” I asked. “She is black, you are white” (Veejay, girl, 4 yrs). “No, hey she is not like you, you are white, Australian, and she is brown, she is not Australian” (Santa, boy, 4 yrs). “Okay, we all know about skin colour, Prasanna has something else to tell you” (Gina). (N: 18/08/10-d)

Surprised by children’s ‘Othering’ engagement, Gina wanted me to talk about something else. I recognised my inner postcolonial voice, as I concluded that Gina effectively diverted children’s complex(ion) ‘speak’ to maintain the ideology ‘white as Australian’.

“I didn’t expect. But it does stand out I suppose. Don’t get me wrong, skin colour is obvious. I wish I had a book” exclaimed Gina apologetically.

Gina was dragged by Ganga’s force to acknowledge that children ‘Othered’ and shaped the identity of ‘Australian’ as ‘white’. She allowed me to read the book ‘The colours of us’. Yet, the national colours expressed by children remained unchanged.

These conversations happened every time the book was read. “We can’t find our colour. What about me?” (Feeniyan, See and Fairy, 4 year old white Anglo Australian girls). “But you are peachy tan, aren’t you?” I asked. “No, see we are white, not peachy tan” (Feeniyan). “It is tricky isn’t. There are usually two colours with skin colour, like black and white” (Gina whispered). A little later, “I am white, so I am Australian. Pookey is black not Australian. Like you she is Indian,” said Feeniyan. Pookey replied, “No, I am white, I am Australian”. (N: 18/08/10-g; 1/09/10-c; 15/09/10-d; 13/10/10-i)

Children too remained subjectified by their ‘whiteness’ and their national identity, ‘Australian’. I gathered their reluctance to relinquish ‘white’ for ‘peachy tan’, and I also realised that Gina’s interpretation of this event differed from mine, as the dichotomous white/black existed for her. I heard later children shaping ‘white’ as ‘Australian’, and as ‘Australian speakers’, they ‘spoke’ their commitment by ‘Othering’ who was ‘Australian’ and who wasn’t by their skin colour. The excluded ‘black not Australian’ Pookey,
immediately declared that she was ‘white’ and ‘Australian’ with aspirations to become that national subject.

I felt that I was projecting my postcolonial interpretations on children, who ‘spoke’ as ‘white Australian’, and on Gina, and I again recognised my own subjectivity and my inability to relinquish this. I now re-engage with my silenced complex(ion) question that stemmed from chapter 5,

- Why did the ‘Australian self’ talk about ‘Australian’ identity when Ganga ‘spoke’ complex(ion)?

I recalled all those authors (Arber, 1999; Aveling, 2002; Tavan, 2004; Leeman & Reed, 2006), who commented that Grassby’s declaration of multicultural Australia did not challenge the image of ‘white Anglo-Saxon Australian’, as it still positioned indigenous and ethnic groups as outsiders. The ‘Australian speakers’ evaded talking against ‘white as Australian’, because of their ideological commitment to this identity, as they had ‘Othered’ this identity as being colourless, ‘just Australian’. They not only continued to permit children’s categorisation, but excused Pookey’s dislike for ‘brown skin’ and her desire for ‘white’ as her aspiration to belong and become ‘Australian’. However, such aspiration is strongly recommended by multicultural policies of Australia (see summary, pt.1, 5).

While Boutte (2008) recommends adults to be honest in embracing children’s curiosity with open discussions about such differences, Gina and Katherine denied ‘speaking’ colours with children or felt that it was tricky to disrupt the binary of ‘black/white’. Moreover, children were engaging in ‘Othering’ as they were distinguishing individuals as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ using our skin colour. Weedon (2004) argues that attaching such stringent attributes to visual clues of one’s body is “everyday racism”. Thus, the ‘Australian speakers’ shaped and allowed the shaping of ‘white Australian’ by children. This only made the operation of ‘Australian whiteness’ more noticeable for me, and the power of ‘Australian speakers’ to reinforce ideologically created, maintained and perpetuated identity of ‘Australian’, and I concluded that ‘white Australian’ identity was incontestable.

Forbidden Fs meanings that shaped ‘Othered’ identities

In the following I use specific examples to illustrate how Forbidden Fs enactments were ‘Othered’, by ‘Australian’, in particular ways.
Ganga encounters Cathy

Cathy, the ‘Australian speaker’, welcomed me into her space with so much warmth and expectation. She described to me the Indian shop that she recently visited, “It is a glorious shop, the sequence, and the workmanship was all exquisite. I was relating to my own culture. There is nothing, it is blah like I always say” (N: 13/10/10-k). She always called me her ‘exotic other’ and I called her my ‘white Mogul’ and laughed about her desire for everything that I was, the colour, the food, the celebration and all my ‘differences’. We had the lengthiest conversations with each other during which we shared our professional and personal experiences, and I therefore, was highly committed to our friendship.

Cathy expressed her goals for my study, and as a participatory action researcher I underlined this as our key goal.

“I really hire strong women as staff and they are strong, they have been through such difficult experiences and have such wonderful, diverse backgrounds. But they just leave back who they are as soon as they walk into the centre, just out that door (pointing to the entrance). They leave it right there on the foot mat. I keep wondering why can’t we celebrate cultures, their colours and festivities. But no, even families, the enrolment forms have a specific space to record such things, but families never fill this area, they just write the same as the other person. I just don’t understand why we can’t celebrate who we are. It is not that it is not there, when I attend weddings and celebrations of staff like Selma’s and Fatima’s they are so rich and colourful and vibrant. So different and interesting. But they come in here and it all goes pear shaped.” (Cathy). “I hope you don’t mind me asking, but have you ever spoken to them about yourself and your own background” I asked. “I have you know…..but I thought I spoke quite openly. But that hasn’t really made them join the party. You get what I mean. If you can bring the cultures of the staff and families to help them celebrate who they are I would much appreciate that. I want this place to be buzzing with joy, colour and celebrations. I hope that your study can do this to us” (Cathy). “Thank you Cathy and I will have a think about what you said now, after all this is action research and I have to respond to things raised collaboratively. I do have books to help me design questionnaires for staff and families.” I replied. “Yeah, we need to normalise difference. How do we do that?” (Cathy) “Have you ever acknowledged your background anywhere at any time?” I asked. “I think of myself as just Australian, so I don’t really wonder about that much. But when you ask it is to be an Australian, like you did once, it is confronting” (Cathy). (N: 7/07/10-f)

Cathy spoke about the cultures of her staff through her acceptance, respect and a longing for all their colour and celebration. Their silence bothered her, and I gathered that she was thinking through expressions of democracy and freedom that envisioned individuals as being free to choose public cultural expression. Her commitment to ‘Australian’ identity was noticeable when she ‘spoke’ of who she was, as an ‘Australian’. I
gathered that Cathy felt uncomfortable when asked to unpack this identity, as to fragment the unified ‘Australian’ through historical engagement was confrontational. I remembered that such unification was deemed as being necessary right from the time the identity ‘Australian’ was politically publicised. Till the very end Cathy avoided engaging with who ‘Australian’ was, by taking ownership of this identity, thus, the identity ‘Australian’ remained undisrupted and unspoken, and therefore, her image, and what she represented as ‘Australian’ remained normalised.

Being a postcolonial subject, I could not continue to be silent and I specifically ‘spoke’ about her collective culture, its dominance and its privilege by giving her journal articles\(^5\) to read on her ‘white’ culture nationalised as ‘Australian’

_A The next week, Cathy walked into the room as I was painting with the children. “This questionnaire Prasanna, for the staff I was trying to answer this and I couldn’t answer anything in it” (Cathy). “Why, should I redesign and modify this? Wasn’t I respectful?” I asked. “No, no. It is fine. But what culture do I have to talk about. I am boring, I am nothing. There is no colour, celebration or food. Tell me about it. I am just ordinary. Nothing to talk about” (Cathy). I smiled. (N: 26/08/10-c)_

I began to conceptualise Cathy’s subjective commitment to the identity ‘Australian’. Cathy ‘spoke’ as an ‘Australian speaker’, ‘Othering’ the ‘Australian’ identity, as “nothing, no colour, celebration or food”. She was ‘speaking’ the ideological ‘Australian’ by centralising the identity of ‘Australian’ and grouping the rest around this identity.

Simultaneously, she ‘Othered’ or shaped ‘Australian’, as “nothing”. Cathy’s ‘Othering’ continued,

_A A few weeks later, I was showing the books, ‘Faith’ and ‘Symbols of faith’ to Cathy. She flicked through the pages, “Look at these pictures. See this is what I was telling you. This is culture, colour and celebrations. But what do I have” (Cathy). “But Cathy, you do. But your culture is normalised and sometimes made to be seen as scientific that you don’t see it. I see your culture as an outsider and I see that your celebrations have colour, like red, green and gold associated with Christmas. The sound of bells and carols everywhere you go” I added. “But, what is the point, it is not special. There is nothing special about it. It is always there” (Cathy). “True, Cathy you are right” I said. (N: 8/09/10-d)_

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These articles discuss the privileges of unnamed, normalised, nationalised ‘white’ culture, especially in multicultural societies such as, America and Australia.
I could not help but revert back to my postcolonial roots, as the identity ‘Australian’ was ‘Othered’ by Cathy, as she simultaneously glorified the rest of the cultures. I interpreted this as a colonising act that conceptualised the identity of ‘Self’ by configuring the “exotic other” (Said, 1978; Young, 2001; Ashcroft et al. 2007). I tune in to my silenced question that surfaced from my previous analysis of Forbidden Fs.

- Why did the ‘Australian self’ epitomise ‘not Australian’ to nullify ‘Australian’ identity, when Ganga ‘spoke’ food, faith and festival?

The ideological ‘Othering’ had influenced Cathy, the ‘Australian speaker’, to express her strong commitment to Australian multiculturalism, by highlighting her acceptance, respect and her enthusiasm for celebration (see summary, pt. 2, 3). Although, ‘Whiteness’ as a culture, its privileges and the resulting ‘white cultural dominance’ have been talked about by many authors (see Frankenberg, 1998; Pang 2001; Rose-Cohen, 2004; Gorski, 2008), her shaping of ‘Australian’, was by ‘Othering’ her culture as “nothing, no colour, food and celebration”, as she exaggerated those of others. Overall, I concluded how the participation of ‘Australian’ in colour and celebrations of diversity had enabled her to believe her acceptance, respect and celebration of other cultures, but had not allowed it to colour what was ‘Australian’. Her commitment to maintaining the identity of ‘Australian’ in its original form inhibited the infiltration of colours and celebrations. However, the same commitment to this ideology also enabled her to feel satisfied with sporadic, superficial participation. Leeman and Reid (2006), and Vickers (2002), argue that cultural pluralism that is established around ideologies of liberalism and universalism privileges the unnamed dominant race and covert effects of colonialism, which can be likened to “democratic racism”.

This ‘white cultural dominance’, unlike the previous example, was more subtle, but it still shaped and ‘Othered’ the nation and its national identity, in their original form before the introduction of multiculturalism by the political structures of Australia.

**Tongue ties meanings that shaped ‘Othered’ identities**

The discussion below illustrates the shaping of linguistic identity of ‘Australian’.

**Ganga encounters Cathy, Gina and Katherine**

I have introduced the above ‘Australian speakers’ earlier, therefore, the following is my discussion with Tongue ties, ‘Australian speaks’.
“Why should Pookey get so attached to you?” Katherine (white Anglo-Australian staff) asked. “Won’t children gravitate towards someone who shares similar experiences?” I asked. “You know when I went to Singapore, although it is cosmopolitan, and everyone spoke English, I was dying to hear someone who spoke Australian” Cathy (white Anglo-Australian staff) added. (N: 28/07/10-b)

I began to explain Pookey’s (Tamil, Indian Australian, girl, 4 yrs) attachment, and Cathy intervened to extend her support. However, to do so, she shaped the linguistic identity of ‘Australian’. I was thinking about all the layers of experiences that Pookey and I shared, and the theories that speak of maintaining children’s first language. As an ‘Australian speaker’ she ‘spoke’ of hearing what was ‘Australian’, the language she missed in a space where everyone spoke English. Thus, she set apart the identity of ‘Australian’ from the English speakers, and as a committed subject of Australia, she established images of ‘speaking and hearing Australian’. Rather than focusing on Pookey and her reluctance to speak Tamil at the centre, the ‘Australian speakers’ moved to underpin what was ‘Australian’.

“Pookey does not speak in your language because she has no one here. We are both Australians and the rest of the children speak English” (Gina). “But I can and I am here, yet she doesn’t want to speak Tamil with me” I said. We (Gina and Katherine) are both Australians and we will never be able to talk in your language” (Gina). “May be you are right” I agreed. (N: 28/07/10-c)

Gina too showed her commitment in maintaining this identity, by ‘Othering’ their identity as ‘Australian’ outside the English spoken by children. Cathy and Gina, as ‘Australian speakers’ with “new nationalism” (Grassby, 1973) owned and maintained the language identity of ‘Australian’. They found it difficult to think and behave outside their ‘Australian’ subjectivity, as they repeatedly shaped why and what ‘Australian’ speak and don’t speak, by ‘Othering’ what was ‘Australian’ and by keeping my identity and the language I spoke outside this.

“But, you know when you speak in your language with her mum looking back at Katherine, you can’t do that. You are talking about her and isn’t that wrong to speak in a language that everyone can’t understand. How do you think she would feel?” (Gina). “I am sorry that it seemed like that. In India we speak many languages, it is the way of life” I explained. “But they are all Indian” (Gina). “No, there isn’t one language called Indian. They are very different, and that is why I never hesitate to speak in Tamil. Even if they are from Malaysia, Singapore or Sri Lanka, we can share the same linguistic background” I said. “So whom do you want to change or work with, children, families or staff” (Gina). “All” I replied. “I think families, work on
Gina, the ‘Australian speaker’ expressed her commitment to the space, the nation and her desire to control and unify everything that was heard and spoken. As ‘Australian speaker’ she emphasised the feelings of fellow subject when another language was spoken in their presence. I concluded that she was exhibiting her ideological commitment in maintaining the well-being and harmony of all ‘Australians’ (see summary, pt. 4, 5).

I recognised that I was thinking and speaking through not just my postcolonial subjectivity, but also my multilingual experiences in India, and my current experiences with Tamil speakers whose ethnicities vary. I wanted Gina and Katherine to be exposed to my languages experiences, my ‘difference’, and I could sense that it meant that I was reconceptualising the nation, Australia and ‘Australian’. I was directed to work with Pookey’s family, and I felt that Gina as an ‘Australian speaker’ was keeping herself aloof to maintain the linguistic identity of ‘Australian’. The assertion of ‘Othering’ what was ‘Australian’ continued.

The centre had many children and staff with English as Additional Language (EAL), and my conversations with staff from EAL backgrounds began to revolve around our understanding or lack of understanding about children’s First language development, in an environment dominated by English speakers. At the staff meeting, we discussed the promotion of cultures, focusing on supporting children’s first language development.

We were contemplating how to promote cultures in the setting. Bella, a Polish staff expressed that a child in her room with English as Additional language, was observed as needing support with language development. However, they soon noticed that he began to sing and talk as soon as he heard songs sang in his first language by the reliever. Therefore amongst many suggestions she recommended, “We can sing songs, like I beg of you one thing. Each staff if you could translate one song in the child’s language it is so good for the child who is speaking that language.” (Bella). “Songs, you know we nowadays don’t sing those typical Australian songs in centres anymore. We used to all the time when I was teaching. Not anymore, it is not fashionable” (Cathy). “Really, Australian, would I know?” I asked. “No, you wouldn’t know, ‘Road to Gundagai’ and many more like that. It is really very Australian. For me I miss that, I wish we would start singing those again, we are losing what is Australian with all this new stuff” (Cathy). We ended the meeting soon. (N: 22/9/10-c)
When the staff expressed the need to bring about changes in their daily language experiences with children, Cathy’s comment immediately ‘Othered’ the identity of ‘Australian’ and ‘spoke’ of its preservation. Being influenced by policies that underpin English as Australia’s national language (see summary, pt. 4, 5), her commitment to the protection and maintenance of this ideological ‘Australian’ was expressed by her resistance to be influenced by change. For Cathy, singing translated songs in children’s first languages evoked her memories of “typical Australian”, and her links with what was ‘Australian’. When she ‘spoke’ of the loss of ‘Australian’, it was not attached to indigenous languages, but the perceived indigeneity of colonial Australian, expressed in Grassby’s image of “bushwalker” (Grassby, 1973). This made her lament the loss of hearing and singing, ‘Road to Gundigai’, an English song shaped as “really very Australian”. By not engaging with Australia’s pre-colonial status, she was able to present and maintain the colonial image of ‘really Australian’.

I experientially knew that multilingualism was possible and desirable as a speaker of more than two languages, who grew up in a multilingual environment in India. Beyond my personal experiences, I recognised my own commitment to postcolonial ideas, as I was seeing her in her past, the colonial tradition and its ancient forms of calculated domination, in the ‘Australian speakers’, their ‘whiteness, food, colour, celebration and language’. Loomba (2005) too points out that although the white settlers try to create an identity separate from their colonising past, they are still seen as agents of colonialism by the colonised people. Perhaps, that was why I saw my coloniser in Gina and Cathy, as they both spoke for the uniqueness of this ‘Australian’, by distancing this from English and from all other languages. As I saw them in their colonial past, I questioned my own critiquing of ‘Australian speaker’, and how I was engaging in the same colonising act of positioning and boxing groups in their antiquity and tradition. I remembered my silenced question that emerged from my past analysis of Tongue ties,

- Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain ‘really Australian’, when Ganga ‘spoke’ of loosening Tongue ties of bilingual children?

Authors have repeatedly alerted educators to the loss of children’s first language in especially monolingual early childhood educational care settings, and they have suggested varied ways to promote and maintain children’s first language (Corson, 1998; Cummins, 2000; Arthur, 2001; Chantler, 2004; Clyne, 2005). Moreover, authors caution early childhood practitioners about the loss of generational ties with first language attrition, and therefore, recommend working closely with families to keep the linguistic ties alive (Siraj-
Blatchford & Clarke, 2000; Arthur, 2001; Clarke, 2005). My conversation about languages began especially because of such concerns. I also understood that when ‘White Australia policy’ (Immigration act, 1901) was in operation, outsiders were excluded not only by their ‘race’, but also by language, by testing and rejecting new arrivals with tests in English (Tavan, 2004; Holmes et al, 2007). Thus, discrimination based on ‘race’, and linguistic backgrounds had guided the construction of this nation and their subjects for a long time. Authors continue to highlight that Australia had historically been a land of many voices and multiple sounds, and colonisation with its emphasis on monolingual discourse usurped this multiplicity through the imposition of one language for all (Nicholls, 2005; Clyne, 2005).

Cathy, the ‘Australian speaker’ was not concerned about the historical loss of languages due to colonisation, or the loss of generational ties, but more alarmed of ‘Australian’ being eroded by incoming change. I concluded that by ‘Othering’ the identity of ‘Australian’ as something unique and real, the subjectively committed ‘Australian speaker’ diverted the transformation of this identity, and shaped ‘Australian’ as, ‘English only speaking Australian’.

Terra strikes meanings that shaped ‘Othered’ identities

The following is a sample that talks with the shaping of nation, Australia.

Ganga encounters Katrina

Katrina, was the ‘Australian speaker’, who stood up for the upliftment of the marginalised, as she expressed the very first day I met her, “I am always for change. So, if you think you want to change something you can. But not everything all the time” (N: 8/06/10-g). Hearing this, I felt quite comfortable to voice my opinion on matters we discussed, as I believed that she was open to being challenged.

This is my first meeting with Katrina (white Anglo Australian staff) and Katrina expressed her ideas about Australia.

“There is nothing wrong with Australia. It is like an umbrella. There, Remi is Indian, she is Sri Lankan and they are as Australian as I am. You know Remi came here with so little confidence and I made her get her diploma and she is much better than before. I think we are all the same” (Katrina). “Yes, I was so scared and they kept telling me that I should study and I can do this and therefore I am a bit better now” (Remi). “See, I told you. Australia is like an umbrella we are happy together. We are okay, nothing needs changing. It is in other countries. You know in Taiwan and Japan they don’t like Americans, is that fair? We are lucky. We don’t have what happens in other countries, no one is dropping bombs on us. Like Iraq and Afghanistan. What about the Australians who get bashed up in Papua New Guinea? This is what I don’t like. When
you come to Australia, you have to take on Australian values. You can’t try and change us. Like the Muslim girls who want to swim in our community want the swimming pool closed for men on Tuesdays. They can’t do that, and that is not fair. Everyone pays their rates, they can’t have special permission” (Katrina). (N: 8/06/10-

Katrina, the ‘Australian speaker’ was keen to show me how she had accepted “ethnic groups” as ‘Australian’, showing her strong commitment towards regarding all groups as ‘Australian subjects’ (see summary, pt. 1, 3). The very ideology recommended as a commitment and an aspiration of all individuals, by multicultural policies from Grassby (1973) to Commonwealth of Australia (2003). As Grassby (1973) did with the use of “Family of nation”, she re-ordered these cultural groups as ‘Australian’, and proceeded to unify and symbolise the nation as ‘umbrella’. Being connected and committed in keeping this identity intact, she stressed on its perfection and safety, and compared this with those that aren’t, by bringing to note that the values of Australia. By speaking as ‘Australian’ she maintained her power to dictate the identity of ‘Australian’ and the conditions for living in Australia.

“But what are Australian values? Who determines this is what it is to be an Australian” I asked. “I think we are okay. You know Greeks keep to themselves, Italians keep to their own community. My cousin wanted to marry a Greek and their family didn’t allow it because he is not Greek” (Katrina). “However, in countries like America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, most number of people are Anglo-white people. Isn’t this because this group came in large numbers together and kept together?” I asked. (N: 8/06/10-

Katrina not only centralised the identity of ‘Australian’ by underling its perfection, she also named the “ethnic groups” around it (see summary, pt. 2, 3). I struggled to remain silent as the ‘Australian speaker’ owned this identity and shaped it with rigid insularity. This was my first meeting with her, and I could not hide my loyalty to my postcolonial subjectivity, as she repeatedly justified the ideological ‘Australian’. I named the ethnicity of her collective identity, as a group that was as distant or as close to ‘Australian’ as any “ethnic group”. I could not help but identify the ideological influence of multicultural policies of Australia (See summary, pt. 3, 5) in her expressions, as she stressed on the obligation of “all Australians” to be guided by these unique set of values. Katrina the ‘Australian speaker’, effectively used ‘Australian values’ and supported this with ‘fairness’ to suggest the mutual rights of all subjects. As Althusser (2008) comments, I regarded these values as an illusion, circulated with an object to subjectify all individuals, and most of all empower the ‘Australian speaker’ with the power to take control and exclude anything or
anyone seen as a threat to the nation and its identity. The ‘Othering’ of ‘Australian’ identity continued.

“I know colonisation and all that. But we can’t go back in history. Like Aborigines they keep to themselves and they don’t want to change. I really don’t think we should let everyone come in to our country. People in boats, can be terrorists. I have a friend from the police force and he says most of these people are terrorists. They come here as asylum seekers in boats, change passports, get comfortable and then turn into terrorists. I even heard on the radio this morning, all these terrorists come here in boats to hide in Australia” (Katrina). “But, did you watch SBS last night, one of the asylum seekers from Sri Lanka was teary and he made the audience cry and I did too. It is sad that we can’t support these people. According to statistics, most of them who came as asylum seekers were granted refugee status. Doesn’t that prove something?” I asked.

“No, my friend actually said they are terrorists and they should never be allowed. We can’t let everyone in, this is our country shouldn’t we have a choice. Like I told you Australia is an umbrella. We live together as Australians” (Katrina). (N: 8/06/10-g)

For Katrina, being an ‘Australian’ was about allowing, accepting and respecting the culture of each other, but within the realm of what she stipulated as ‘Australian values’ (see summary pt. 1, 2, 3, 5). After all ‘United in diversity’ clearly stipulates these to be the commitment of “all Australians” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). I could sense the values of democracy and freedom aiding her unwillingness to change, as her aloofness was her choice to express who ‘Australian’ was, and what they stood for. With absolute loyalty and commitment to not only the national identity, but also to the nation, the ‘Australian speaker’ closed the borders for outsiders on the basis of national interest. Finally, Katrina enacted the ideology, as she spoke with absolute certainty, of outsiders, who needed to remain excluded, and this was about her guarding the nation and its identity (see summary, pt. 5). She claimed this choice, as an ‘Australian speaker’, by expressing the imperativeness of all individuals to be subjectified as ‘Australian’. This to me was about enacting the categorical role of ‘Australian’, a subjectivity that she had unquestioningly internalised as “good for all” (Althusser, 2008).

I concluded that Katrina, as an ‘Australian speaker’ shaped the identity of ‘Australia’ and ‘Australian’, firstly through her absolute loyalty to this categorical identity; secondly, by claiming ownership of the nation and the national subjects; thirdly, by actively expressing her commitment to maintain this identity through overtly defending its uniqueness and its perfection; finally, by proclaiming the subjectification of all individuals as ‘Australian’, the re-ordering recommended by Grassby (1973), and the policies that followed.
I thought I had always been aware of how my postcolonial subjectivity was regarded and received by those who were less committed to this disposition. Yet I did not stop challenging her acts of ‘Othering’ as she shaped the identity of ‘Australian’. Perhaps, I did so, because I was consumed by postcolonialism and had internalised and embodied this disposition, or perhaps because I wanted to take control and somehow induce change in my ‘other’. I realised that I was as much a coloniser as this ‘Australian speaker’ was, and I wanted to subjugate her through my postcolonial ideology. I tried my very best to see her otherwise, but the following only reinforced my postcolonial perceptions.

A few weeks later, Katrina and I were locking up and I decided to bring up my discussion with Amelia on indigenous Australians. “Katrina, Amelia has asked me to find out about the indigenous name of this suburb as we want to start discussing indigenous Australians with children” I started. “It is NAIDOC week soon, but if you are having indigenous flag, we should also have Union Jack displayed” (Katrina). “Okay, I’ll see what I can find from the council” I replied. (N: 30/06/10-h)

I justified my visions of seeing Katrina as my coloniser, a coloniser who initially sidestepped ‘speaking’ history, but now clearly indicated her historical attachment to maintaining ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ identity as ‘Australian’. I traced my silenced question,

- Why did the ‘Australian self’ maintain the ubiquity of ‘Australian’, when Ganga ‘spoke’ the origin of Australia and ‘Australian’ identity?

The purpose, or what seemed as the purpose of Grassby’s speech (1973), and the later multicultural policies (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, 2003) was to direct “all Australians” to embrace cultural diversity, and take on an identity that is multiple and flexible. However, it was evident to me from the above ‘Australian speak’, that this had only resulted in ‘Othering’ this identity with ‘white-Anglo-Saxon’ image. Most of the literature that I engaged with highlighted this as the primary shortcoming of Australia’s multiculturalism (Arber, 1999; Aveling, 2002; Tavan, 2004; Leeman & Reid, 2006).

Burnett (2004) warns that visions of singular ‘Australian’ identity results in seeing ‘others’ as a threat to the current way of life, and Katrina, the ‘Australian’ was doing so. According to Burnett (2004), since September 11, the public and political discourse in Australia has reverted to border control policies akin to ‘White Australia policy’ of 1900s, and this has perpetuated feelings of animosity against asylum seekers. I did not have the power to change the singular vision of Katrina, the ‘Australian speaker’, with ‘renewed nationalism’, ‘Othering’ what was ‘Australian’. Her ‘Othering’ was backed by institutional power, as being, owning and maintaining the shape of ‘Australian’, and all individuals as ‘Australian’
was politically supported (see summary, pt, 1, 3, 5). Therefore, Katina was reinforcing the above interpellations by enacting her subjective commitment to being an ‘Australian’.

I concluded that for all ‘Australian speakers’ above, what was ‘Australian’ was already here, and anyone from outside was expected to accommodate to this, as they were seen as ‘different’ to what was central as ‘Australian’. Thus, diversifying the complex(ion), food, faith and festival, language and the borders of Australia and its national identity was ‘Othered’ and shaped as ‘white Anglo-Saxon Australian’ by ‘Australian speakers’ who reinforced the ideology, ‘Australian’. Therefore, the process of recategorisation, which is promoted by theories of social psychology (Crisp & Turner, 2007) had only made the political institutions to become obsessed with creating unified ‘Australian’ subjects. This in turn had resulted in our cultural enactments becoming dictated by distinguishing what is ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, and form and reform individuals and groups accordingly. According to Weedon (1987), identities that are backed by institutional ideologies also gain power, and thus become dominant. Therefore, Ganga—the data or anyone who challenged this identity was excluded and diverted to keep this categorical behaviour incontestable with the power of being, thinking and acting the identity of ‘Othered Australian’. If hegemony is a form of dominance that covertly control subjects by playing on their common sense (Loomba, 2005; Camara, 2008), all our enactments were hegemonically controlled by the dominant ideological ‘Australian’ on one hand, and by those who shaped this as ‘Australian speakers’ on the other. Although my colonising voice urged me to conclude here, my postcolonial Ganga—the data prompted me not to give up, and I listened to her.

Resistance meanings that shaped ‘Othered’ identity

The ‘Australian speakers’, ‘Othered’ this identity, as ‘Australian’ by ‘speaking’ for and about, and by being, thinking and acting ‘Australian’. Their categorical behaviour reinforced not just what was the ideologically represented as ‘Australian’, but dominated the cultural enactments of all individuals in Australia. Did that mean hegemonic control was inescapable, and we had to reconcile to enact cultures within the expectations of ‘Australian’ ideology?

Amelia illustrated engaging with the same ideology differently. Amelia, an ‘Australian speaker’, ‘spoke’ to contest the ideological propagation of ‘Othered Australian’. The following illustrates a sample of Amelia’s encounters with Ganga, the data.
Ganga encounters Amelia

Amelia, was an ‘Australian speaker’, who openly and enthusiastically welcomed my presence. From the very first day, she wanted to know about what I meant by ‘identity’ and we talked about subjectivity, power and discourse. Every afternoon during her lunch break or sleep time we used to regularly exchange our observations of children and by saying, “Let us do something to change this”, Amelia showed her willingness to be challenged and changed.

Amelia opened this conversation with me, even before I shared any of my children’s observations with her.

“I worry about Plafe and Moo, Prasanna” (Amelia). “Why do you say that”, I asked. “I cuddle these children and I protect them. But the outside world is cruel. I know it is different out there. I am from that world Prasanna. I am white, like you say. I grew up in a suburb with many cultures. I used to bring home all sorts of friends from varied backgrounds. My mum and dad were okay with it. But you should have heard my grandpa, grandma and other relatives. They say terrible things against people of colour. I just bend my head down and am too scared to say anything. Can’t they realise we are all Australians? We first had Sri Lankans and then Indians, they were slowly seen as similar to us and then they were not a problem. Now there are Sudanese and Somalians and that seems to bother everyone, they are right in front of their faces, dark as, and so they don’t know how to cope” (Amelia). “Amelia, Seaweed still says that she doesn’t like being brown and that worries me” I said. “I know, I am shocked” (Jan). “We have to do something, I’ll have a think” (Amelia). (N: 11/06/10-g)

Amelia opened the conversation by talking about Plafe (4 year old Indian Australian boy) and Moo (3 year old, Indian Australian girl), my study’s focus children. She ‘spoke’ as an ‘Australian speaker’, by colouring her world, the socio-political context of Australia. She felt the need to protect them, because she felt her ‘white world’ was cruel. I again observed how our conversations that started with our observations of Plafe and Moo got diverted to ‘speak’ about ‘Australian’ by ‘Australian speaker’. As she continued she shaped the complex(ion) of ‘Australian’ differently. As an ‘Australian speaker’, she too was committed in the subjectification of all individuals and migrant groups in Australia as ‘Australian’. An ideology, the re-ordering of all “ethnic groups” as ‘Australian’ with “new nationalism” has been perpetuated since Australia’s multiculturalism was proclaimed by Grassby in 1973. However, she also spoke about the inability of ‘white Australian’ subjects to accept people of colour as ‘Australian’, and how her own family’s acceptance of ‘darkness’ as ‘Australian’. Therefore, rather than expecting those from outside to engage with what was
already here, she challenged what was already here as an insider, in order to engage with those outside.

When Jan and I shared our observations of Seaweed (Indian Australian girl, 3 yrs), Amelia listened to this with intentions of acting against Seaweed’s dislike of her own brown skin. I shared my personal experiences with complex(ion) in Australia, as she shared hers. I felt at ease with Amelia, and being a postcolonial subject, I still saw her colour and her subjectivity as, ‘white Anglo-Australian’. Yet, I also observed how she ‘spoke’ by shaping the limitations of this identity in its current form. She wanted to reconceptualise this identity with ‘difference’, and not as it was currently in operation. Without disengaging from the ideological constructions of ‘Australian’, she set out to change who was regarded as ‘Australian’.

Later, Amelia asked, “Prasanna, can you write up a newsletter for families and we will use EYLF as a reason for making family books, and that way children will see the diversity in families. Because we have it here in our group, we are all different. I will start this by describing my family history, not as just Australians, but as you say, white Anglo Australians and how we came here many generations ago. Otherwise families will just write about like ‘normal’ (using her fingers as quotation marks) family” (Amelia). “I want to write it down, white Anglo Australians. I thought they were Australians” (Jan). (N: 15/06/10-k)

The action that Amelia decided to take still focused on ‘Australian’, however, she decided to use EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) as an excuse to reconceptualise what currently is ‘Australian’. This ‘Australian speaker’ did not think of herself as ‘just Australian’, and therefore, without being confronted, she used this opportunity to unpack the history of this identity. As she established ‘difference’ in all groups, she included ‘Australian’ as a group amongst the migrant groups, without erasing its origin. Thus, to make family books that showed difference in all of us, she connected with her history, her history of coming from a distant land, by naming her group as ‘white Anglo-Australian’, like any other migrant groups that come to Australia to settle. Thus, as an ‘Australian speaker’, she ‘Othered’ and shaped this identity with its history and collaboration, and opened the identity of ‘Australian’ to be contested.

I wondered about our subjectivities, as Amelia and I shared our personal stories with our complex(ion). By diluting the discourse of Orientalism (Said, 1978), the stringent dichotomy ‘coloniser/colonised’ we challenged dominance. I didn’t feel compelled to become like her in order to engage in activism. I could not help but compare Amelia with Cathy, Gina, Katherine and Katrina. She did not take her ‘Australian’ identity for granted,
as she discussed how this had resulted in discriminating people of colour outside the identity of ‘Australian’; she did not feel confronted to seek what it is to be an ‘Australian’; she still spoke within the ideological constructions of ‘Australian’, as an ‘Australian’, committed not just to this identity, but to all groups within Australia to be accepted as ‘Australian’ by all Australians. Pang (2001), and Grant and Sleeter (2007) recommend critical exploration of ‘white’ privileges with families, children and colleagues at the educational settings, especially in countries such as, America, Australia and New Zealand, and urge ‘white’ individuals to engage in activism to bring about equity. Aveling (2002) too recognised “race cognisant” participants in Australia, as they engaged with information that was confrontational and wanted to explore issues of racism and ‘white dominance’ although it was difficult. After we shared my Ganga-the data, what emerged were not silenced questions, but collaborative action.

A few weeks later, “What does Katrina (white Anglo Australian staff) know about living in this white world? She is white and lives in this white world, but for children like Moo and Seaweed what they feel and go through day after day is a reality. I hope we are able to continue to work on skin colours consistently even after you leave” (Amelia, white Anglo Australian staff). (N: 16/07/10-d)

I could not understand Amelia, as at that time I wondered why she was talking about my exit, when we had till the end of the year. Amelia and I parted, and my postcolonial voice became suppressed by my colonised voice again, as I was prompted to list my key understandings from ‘Othering’.

- Australian multiculturalism promotes the acceptance of cultural diversity, by simultaneously promoting a strong commitment to the maintenance of ‘Australian’ identity. However, at the time of its conception, because the nation and its national identity was owned and ‘Othered’ by ‘white Anglo-Australian’ individuals, this image still remained in the minds of ‘Australian’ subjects.
- Being strongly conceptualised and etched as a specific image, this, unspecified ideological category ‘Australian’ although abstract (Althusser, 2008), played on the minds of ‘Australian speakers’, and they shaped their subjectivity in particular ways, by ‘Othering’ this identity.
- The ‘Australian speakers, either guarded and protected this ideological image as it was ‘spoken’ and by whom it was ‘spoken’ at the time of its conception, or they opened this up for contention. Thus, the identity was shaped as either ‘incontestable’ or ‘contestable’.
The ‘Othering’ of ‘Australian’ identity when shaped as incontestable, was taken for granted by the ‘Australian speakers’ and anything or anyone that disrupted this image was seen as being confronting. Therefore, all challenges and challengers were seen outside what was ‘Australian’. Yet, they openly asserted its concrete presence, with visions of uniqueness and perfection, and regarded its influence on all individuals as being imperative for our wellbeing. Or, they acknowledged its presence with visions of emptiness and boredom, and yet, maintained and guarded this monotony, and thereby disregarded its influence on all individuals. Therefore, all cultural enactments, and individuals who practised cultures outside what was considered as ‘Australian’, were also termed as ‘not Australian’ or ‘different’.

The ‘Othering’ of ‘Australian’ identity when shaped as contestable, its presence was challenged by the ‘Australian speaker’ by acknowledging how its histories still influenced all individuals resulting in inequities and exclusion within Australia, and particularly in early childhood settings.

“Difference” is critical in the construction of one’s identity, as when we say who we are, we are also saying who we are not (Hall, 2003). My Ganga-the data along this course in my previous analysis and discussion chapters 4 and 5, surface that we enacted our boundary/cultural/ethnic/’race’, as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’.

With regards to chapter 7, the ideological ‘Australian’ influenced the categorical behaviour of ‘Australian’ and this became the nucleus of all our cultural enactments, as repeatedly through ‘Othering’ all our enactments were pulled towards this reference point the ‘Othered Australian’.

My postcolonial Ganga emerged: my critical resurgence and resistance

My Ganga-the data, and I tried, yet the ideology ‘Australian’, subjectified ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ cultural enactments. My Ganga clarified to me that the identity of ‘Australian’ was still moderated by ‘white Anglo Saxon’ boundary (image/value/culture), and therefore, all those who subscribed to being and becoming an ‘Australian’ subject, operated as and with this ‘white Anglo Australian’ boundary. As Arber, (1999), Aveling, (2002), Tavan (2004) and Leeman and Reid (2006) argued, I acknowledged that current Australian multiculturalism was unable to combat the centralisation of ‘white Anglo Saxon, English speaking’ image as ‘Australian’ with the rest of the groups seen as ‘other’. However, what I also identified was, not all of us reinforced this ideology. In the above, Amelia as ‘Australian’ subject and I as ‘not Australian’ subject resisted subscribing to this
image. As Spears (1997) and Elliot (2007) argue, due to the reciprocal relationship between individual and social structures, individuals have the power to challenge ideological conceptions of identities. Therefore, I revived my tryst with my Ganga, not to obliterate the ideological ‘Australian’ but to engage in ways of transforming identities, for all colours and cultures to be equitably enacted in Australia. I felt compelled to do so, especially in early childhood settings, due to what I gathered from Ganga, her streams, her courses and her data till now.

I briefly drew the following conclusions about how we as, early childhood teachers/staff ‘spoke’ through the ideology ‘Australian’, and contributed to children’s constructions of binaries. Children 3-4 years of age, frequently categorised the collective and personal identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ based on colour, language and nationality and moreover used these attributes to conceptualise binary constructions of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. Most early childhood practitioners/staff were unable to challenge children’s binary constructions of identity groups, and moreover being influenced by ideologies that perpetuated such conceptions, they ‘spoke’ and propagated narrow constructions of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ identities. It resulted in a desire to become ‘Australian’ in most children and adults who were seen as ‘not Australian’. This desire was fulfilled either by silencing who they were publically or by distancing ‘self’ from their own cultural group, by gravitating towards what was conceptualised as ‘Australian’. Sometimes the ‘not Australian’ children also chose to distance ‘self’ from the national identity, with feelings of incompatibility with this identity. As adults, and as early childhood practitioners/staff, we were all unable to support the cultural identities of all children to be developed outside such binary conceptions, due to our inability to challenge the ideological ‘Australian’. As Kowalski (2007) highlights our behaviour was influencing young children’s attitude towards the groups of ‘self’ and ‘other’ (‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’).

However, I also identified resistance to ideologies in some, and these paved ways to enable many cultural practices to become visible and be heard within what is ‘Australian’, and not outside this identity. Therefore, I understood that one of the ways to enable all cultures to be heard and seen was to reconceptualise what is ‘Australian’, as multiple. My silenced question that emerged from above is as follows.

- How did the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily cultural practices of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ subjects in Australia?

I share my subjective, silenced voice before I involve in inquiring the above.
My postcolonial, coloured ideological subjectivity

This particular stage of analysis and discussion brought to surface my subjectivity, my ideological commitment, whose presence I had tried to suppress in the name of decolonisation. I therefore, first tussle with my ideological commitment.

~ I am a postcolonial subject, for whom decolonisation is impossible because of my commitment to acknowledge and challenge colonial dominance. The effects of colonialism are still within and without, and therefore, I have the propensity to colonise, as much as challenge colonialism. Denying this hurts me and hurts those with whom I interact.

~ If I rationalise my interactions with my postcolonial vision, I engage with subjects with my postcolonial subjectivity. I regard them as colonisers and the colonised. This hurts, but at the same time it also liberates me and those I engage with. Who gets hurt or liberated depends on our subjective affiliations to colonialism.

~ I am also a coloured subject, whose embodied ‘brownness’ is a reality, that still is influenced by ideological constructions attached to one’s skin colour. The effects of my ‘brownness’ are still within and without. Denying my ‘brownness’ and the experiences inflicted on this embodied subjectivity hurts me, hurts those who are coloured and those who are ‘white’.

~ If I rationalise my interactions with my ‘coloured’ vision, I engage with subjects with my ‘coloured’ subjectivity. I regard them as ‘brown’ and ‘white’. This hurts, but at the same time it liberates me and those I engage with. Who gets hurt or liberated depends on our subjective affiliations to our ‘colour’.

Thus, I came to realise that the only way to resist dominance, colonial and ‘race’ ideologies was to challenge these by acknowledging its presence and consistently work with those who were willing to do the same, and I set out to find means of resistance by unmasking my ideology, my critical postcolonial stance. I now understand that it is futile to believe that decolonisation was possible for me, as Loomba (2005) aptly comments postcolonialism does not arise out of vacuum, but is a presence that stems from colonialism. I accepted my Ganga, in all her forms and voices, as I realised being postcolonial is being colonised yet decolonised, and being colonial yet anti-colonial, it is embracing “hybridity” to purposefully work against colonial dominance (Bhabha, 1994, 1996). With my postcolonial Ganga’s voice, I united with many who have done the same, to shoot from and shoot at colonial dominance.
Weedon (1987) specifically recommends the use of Foucault’s form of discourse analysis to identify and resist dominance. I felt one way of resisting ideologies was to identify how ideologies regarding cultural identities in Australia, permeated our daily practices in early childhood settings. Ideologies are abstract and they require subjects’ commitment and reinforcement of categorical prescriptions (Althusser, 2008). Institutional ideologies are perpetuated by subjects through their subjective discursive practices (Mills, 2004; Gee, 2010). I therefore decided to unravel the relationship between ideologies, discourses, and daily practices by seeking the support of poststructural feminist method of discourse analysis and postcolonial theories, and my Ganga again. I would like to briefly touch upon the relationship between ideology and discourses, as this is regarded as the factor that mediates daily identity behaviours of individuals by the following authors (see Weedon, 1987; Fairclough, 1992; Halls, 2003; Loomba, 2005; Gee, 2010).

**Ideologies** are impotent on their own, as they need committed subjects who are willing to mediate and mobilise these categorical behaviour as a part of their daily lives (Althusser, 2008). Ideologies are symbolically propagated via discourses (Wodak, 2001), and discourse is a product of ideology (Locke, 2004).

**Discourses** are mental identity maps, as they offer individuals, specific ways of thinking, being and acting to perform a specific subjectivity everyday (Weedon, 1987; Gee, 2010). Discourses need subjects to embrace them to realise their subjectivity or their categorical identity (Weedon, 1987). Weedon (1987) and Blaise (2005b) add that although there are many ways of enacting a particular subjectivity, only some are socio-contextually and structurally approved and those that are approved are dominant and powerful, and those outside such approval are punished and sanctioned.

~ My analytical discussions above outlined how the ideological structures influenced the cultural enactments all individuals, and particularly those of ‘Australian’ subjects. This resulted in not just binary constructions of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ which are ruinous (Connolly, 2008; Davies, 2008), it resulted in inequitable cultural enactments by all groups. Spears (1997) argues that as much as individuals are influenced by structural ideologies, individuals create social structures, therefore they can either choose to reinforce or resist structures. If ideologically driven categorical behaviour can be reinforced or resisted by individuals, and if the daily transmission of ideologies by individuals is via discourses, I concluded that identifying and analysing discourses that reinforce and resist enables me to engage with possibilities of equitable cultural practices by all groups in early childhood settings.
Reinvigorated with my postcolonial voice and those of many others, my silenced question and my research question, I navigate to my next chapter to discuss how I transformed and was transformed by my Ganga’s final course of postcolonial resistance.
Chapter 8

‘Speaking’ boundary identities as Ganga

I now navigate my Ganga-the data through her final course, her poststructural feminist, postcolonial theoretical combination to surface the possibilities of critical cultural engagement in Australian early childhood settings. I trace the origin of Ganga’s quest, my study before I go further.

~ My study’s key purpose was to engage with the complexities of cultural identity enactments to bring about equitable practices of all cultures, as it was outlined that current multicultural practices had resulted in the construction of migrants and indigenous Australians as “other”, around the central, unified image of ‘Australian’ (Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006). The discussions stemming from the navigation of Ganga’s first course brought forth that our enactments of cultural identities in early childhood settings were invariably tied to the process of language based ‘othering’, that created ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ boundary identities, and the ‘Othering’ by ‘Australian speakers’ was central to our enactments.

~ Navigating Ganga’s second course revealed that the Australian political structures in order to “manage” (Stokes, 1997) its cultural diversity, with the use of language, aimed to create a unified identity for “all Australians”, and for “all Australians” to be committed to the upkeep and maintenance of the nation and the national subject (Grassby, 1973; Commonwealth of Australia, 1999; 2003). However, it has been underlined by several authors that the current multicultural policies have not disrupted the identity of ‘Australian’ defined in terms of ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ culture, and therefore remnants of racist ideologies, still operate within the society of Australia (Stratton and Ang, 1998; Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004; Holmes et al, 2007). This course specifically surfaced the ‘Australian speakers’, who were ideologically subjectified, ‘Othered’ or shaped the identity of ‘Australian’ in particular ways. I recognised that the ‘Othering’ by most ‘Australian speakers’ still epitomised the image of ‘white Anglo Saxon, English speaking Australian’ as the identity of ‘Australian’.

~ The ideologically backed and committed ‘Australian’ subjects not only controlled the categorical behaviour of ‘Australian’ but also those of ‘not Australian’, with their quest to maintain the identity of ‘Australian’ as it was. The ‘not Australian’ subjects, children and adults alike responded by modifying their own behaviour to reflect their closeness to this identity ‘Australian’. Therefore, I concluded that the multicultural policies adversely
affected the equitable practices of all cultures, and Holmes et al (2007) suggest equity and social justice can prevail only when both national and migrant identities are transformed. I now introduce my third question, and I also transform and split this question into two. I address the first part of this question in this chapter and the next in my following chapter 9.

~ How can they (Australian/not Australian) be transformed?
~ To reshape (contest) identities in othered (othered) voices?

In order to initiate this transformation of both ‘Australian’ (national) and ‘not Australian’ (coloured/indigenous/migrant) identities, I sought the support of poststructural feminist theories, postcolonial theories, and critical race theories. In the following, I string their role in transforming both categorical identities to engage in my final stage of analysis.

**Poststructural feminist theory**

I have used the key concepts of this theory as the foundation of my analysis, and I have predominantly used the work of Weedon (1987). I summarise the key concepts and justify their use as follows, for the very last time in my postcolonial, yet colonised voice.

**Material effects**, as Weedon (1987) and Blaise (2005b) observe are concrete and are directly connected to our daily realities. Material effects are directly related to discourses, as these are the daily realities that convey the subjectivity from which that discursive language statement is delivered (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2010). Strategies work closely with specific discourses to realise specific material effects (Graham, 2005), because they determine the purpose of the statement, their subjective identity and what material effects are realisable by that discursive practice.

~ I understand from above that material effects are central to that subjective identity, as it is directly related to what we can attain at that particular moment. Therefore, identifying and naming material effects enables me to uncover the purpose of specific discourses and their subjective relationship to that identity, and what they choose to achieve or relinquish by discursively practising that specific subjective disposition.

**Strategies** uphold discourses, as discourses are strategically interdependent, and strategies operate together, change with context and time to maintain particular material effects (Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 2003). Strategies constitute language statements, actions and silences, thus discursive and non-discursive constraints (Fairclough, 1992), and sets of strategies across varied faculties operate in union to realise the desired material effect. Foucault (1977) specifically talks about “tools and methods”, which I regard as strategies,
or the constituents that unite to enable certain ideas or “knowledge”, which to me is the
identity of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ become more valid.

That is to say there may be ‘knowledge’ of the body that is not exactly the science of its
functioning.……Of course this technology is diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous, systematic
discourse; it is often made up of bits and pieces; it implements a disparate set of tools and
methods.…. Moreover, it cannot be localized in a particular type of institution or state
apparatus.

(Foucault, 1977, p. 16)

~ Strategies aid particular discursive practices, and if strategies encompass actions and
silences, and change with context, it is only through the identification and naming of
strategies I can target how specific discourses are strategically supported. The recognition
and naming sets of strategies is critical to discussions on how strategies are mutually
supportive and morph contextually, especially when dominant discourses are challenged for
change.

**Discourse** is the link between ideologies and individuals, as discourses serve as maps
that inform how individuals should be, think and act particular subjectivities within a given
society (Weedon, 1987; Spears, 1997; Gee, 2010). Institutional discourses are language
statements or ideologies that interpellate subjects with information about how they should
be, think and act that categorical behaviour (Mills, 2004; Althusser, 2008), and enacting
institutionally backed discourses are dominant, as they endow the subject with realisable
normality and **power** (Weedon, 1987; Blaise, 2005b). However, discourses and language
also serve as points of disruption, and Foucault’s form of discourse analysis identifies
dominance and resistance at individual level to show the existence of alternatives (Weedon,
1987; Hall, 2003).

~ I had observed with my Ganga—the data that most ideologically committed
‘Australian’ subjects, through their categorical behaviour not only controlled the identity of
‘Australian’, but they also controlled those of ‘not Australian’ and those that challenged
ideological conceptions of that identity. This categorical behaviour is related to **power**, and
is supported by ideological structures, as commitment and loyalty to the nation and national
identity should be the core aspiration of “all Australians” (Commonwealth of Australia,
1999, 2003). I also recognised that there were some who chose to challenge this ideology in
both groups. Therefore, the use of Foucault’s form of discourse analysis, as Weedon (1987)
suggests enables me to identify how cultural identity enactments are reinforced and resisted
by individuals, and more specifically recognise strategies that create possibilities for challenge and change.

I make meaning of the above to further release my postcolonial voice as follows. **Ideologies** that prescribe categorical identity behaviours are mobilised by subjects via **discursive practices**, and are upheld by **strategies** that have the propensity to change contextually in order to realise certain **material effects** by individuals. As all these elements are closely linked, change in discursive practice can be initiated by changing material effects. However, to change material effects one needs to recognise how discourses are attached to power, and how this is made attainable by specific strategies.

**Postcolonial theory**

I have already discussed the influence of colonialism and ‘whiteness’ in the construction and conceptualisation of Australia and ‘Australian’ in chapter 2 and 7. I would like to begin with how Loomba (2005) regards anyone who challenges dominance as a postcolonial subject, and she recommends this broader understanding to act against any form of dominant ideologies, including ‘race’, culture, class and caste. Using postcolonial concepts enables me to work against not just colonial dominance, but act against the dominant ideologies that controlled the boundary (cultural/ethno-linguistic/religious/’race’) enactments of all individuals and groups. Postcolonial theories allow me to identify how the statements attribute and represent the subjective categories discursively, and it allows me to interpret the realisable material effects, by relating to its situated meanings. I summarise and list the key postcolonial concepts and their relevance in my Ganga’s final course.

The process of ‘othering’ is central in the creation of dichotomous, hierarchical relationship between the coloniser, ‘Us’ (Occident/Self) and the colonised ‘them’ (orient/other) (Said, 1978). This relationship centrally positioned the dominant group against all the rest, and in doing so characterised ‘Self’ as superior, capable, scientific, modern, independent, logical, rational and mature, while the ‘other’ as mysterious, exotic and suitable for display for their linguistic, cultural and religious personality (Said, 1978). Said adds, that the ‘other’ is also simultaneously regarded as child like, less developed, volatile, less orderly and hostile and therefore needs discipline and correction to be accepted by ‘Self’(1978).

~ The previous discussion chapters already surfaced the process of ‘othering’ not just in the categorisation of cultural groups as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, but also in the ideological construction of the national subject ‘Australian’, who in turn ‘Othered’ and
controlled the cultural expressions of all groups. Inquiring this process of ‘othering’ using the above postcolonial meanings enables me to recognise how groups are positioned, classified and ordered, and name the strategies used in creating and maintaining this hierarchical relationship. As I am still working with the same process of ‘othering’, I name the postcolonial form, which represents this strategic creation of binary constructions to control individuals and groups as, ‘othering’ with a slashed ‘ø’.

**Nation, nationalism and culture**, are social constructs that have become highly meaningful in western, modern societies (Taylor, 2004; Appadurai, 2006; Merenstein, 2008). According to Loomba (2005) nationalism has resulted in the perpetuation of dominance in current societies. Hage (2000) extends the role of this concept in creating the national subject with specific attributes, and thereby resulting in cultural dominance and disparities. Said (1994) amply adds that associating culture (specific values, tradition) to nation or state always becomes a differentiating factor that results in ‘us’ and ‘them’, the dichotomous ‘othering’.

~ My discussions till now had already brought forth the presence of nationalistic language not just in adults, but also in young children, as we categorised the attributes of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. This postcolonial concept enables me to acknowledge this ideological presence and its influence in the boundary identity enactments of subjects in my study.

**Resistance** is a concept recognised by latter postcolonial theorists, and this concept is especially useful when engaging with current postcolonial societies, as postcolonial present cannot be separated from the past (Loomba, 2005). I outlined in chapter 2, the different forms of resistance recognised by authors such as Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1998, 1999), Young (2001) and Prasad (2003), and I include these as I explain the elements of my analysis.

~ Although I spoke about the commitment of most ‘Australian speakers’ to ideological ‘Othering’, I also brought to note how this was resisted. Therefore, postcolonial approach to resistance enables me to critically recognise and name the specific strategies used by ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ subjects, to resist being dominated by nationalism and national subject, ‘Australian’.

**Critical race theory**

I reluctantly and hesitantly recognised the presence of ‘whiteness’ in my Ganga-the data. I could not ignore its presence especially when children used ‘whiteness’ to categorise
‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, and those who owned ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ remained silent, even as they heard such dichotomous constructions. Weedon (2004) regards such identity constructions that are stringently based on physical attributes as “everyday racism”. I then seriously sank my Ganga-the data into it. I use the concepts from critical race theory to talk about the dominance of ‘white’ subjects (the use of colour to exclude and include), and ‘whiteness’ (the ‘white culture’, everything that this signifies). Moreover, the framework that Frankenberg (1993) uses to analyse the construction of “whiteness”, provides me with a conceptual framework to recognise the varied discursive positions available for all subjects in relation to the national identity ‘Australian’, and the corresponding strategies and material effects. In the following, I weave Frankenberg’s (1993) conceptual framework into my analysis.

The three main categories that Frankenberg (1993) put forth are **essentialist racism, colour and power evasiveness and race cognisant**. Frankenberg specifically brings to note how women under each of these categories named and positioned themselves in relation to their ‘other’ and how particular discourses resulted in the perpetuation of dominance and resistance. Moreover, by linking “whiteness” with “Americanness”, the national identity, Frankenberg (1993) speaks against the non-examination of its role in marginalisation and exclusion of some individuals and cultural groups. Her framework provides a structure with which I could sketch patterns of discursive practices. I explain the concepts that I have used in my analysis, as I discuss the discursive elements later in this chapter.

**The transformation of boundary speakers into postcolonial subjects**

As I engaged with Ganga-the data repeatedly, the patterns became laden with categorical behaviours of both ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ speakers. The categorical behaviour of ‘Australian speakers’ ranged from those that strongly essentialised, to those that evaded, to those that resisted what was ‘Australian’. Most of all, as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ boundary speakers, we all responded to the ideology ‘Australian’, therefore, we were all dominated or colonised by the ideological ‘Australian’, and especially “white Anglo-Saxon image” (Stratton & Ang, 1998; Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004; Leeman & Reid, 2006). The ‘Australian speakers’ colonised once by ideology, took control of this identity and in turn colonised ‘not Australian speakers’. Thus we were all colonised by the ideological ‘Australian’, and Holmes et al (2007) suggest I set out to transform both identities need to head towards social equity.

If ideologies colonised all boundary ‘speakers’ and if they are mobilised by subjects through our daily discursive practices of our subjective identities (Weedon, 1987; Gee,
unravelling boundary ‘speaks’ with my postcolonial combination of discourse analysis, can bring to light how ideologies affected and effected all our boundary enactments (cultural/ethno-linguistic/race’). This will enable me to identify how ideologies discursively permeated our daily practices in early childhood settings. To engage in discourse analysis I needed to transform boundary ‘speakers’ into subjects and I transform the boundary ‘speakers’ into postcolonial subjects. I had already discussed in detail in chapter 2, my struggle with using postcolonial and critical race theories, especially because they result in creating oppositional sets of subjects. I briefly discuss below why and how I reconciled to using subjective groups to talk about our subjective experiences, that were categorically (in)congruent.

~ Said’s (1987) Orientalism, has been acclaimed by many as the groundbreaking body of work that systematically underlined the ruins of colonialism on the colonised. However, it has been criticised for its use of stringent dichotomies, the ‘coloniser/Self’ and the ‘colonised/other’, and that it fails to recognise resistance that was present and that still is evident in both groups (Prasad, 2003). Gunaratnam (2003) states, it is important to recognise and discuss the disparities in the daily experiences of subjective groups. However, Kumar (2000) argues that holding any such binary visions, “One” and “other”, only reinstates colonial hegemony. Therefore, to avoid the use of binaries that divides groups, I transform ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ subjects into postcolonial subjects, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ respectively. This represents the overlapping nature of these identities and recognises the presence of ideological ‘Othering’ in the discursive creation and responses of both subjects. Moreover, this transformation enables me to simplify the many complex layers of our identity for my analytical purpose, and yet allow me not to stereotype individuals and groups, as ‘white Australian’ and ‘coloured migrants’, as there were differences between and across individuals in groups. Thus, I am able to analyse the subjectivity that particular statement signifies at that moment, and the material effect that it offers for the subject, in their subjective category.

~ Frankenberg’s (1993) analysis of discourses of “whiteness” offers a pertinent base to recognise and analyse the discursive practices of the dominant group, which is ‘Other Australian’, in my case. As she combines “whiteness” with “Americanness”, I am able to use her theories to recognise the significance of ‘whiteness’ in constructing ‘Australian’ identity. However, as a ‘coloured not Australian’, I did not want to just analyse my ‘other’, the ‘white Australian’, as I believed I would then be engaging in colonial discourses of dominance, in which the ‘Self’ constantly scrutinised and monitored the ‘other’ for purposes
of management and intervention. Therefore, I identified and included a parallel set of discourses practised by ‘othered Australian’, my own group.

Thus, in my discourse analysis, ‘Other Australians’ are those subjects, who speak as ‘Australian’ with boundaries of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’, and ‘othered Australians’ are those subjects who are differentiated and ‘othered’ by boundaries of ‘colour’ and ‘culture’. I am an ‘othered Australian’, as I was told by ‘Other Australian’ children that I have brown skin, therefore I am ‘not Australian’, and ‘Other Australian’ staff have either directly remarked that I am a minority for which Australia does not have to change, or have indirectly excluded my cultural practice as being rich in colour, food and celebration in comparison to what was ‘Australian’. In order to include the analysis of my discursive practice and how I interacted with the ideology, ‘Australian’, I split and name myself Ganga. This conversion of all individuals into postcolonial subjects enables me to distance my emotions and feelings during the process of analytical discussion. Later, speaking with my postcolonial Ganga particularly enables me to distance myself and speak about my own silences, as she interrupts my contextual discursive decisions, providing postcolonial prompts as I shift to face daily realities. My Ganga is that postcolonial ‘othered’ inner voice, and in the following I discuss how I rekindled Ganga-in all her forms with this transformation.

**Postcolonial discourse analysis of boundary subjectivities**

Having transformed all the boundary ‘speakers’ into postcolonial subjects, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’, I now engaged with the rekindling process of postcolonial discourse analysis of boundary subjectivities. Foucault (1972) defines discourse as follows,

“We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated......it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined”.

(Foucault, 1972, p. 131)

Bearing in mind that language is still central to all identity enactments (Weedon, 1987; Gee, 2010), I began rekindling my Ganga-the data by choosing “group of statements” (Foucault, 1972), which I recognised as representing the subject’s discursive practice, and I teased these with the support of Graham (2005) as follows.
~ How does the statement function? How does it list, classify and order (in other words, ‘other’)?
~ What does it offer the speaker, what and who does it privilege and what and who does it silence?

With the above guiding my understandings of subjective discursive expressions, and my repeated engagement with this inquiring process, patterns of categorical behaviours that were specifically connected to postcolonial subjective dispositions of subjects became evident. I now understood what Foucault meant by “conditions of existence” (Foucault, 1972), as I now deciphered that these were mutually bound circumstances strategically formed and practised by subjects to realise particular effects. These patterns that reflected all these networks were tangled and my colonised voice again prompted me to formulate rows and columns to neatly lay out my complexities, and I strategically used this voice to ultimately realise my postcolonial emancipation. I grouped, tabulated and organised these with headings, discourses, strategies and material effects for systematic analysis as follows.

Table 3: Postcolonial discursive elements – Other Australian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary defending</td>
<td>Othering</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hierarchical othering</td>
<td>Self-proliferation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nationalising</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theorising</td>
<td>Insulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sanctioning</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary denying</td>
<td>Othering</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Othering</td>
<td>Self-Proliferation</td>
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<td>Nationalising</td>
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<td>Theorising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eluding</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limiting</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary diffusing</td>
<td>Critical Othering</td>
<td>Diffused Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical othering</td>
<td>Self-Narration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risking</td>
<td>Critical cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resisting</td>
<td>Critical action</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Critical recognising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Postcolonial discursive elements – othered Australian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boundary committing</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>subjective power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-regulating</td>
<td>self-alienation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gravitating</td>
<td>submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boundary conscious</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>subjective power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-regulating</td>
<td>self-narration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resisting</td>
<td>exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical othering</td>
<td>regulated-acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical recognising</td>
<td>suppression</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>silencing</td>
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<tr>
<td>boundary diffusing (ø)</td>
<td>risking</td>
<td>voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resisting</td>
<td>self-narration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical othering</td>
<td>critical cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical recognising</td>
<td>critical action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this stage, I used spreadsheet application to tabulate, categorise, analyse and interpret data. I used upper case to represent the discursive elements of ‘Other Australian’ and lower case for ‘othered Australian’. I used the statements from the 2nd stage of analysis, and I re-analysed these as discursive statements with the tables below. Although our discourses and subjectivities intricately tangled with each other, the above table enabled me to organise my analysis in a simplified manner.

In what follows, I illustrate how I discursively analysed the contestation of the identity ‘Australian’ by ‘Other Australian’, and my voices are guided by my postcolonial stance.

Contesting ‘Australian’ with ‘Other Australian’ discourses

The following set of discourses and their corresponding elements relate to how the identity ‘Australian’ was contested by ‘Other Australian’. The postcolonial subject ‘Other Australian’ speaks as an Australian, for, about ‘Australian’ and for the nation Australia. The three main categories of subjective discursive practices of ‘Other Australian’ are Boundary defending, Boundary denying, and Boundary diffusing. Many of the strategies and material effects are common to two discursive dispositions, yet they are also different in how they result in different material effects when enacted within particular conditions. Statement within particular discourses need not necessarily link with all strategies and
material effects of that discursive practice. I now unpack each of the discursive practice, their elements followed with an example that illustrates my analytical interpretation.

I begin with Boundary defending discourse of ‘Other Australian’.

**Table 5: Boundary defending ‘Other Australian’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
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<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Sanctioning</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Boundary defending** – In this discourse the subject ‘Other Australian’ speaks as, for and about the nation and its national identity ‘Australian’, and overtly expresses her/is commitment to maintain this. As discussed in chapter 6 and 7, this is a discourse supported by political structures of Australia and is seen as desirable by all individuals living in Australia. I list and explain the strategies that aid in practising this Boundary defending discourse. It resembles “Essentialist racism” (Frankenberg, 1999).

**Strategies that support the discourse of Boundary defending**

**Othering** – strategy used by ‘Other Australian’ to take ownership and control, define (list, categorise, organise, Graham, 2005) the identity of ‘Australian’, what the nation and the national subject stands for. It essentialises ‘Self’, as being superior, and as an attribute that all individuals and groups should aspire to be and become. This strategy closely resembles the colonial discourse ‘othering’ (Said, 1978), used by the colonisers to assert their superiority and maintain control over colonised peoples and lands.

**Hierarchical othering** – this strategy supports the one above, and is used to talk about and exclude ‘other’ (ethno-linguistic, religious groups) from gaining access to what is claimed to be ‘Australian’, by characterising these groups as dangerous and a threat to national solidarity. Said (1978) comments, the establishment of hierarchies between ‘Self’ and ‘other’ with the maintenance of ‘other’ as inferior, dangerous and needing correction, supports not just the preservation of ‘Self’ but also justifies the act of dominance, intervention and correction.

**Nationalising** – With the use of this strategy, ‘Other Australian’ is able to position ‘Self’ as the representative of the national subject, using which recategorises individuals and groups
to be “not quite but the same as Self” (Arber, 1999). The subject is able to dominate by claiming ownership of the nation and its identity unattached to any specific origin and history. Authors regard these as acts of colonialism that perpetuates dominance by the conceptualisation of a national subject (Young, 1995; Hage, 2000; Loomba, 2005; Appadurai, 2006).

**Theorising** – the ‘Other Australian’ uses early childhood theories, media or personal and public experiences to justify their stance. This enables the subject to avert and silence challenges that can initiate change in the current understandings and practices prevalent in that context. This strategy in combination with western ideologies of individualism, humanism (White, 2002), is quite effective especially in early childhood settings, as early childhood is a field dominated by developmental psychology (Grieshaber, 2001). This strategy also enables the ‘Other Australian’ to discard the impact of colonisation, and the subject is able to retain possession and control of the national identity by remaining anonymous, as ‘Australian’.

**Sanctioning** – the strategy punishes any act or presence of any elements that disrupt the ideologies, attitudes and understandings of nation and national identity, ‘Australian’. As an ultimate strategy, this is used to silence and overcome alternative practices. In the following, I list and explain the material effects that are realised by this discursive practice.

**Material effects realised by Boundary defending discursive practice**

**Power** – is a crucial and central material effect, which according to the following authors (see Foucault, 1972, 1977, 2010; Weedon, 1987; Fairclough, 1992; Loomba, 2005) the driving factor of ‘Other Australian’s’ statements and strategies. Power is not about strength, but it is to do with how close one’s categorical behaviour is, in relation to institutionally approved discursive practice. Power enables ‘Other Australian’ not only to realise the following material effects, but to feel in control and be satisfied in fulfilling their subjective role.

**Self-proliferation** – the ability to propagate and recruit loyal subjects due to “colonial ambivalence” (Bhabha, 1994), as ‘Self’ engages in training the deficient ‘other’ to become as close as ‘Self’. Having subjectified the ‘othered Australian’ as ‘not as Australian as’, this effect is hegemonically realised, especially through acts of nationalising and hierarchical othering, thus triggering aspirations in ‘othered’ to become the national subject.

**Ownership** – nationalising, theorising and Othering strategies enable the ‘Other Australian’ to act as an ideological agent, and claim ownership of land and peoples, keeping absolute control of the categorical behaviour of all individuals and groups and the nation.

**Insulation** – this material effect is realised by Theorising and Sanctioning as the ‘Other
Australian’ protects ‘Self’ from being influenced by ‘othered Australian’ or anything seen as a challenge to the realisation of power.

Legitimation – this material effect reifies the control and maintenance of the nation, the national identity and the privileges that this subjective position offers. Table 6 below illustrates how I analysed and interpreted Boundary defending discourse.

Table 6: Contesting ‘Australian’ with Boundary defending discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There is nothing wrong with Australia. It is like an umbrella. There, Remi is Indian, she is Sri Lankan and they are as Australian as I am. You know Remi came here with so little confidence and I made her get her diploma and she is much better than before. I think we are all the same” (Katrina)</td>
<td>(S) - Othering characterises the nation as perfect (nothing wrong). Speaks as ‘Australian’ by nationalising ‘Self’ and the anonymous marking ‘Self’ as national subject. Commitment to national identity is structurally backed – dominant. (ME) – Power, Ownership, Insulation. Ability to control the image of Australia, ‘Othered’</td>
<td>Katrina - Other Australian</td>
<td>Boundary defending</td>
<td>Othering, Hierarchical othering, Nationalising, Theorising</td>
<td>Power, Self-proliferation, Ownership, Insulation, Legitimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(S) - Hierarchical othering</td>
<td>Remi othered Australian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ME) – Self-proliferation, Power, Theorising in the end with ‘we are all the same’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ME) – Legitimation and Insulation, Power, Ability to control, not just the subjects but the conversation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Everything that Katrina uttered, to me reflected her ‘Boundary Defending’ discourse. As Katrina spoke, I was making meaning of how she strategically engaged in ‘Othering’ the nation Australia as a symbol of shelter and protection, and at the same time nationalised ‘Self’ and compared her ‘Australianess’ with Remi. I felt this was now supported with subsidiary strategies of ‘Hierarchical othering’ and ‘Therorising’, as she described the ineptness in Remi that she could control and modify to produce colonial agents ‘sameness’. This ‘Other Australian’ effected ‘Ownership’ of the identity of nation and national subject; ‘Insulation’ by epitomising ‘Self’ and ‘Legitimation’ of her intervention and manipulation with ‘sameness’. What stood out for me was that she held on to that ‘Power’ of ‘Australianess’, and as I saw her ‘whiteness’. I thought you, Remi and I can never be the
same in Australia, and why should we be the same. As my thoughts were running, I heard Remi, “Yes, I was so scared and they kept telling me that I should study and I can do this and therefore I am a bit better now”. While internally I was discursively resisting Katrina’s dominance to find my ‘voice’, Remi was discursively ‘boundary committing’, as she was ‘self-othering, self-regulating and gravitating’ towards Katrina’s ‘Australianness’, to realise, ‘submission, self-correction’ and above all, ‘subjective-power’. Katrina’s immediate reply reflected the acceptance of Remi by ‘Other Australian’, and ‘Othering’ what was ‘Australian’, “See, I told you. Australia is like an umbrella we are happy together. We are okay, nothing needs changing”.

Based on my perception of what happened between Katrina and Remi, the key material effect realised from Boundary defending discourse of Katrina was ‘Power’. All strategies and material effects overtly contributed to retaining, maintaining and controlling power from speaking as ‘Australian’. As Katrina was ‘Boundary Defending’, resisting or reinforcing discourses were available for Remi and me as ‘othered Australian’. Yet, we chose our discourses according to the material effect we wanted to realise. Many more statements indicated the same, and as I was silently resisting, I felt that this ‘Power’ was fragile as its reliability was dependant on the listener’s reciprocal discourse.

My postcolonial mental image of what was happening, including my silence that stemmed, shifted the table used for analysis as follows.
In the following, I unpack the Boundary denying discourse of ‘Other Australian’.

Table 7: Boundary denying ‘Other Australian’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary denying</td>
<td>Othering</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Othering</td>
<td>Self-Proliferation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nationalising</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theorising</td>
<td>Insulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eluding</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limiting</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Boundary denying** - The subject ‘Other Australian’ speaks as and for the nation and national identity ‘Australian’, as in the one above. However, in this discursive practice, the subject does not centralise ‘Self’ as superior and anonymously tied to the national identity.
The subject, may name the origin of ‘Self’, yet, the ‘Other Australian’ through constant comparisons with ‘othered Australian’ not only projects ‘Self’ as bland and colourless, but the ‘other’ as possessing everything that is lacking in ‘Self’. Therefore, in many ways this discourse is comparable to the discourse of colonial dominance, as the ‘Self’ as national subject remains undisrupted, with the maintenance of ‘other’. As Said (1978) annotates in Orientalism, the ‘other’ is used for exhibition of religious, linguistic and cultural interest of ‘Self’. Frankenberg (1993) comments “Colour and power evasiveness” that encourages selective inclusion as the most prevalent multicultural practice noticeable in public discourses in America.

**Strategies that support the discourse of Boundary denying**

**Othering** – this strategy speaks and attributes the identity of ‘Australian’, but it maintains ‘Self’ with attributes of normality and casual presence, and not superiority. Therefore, does not overtly state that being and becoming the same as ‘Self’ is desirable, but positions and maintains groups and individuals as ‘Australian’, and ‘not Australian’ by distinguishing ‘difference’ in colour, culture and celebration and faith.

**othering** – unlike Hierarchical othering, the ‘Other Australian’ distinguishes and shows extreme desire for ‘othered Australian’, yet avoids the influence of ‘othered Australian’ on daily practices, by keeping this special and distant. This and the above strategies work together usually within a statement, and is able to control the ownership and maintenance of ‘Australian’ identity.

**Nationalising** – as recognised under Boundary defending.

**Theorising** – the ‘Other Australian’ may trace historical and personal events and the evidence of structural understandings in influencing the nation and national identity, however, does so without unpacking the privileges and the discrimination of the past. Therefore, this subject still avoids taking action against prejudice and injustice.

**Eluding** – the ‘Other Australian’ uses strategies such as, structural, spatial or temporal constraints to divert and avoid taking action that can result in changing current understandings about what and who is privileged to speak as and for ‘Australian’.

**Limiting** – used with strategies of eluding and othering, the ‘Other Australian’ is able to provide special days, space and specific times to “selectively engage” (Frankenberg, 1993) in celebrating the presence of ‘othered Australian’. This strategy enables ‘Other Australian’ to exhibit their commitment to diversity.
Material effects realised by Boundary denying discursive practice

**Power** – this subjective position of ‘Other Australian’ seems highly generous and accepting due to their repeated naming and negation of ‘Self’, with the acclamation of ‘othered Australian’. However, ‘Power’ is covertly realised by the very same strategies, as they still guarantee the subject invisible control and ownership of national identity and the nation, within the ideological discourse of “democratic multiculturalism” (Vickers, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006). The following material effects further guarantee the realisation of this ‘Power’.

**Self-Proliferation** – unlike Boundary defending, this material effect is covertly achieved by Othering and øthering strategies, as ‘othered Australian’ always feels different and outside what is ‘Australian’. Therefore, to be and become ‘Australian’, they resort to projecting the same neutrality and normality. Thus, ‘Other Australian’ is able to fortify their dominance and maintain control of cultural practices.

**Ownership** – as recognised under Boundary defending.

**Insulation** – as recognised under Boundary defending, and the realisation of Insulation is further guaranteed by Celebration and Avoidance.

**Legitimation** – as recognised under boundary defending.

**Celebration** – this effect is realised by strategies of øthering and Limiting, as the ‘Other Australian’ feels satisfied in their sporadic engagement with ‘difference’, and it also supports the above material effects.

**Avoidance** – Avoidance effects the subtle exclusion of anyone or any event that critically challenges the understanding and relevance of centralising national identity, as an unnamed, anonymous culture or tradition.

I mapped this discursive practice within tables as follows.
I was the listener, and as Gina was talking about the event I could find my postcolonial Ganga shifting between ‘othered’ discourses of ‘boundary conscious’ and ‘boundary diffusing’, which I talk about later. I will briefly go through my shifts to highlight the convenience of analysing individual statements, with columns and rows, but its inefficacy in portraying the total complexities embedded in discursive exchanges. As soon as I heard Gina saying that she has ‘nothing to talk about’, I wanted to scream, ‘you have everything, you have the ‘Power’; you are ‘Boundary denying’ the ‘Power’ of your ‘whiteness’’. I could sense that she was strategically ‘Othering’ her ‘whiteness’ as ‘nothing’, and by supporting this notion by ‘othering’ my colour, to maintain and legitimise her inaction and ‘Insulation’. Moreover, by ‘Theorising’ children’s actions and their comments as curiosity and less of an issue, the ‘Other Australian’ could realise ‘Avoidance’, and she was indirectly saying that if at all something needs to be done, it is your responsibility to act. I remained silent, as I was highly ‘boundary conscious’, I was an outsider encroaching in their space, and I valued her friendship and her acceptance of my presence, my ‘subjective power’ that I could realise by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“But it is difficult to talk about colour? If a child comes and asks me, why are you white, I wouldn’t know what to say. You say pigments and stuff about your skin when children ask you about colour, but what can we say, nothing. I remember, last year, you know the hip hop singer, Eminem; he sang this song with the word, Negro in it. That became the buzz word with all the boys in the group. They asked me what does Negro mean. I just said that it is a word used to call people who are dark and didn’t make a big issue about it, you know they are just curious. We had a boy who was dark as, and the rest of the boys started calling him Negro. Oh my god, we didn’t know what to do, we just were shocked and said don’t use that word here” (Gina)</td>
<td>(S) – othering, Eluding, Theorising, Othering by saying that Other is white and nothing, but other has everything, thus avoiding talking about coloured complexities with children. Theorising with children’s curiosity, and having established that Other cannot address colour earlier, not talking about it is legitimised, and insulation from changing practices is guaranteed. Power of ‘whiteness’ is left undisrupted, even when children were engaging in racist remarks, white silence is reified. Able to control future actions of Other and othered. (ME) – Power, Insulation, Avoidance Legitimation</td>
<td>Gina - Other Australian (Speaking with Ganga-othered Australian)</td>
<td>Boundary denying</td>
<td>Othering othering Nationalising Theorising Eluding Limiting</td>
<td>Power Self-Proliferation Ownership Insulation Legitimation Celebration Avoidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
my ‘regulated acceptance’. I chose against ‘resisting’ and ‘risking’ my study. I could sense my split, and my tension in choosing between the two available discourses. I chose to contribute to the maintenance and perpetuation of ‘white Power’.

In this discourse of ‘Other Australian’, the ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’ were not aggressively owned, guarded and controlled, they were maintained as benign, with ‘othered’ and ‘coloured’ subject as possessing everything. In this discourse ‘Power’ derived from the corresponding strategies and material effects were very subtle, as it was to do with covertly protecting the empowered of status of ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’ that were already in circulation, and guarding these from change.

My tensed shifts came to my mind, as I pushed the analysis table aside with my postcolonial image below.

Image 2: Contesting ‘Australian’ with Boundary denying discourse
Now I unpack Boundary diffusing discourse of ‘Other Australian’.

**Table 9: Boundary diffusing ‘Other Australian’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary diffusing</td>
<td>Critical Othering</td>
<td>Diffused Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical othering</td>
<td>Self-Narration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risking</td>
<td>Critical cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resisting</td>
<td>Critical action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical recognising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Boundary diffusing** – The Boundary diffusing discourse of ‘Other Australian’ is also about speaking as and for what is ‘Australian’, however, in this subjective position, the ‘Other Australian’, not only names the anonymous national identity, but critically examines its privileges, and its influence on current understandings and practices. The subject opens up conversations with ‘othered Australians’, within which personal narratives are shared to engage in seeking alternative understandings, to reconceptualise the identity of all individuals and groups. Frankenberg (1993) recalls the “Race cognisant white women” in her study, who engaged in conscious identity searching to question what “whiteness” and “Americanness” stood for. This is a collaborative discourse; therefore, it is available for ‘othered Australian’ too.

**Strategies that support the discourse of Boundary diffusing**

**Critical Othering** – unlike ‘Othering’, which also speaks as and for the identity ‘Australian’, this strategy is used by ‘Other Australian’ to name and recognise the ‘normalised’ identity ‘Australian’, its privileges and its role in discriminating ‘othered Australian’.

**Critical othering** – this strategy when used with critical Othering, recognises and names ‘othered Australian’ to identify inequities, and to speak and act against discrimination. Therefore, although it distinguishes and establishes ‘difference’ between ‘Self’ and ‘other’, unlike the colonial discourse this does not engage in centralisation of ‘Self’ and marginalisation of ‘other’ with notions of danger or exoticism.

**Risking** – becomes inevitable, as this subjective disposition is outside what is ideologically recommended and supported. Therefore, the subject risks being punished and excluded from structural power and position by structures and individuals committed to dominant discourses.
Resisting — the subject uses this strategy along with those above to speak and act against dominance, and therefore, collaborates and creates spaces to act with voices of ‘othered’.

Critical recognising — this strategy is similar to ‘Theorising’, which is used by the other two discourses above, however, the ‘Other Australian’ uses personal experiences, historical moments, media and structures to inform, speak about social issues and engage in critical action with ‘othered Australian’. Here, the subject acknowledges the structural power and privileges of her/is subjectivity, and therefore uses this strategically to act for social justice and equity.

Material effects realised by Boundary diffusing discursive practice

**Diffused Power** — the overarching material effect that the subject realises from this subjective, strategic disposition is the dissipation of power, ownership and control to reconstitute attitudes and understanding about nation and national identity.

**Self-Narration** — effects exchanges of stories and critical historical events to challenge dominance with ‘othered Australian’.

**Critical cognition** — another effect that stems from above enables rethinking attitudes and understandings with ‘othered Australian’ to reconceptualise and challenge current understandings about national identity and multicultural practices.

**Critical action** — becomes inevitable, as all of the above causes disruption and spaces for collaborative action that reorganises current identity practices, understandings and ultimately power.

I mapped this discursive practice as the sample from analysis below.

**Table 10: Contesting ‘Australian’ with Boundary diffusing discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I cuddle these children and I protect them. But the outside world is cruel. I know it is different out there. I am from that world Prasanna. I am white, like you say. I grew up in a suburb with many cultures. I used to bring home all sorts of friends from varied backgrounds. My mum and dad were okay with it. But you should have heard my grandpa,</td>
<td>(S) – Critical Othering, Critical othering, Critical recognising, as Amelia names ‘Self’, narrates and uses personal experience to identify and act against current prejudices about coloured people in Australia. Confronts what ‘Australian’.</td>
<td>Amelia – Other Australian</td>
<td>Boundary diffusing</td>
<td>Critical Othering Critical othering Resisting Critical recognising</td>
<td>Diffused Power Self-Narration Critical cognition Critical action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amelia shared her personal narrative and as she was talking as ‘Other Australian’, I focused on how she spoke about her ‘white world’ and how it privileged ‘whiteness’, through ‘Critical Othering’. She also simultaneously engaged in ‘Critical othering’ to express how this marginalised people of colour, and worried about what could be realised by ‘brown’ children in the group. Her particular understanding was linked to her personal experience, and it was this ‘Critical recognising’ that allowed her to share stories that led to Jan and I, ‘othered Australian’ share our personal stories and our observations of children. When we raised our concerns about Seaweed’s dislike for her ‘brown’ skin, we collaborated to engage in practices that could reconceptualise the identity of ‘Australian’. Thus, Amelia ‘Diffused power’ of ‘whiteness’ and allowed the ‘voice’ of ‘othered’ to be heard and result in Critical action.

I remembered yesterday’s conversation with Katrina, and I could not help but wonder that out of all the choices available for Amelia, she chose a marginal discourse. Amelia could have eluded the privileges of ‘whiteness’ with ‘Boundary denying’ discourse. Any of the dominant discourses would have resulted in Jan and I as ‘othered Australian’ to ‘suppress’ and ‘silence’ our observations and experiences of discrimination. Amelia was open to effecting the dispersal of privilege and ‘Power’ that she automatically possessed from being ‘white’ and ‘Australian’. Therefore, she made decisions with ‘othered Australian’ to change current practices and understandings in the community. This was a marginal discourse that ‘Diffused power’ owned and controlled by particular groups and individuals to resist ideological dominance.

With my postcolonial tussle, I transformed the analysis table with an image as follows.
The above analysis gave me an understanding of how ‘Other Australian’ subjects, discursively practised their varied subjective positions. While ‘Power’ was retained and reinforced by discourses of ‘Boundary defending’ and ‘Boundary denying’, ‘Power’ was dispersed and resisted by ‘Boundary diffusing’ discourse. However, I also understood that the material effects realised can vary with the subjective disposition of the audience, and the effects they desired through the enactment of that subjectivity.

In the following I present the discourses and the varied discursive elements using which we, as ‘othered Australian’ practised our subjectivity. The three main subjective dispositions that I recognised being practised by ‘othered Australian’ are **boundary committing, boundary conscious and boundary diffusing.** I have used lower case for all elements, as this identity is ‘othered’ or marginalised as ‘not Australian’, therefore, is unable to claim automatic ownership of the national identity. As acknowledged earlier, I
position my identity within this subjectivity, and I analyse my discursive practice, by taking
the identity of my Ganga.

I begin by unpacking boundary committing discourse.

Table 11: boundary committing ‘othered Australian’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boundary committing</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>subjective power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-regulating</td>
<td>self-alienation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gravitating</td>
<td>submission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**boundary committing** – We, as ‘othered Australian’ in this subjective disposition aspire to
be and become and accepted as ‘Australian’ by ‘Other Australian’, rather than choosing to
retain both identities or subvert both. Therefore, in many ways this subject is an upholder of
the institutional ideology, ‘Australian’, and is committed to the national identity
unquestioningly.

**Strategies that support the discourse of boundary diffusing**

**self-othering** – this strategy allows us to alienate ‘self’ from our cultural/ethno-linguistic
background, to become fully identified as the national subject. Therefore, in some cases, we
discard or talk about ‘self’ and our own group negatively to be accepted as ‘Other
Australian’.

**self-regulating** – the strategy supports the above, as we begin to distinguish the ‘difference’
established in ‘self’ by ‘Other Australian’, and erase those by adopting practices regarded as
‘Australian’.

**gravitating** – the key strategy that finally seals the movement of ‘othered’ towards the
dominant, as we see ‘self’ as ‘Other’, and fail to see otherwise. Epstein (2009) and Derman-
Sparks and Ramsay (2006) had noticed such behaviour in very young children from
minority groups in their studies.

**Material effects realised by boundary diffusing discursive practice**

**subjective power** – the key material effect realised by us, ‘othered Australian’ is
’subjective power’, as we feel that we have the power of owning and being accepted as a
loyal ‘Australian’ subject.

**self-alienation** – the self-othering and self-regulating strategies contribute towards the
realisation of being distant from our own collective identity, and gives us a feeling of being
‘Australian’.

**Submission** – we are highly grateful of being accepted as the national subject and become more committed to the nation and national identity by beginning to speak for and as ‘Australian’.

I show the mapping of this discursive practice with a sample from analysis below.

Table 12: Contesting ‘Australian’ with boundary committing discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You know I am not like her, I am Chinese, I am Chinese. Like I was already western before I came here. I was educated, I knew the language, as I was taught English in China and so I never was excluded here. I never felt left out in Australia. It helps if you are western, so that you are not excluded and you feel Aussie. I am different from other Chinese here. I am not like them because I am western. Not so traditional, that way I am not excluded” (Dora’s mum)</td>
<td>(S) – <em>self-othering, self-regulating, gravitating,</em> Separating ‘self’ from her group of origin, associating being educated with ‘western’, and how this is desirable to be and become the ‘Other’. Speaking words of ‘Other’, by <em>self-othering ‘Chinese’</em> as traditional, and she is ‘different’ from her own group, feeling Aussie. (ME) – <em>subjective power, self-alienation, submission</em> The subjective power of being accepted by ‘Other’ is realised along with the rest.</td>
<td>Dora’s mum - <em>othered</em> Australian</td>
<td>boundary committing</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>self-regulating gravitating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I felt that Dora’s mum had reconciled to accepting her ‘submission’ to effect ‘subjective power’ that she realised from being accepted by ‘Other Australian’ and feeling ‘Australian’.

I was not questioning how she practised being ‘Chinese’ in Australia, however, I was concerned with the way she ‘self-othered’ and distanced ‘self’ from her ethnic group by setting herself as being ‘different’ from the ‘traditional Chinese’. She was reinforcing ideological statements that regarded ‘migrant’ groups as traditional, against modern ‘Australian’, and was ‘boundary committing’ and ‘gravitating’ towards ‘Other Australian’.

The boundary committing discourse of ‘othered Australian’ subjects exhibits a condition of a well adjusted ‘Australian’, committed to upholding the national identity, with the key material effect realised from this discursive practice being ‘subjective power’. This is the power of being as close as possible to ‘Other Australian’, to become accepted as
‘Australian’. This is a dominant discourse for the ‘othered Australian’ subject, as the political structures of Australia expect such commitment especially from migrant groups.

The above was an exchange between us, ‘othered Australian’ subjects, and yet, we stood apart in our subjective responses. As she was talking, my postcolonial Ganga resisted the political structures that had covertly compelled her to think this was necessary to be accepted. Out of the three discourses available to us, at that time, Dora’s mum wanted to realise ‘subjective power’, whereas I was interpreting her discourse from my postcolonial discursive disposition that believed that she should feel strong in her ethnic origin. Even the choice of ‘Boundary conscious’ discourse was available for her, would to express her movement between ‘Chinese’ and ‘Australian’ boundaries. I understood that our response to that ideological ‘Australian’ was discursively different.

I revised my analysis table with my postcolonial image to visualise the discursive choices available for us.
In the following, I unpack the boundary conscious discourse of ‘othered Australian’. 

Table 13: boundary conscious ‘othered Australian’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>boundary conscious</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>subjective power</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-regulating</td>
<td>self-narration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resisting</td>
<td>exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical othering</td>
<td>regulated-acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical recognising</td>
<td>suppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>silencing</td>
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</table>

boundary conscious – With an awareness of being different and with a perception of what is ‘Australian’, we, as ‘othered Australian’ become acutely conscious of the attributes of ‘self’ in comparison to the nation and the power of ideological ‘Australian’. We either
remove ‘self’ from nation and discourses that attribute socio-contextual power as a sign of resistance, or suppress ‘self’ in the company of ‘Other Australian’. Therefore, this discourse does not result in distancing ‘self’ from our collective group, but we as ‘othered Australian’ are unable to challenge the power of ‘Other Australian’. We choose to publically display our commitment to the ideology, nation and national identity, although we believe otherwise amongst us.

Strategies that support the discourse of boundary conscious

self-othering – with this strategy the we constantly distinguish the attributes of ‘self’ being different to those of ‘Other Australian’, and unlike the above discourse we speak negatively of ‘Other Australian’, by always positioning ‘self’ outside what is ‘Australian’.

self-regulating – as in boundary committing, but by outwardly showing our adjustment and commitment to this nation and national identity, we privatise and reserve the practices of our group, rather than challenging what is ‘Australian’.

resisting – with a fear of dilution of our cultural practices, we as ‘othered Australian’ disengage from socio-political and public engagement, and most of all from owning the national identity ‘Australian’.

critical othering – as noticed in the Boundary diffusing discourse of ‘Other Australian’, we name and recognise the ideological power and origin of the identity, but with no intention of challenging current attitudes and practices in relation to national ideologies. We share this with another ‘othered Australian’ ending with reconciliation to change ‘self’ rather than the ideological ‘Australian’.

critical recognising – as in Boundary diffusing of ‘Other Australian’, we show an awareness of discrepancies in current practices and share historical and personal events that openly reflects the need to challenge practices amongst us, as we are aware of our boundaries.

silencing – this strategy aids the above strategies, and we believe that such silencing is essential so that ‘self’ is not excluded from the nation by ‘Other Australian’.

Material effects realised by boundary conscious discursive practice

subjective power – as defined in Boundary committing, we as ‘othered Australian’ realise the power of being accepted by ‘Other Australian’, and this material effect overrides all experiences of suppression and regulated-acceptance.

self-narration – as those realised in Boundary diffusing discourse of ‘Other Australian’, however, here our exchanges are shared with another ‘othered Australian’, therefore, critical action does not eventuate.
exclusion – as we become overly conscious of the differences between ‘self’ and those of ‘Other Australian’, we as ‘othered Australian’, with resisting strategies choose to exclude ‘self’ from specific public discourses and negotiations.

regulated-acceptance – our partial or complete affiliation with our ethno-linguistic and religious origins facilitates our practices to be given permission to be exhibited publically in a sporadic manner by ‘Other Australian’.

suppression – we realise and accept the censorship and marginalisation of our attributes by becoming aware of our boundaries as an outsider, being different to what is conceptualised and practised as ‘Australian’.

I illustrate how I mapped this discursive practice with a sample from analysis below.

**Table 14: Contesting ‘Australian’ with boundary conscious discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Culture is who you are. Who you are, you want to keep private. When I came to this centre no one asked me whether I am Muslim or this, they just take me. It is because how I present myself. I struggled so hard initially when I came here. But now I have made it here and I want to forget about all that happened before. You know we eat different food and everything being Bosnian, our pans and what we make they are different too. But we have Aussie stuff too, we go to Bosnian clubs a lot but Aussie restaurants too.”</td>
<td>(S) – self-othering, self-regulating, critical recognising, silencing – Selma begins with critical acknowledgement of culture and religion of ‘self’, yet she believes that such silencing and self-regulating practices are essential to be accepted. (ME) – subjective power, self-narration, suppression.</td>
<td>Selma-othered Australian</td>
<td>boundary conscious</td>
<td>self-othering</td>
<td>subjective power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ganga – othered Australian</td>
<td></td>
<td>self-regulating</td>
<td>self-narration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above the ‘othered Australian’ subject, was highly conscious of who she was in comparison to ‘Australian’, and Selma consciously resorted to move between boundaries. Selma’s strategies of ‘self-othering’ and ‘self-regulating’ enabled her to realise ‘subjective power’ of acceptance by ‘Other Australian’. This also is a dominant discourse as such exhibition of commitment by migrant groups is expected by Australia’s multiculturalism.

This was a face to face interview and as Selma spoke of what her culture was and how she had chosen to unquestioningly silence and privatise her identity, I was using my postcolonial knowledge to involve with what I thought was her suppression. However, I
also understood that this was essential for her as a ‘Muslim’ to realise the acceptance of ‘Other Australian’, as this effected ‘subjective power’ of owning the identity of ‘Australian’. I wanted to resist and react to what she specified as ‘Aussie stuff’, however, I had to suppress my own thoughts as I was a non-Muslim, and I felt anything that I say might colonise her experiences that are specific to being ‘Muslim’ in Australia. I too contributed to the perpetuation of ideological ‘Australian’.

I was able to analytically tabulate what she said with rows and columns, however, this did not represent my emotional tensions. As I silenced myself, I mentally drew this postcolonial image.
In what follows, I unpack the boundary diffusing discourse of ‘othered Australian’.

Table 15: boundary diffusing ‘othered Australian’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse (D)</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boundary diffusing</td>
<td>risking Resisting critical othering critical recognising</td>
<td>voice self-narration critical cognition critical action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

boundary diffusing – our subjective position within this discursive practice, is similar to the marginal disposition of ‘Other Australian’. We, as ‘othered Australian’ challenge not just the socio-political constructions of the ideological ‘Australian’, but also subjects (‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’) who uphold this ideology. Therefore, this is a marginal discourse, a subjective position that is outside the structurally recommended commitment to the national identity.

Strategies that support the discourse of boundary diffusing

risking – we risk being rejected by ‘Other Australian’ and structures that are committed to upholding the ideological ‘Australian’, yet we engage in this strategy, and our subjective paradigm to challenge what is ‘Australian’.

resisting – this is similar to the strategy in Boundary conscious, but we reinscribe our own identity, without hesitating to speak and practice our difference privately and publically, and this supports the strategy above.

critical othering – we name, recognise the origin of the nation and the national identity and the dominant, historical and political ideologies that maintain its ownership and control, and we share this understanding with ‘Other’ and ‘othered Australian’ to work towards change.

critical recognising – we engage with alternate media information, theories and literature and we openly confront discourses that essentialise our groups and that of ‘Australian’. We recognise and share our personal and historical events that have influenced our attitudes and understandings about ‘Other Australian’ and we act to change practices and understandings of all subjects in Australia.

Material effects realised by Boundary diffusing (ø) discursive practice

voice – this is the foremost material effect we realise, as we are able to express our experiences and understandings in our own voice and we realise being accepted for what
and who we are by ‘Other Australian’, with little feelings of compulsion to become committed to national ideologies and national identity. For us, our power is our voice, as we do not yet own that structural power possessed by ‘Other Australian’ to diffuse or share. However, we can become empowered through critical action and change.

**self-narration** – as a secondary effect we are able to share the prejudices we had incurred in the past with ‘Other Australian’, who acknowledges and empathises with ‘othered’ experiences, by simultaneously recognising the privileges of ‘Self’.

**critical cognition** – through strategies of critical recognising, we are able to collaboratively acknowledge and identify the realities of ‘othered Australian’, and with ‘Other Australian’ we plan to reconceptualise the ideological, ‘Australian’.

**critical action** – this is a shared material effect realised with ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’, and we collaboratively act upon contextual, current prejudices, hoping to bring about justice and equity for all individuals and groups in Australia.

I illustrate the analysis of this discursive practice with a sample below.

**Table 16: Contesting ‘Australian’ with boundary diffusing discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity statement</th>
<th>Discourse analysis</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Strategies (S)</th>
<th>Material effects (ME)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am very upset. What is this thing Chinese dance? Safeeya has been very worried and upset for the past few days. She has been asking what is it mum, what should I do? I am Chinese but I am not dancing every day. I just said, just go there, it is nothing Chinese” (Safeeya’s mum). “I am sorry we didn’t mean to” (Gina). “Don’t worry, she asked me about Chinese dancing, I am Chinese but I can’t dance. Look at me, do I look like I can dance? (Safeeya’s mum)” “I am sorry” (Gina).</td>
<td>(S) risking, resisting, critical othering, critical recognising – Safeeya’s mother risked the outrage of staff who care for her child. She critically othered ‘self’ and resisted being boxed, with critical recognition bringing to note her current ways of enacting ‘Chinese’. (ME) voice, self-narration critical cognition, critical action. Her voice was heard, and the dominant practices were challenged with an extraction of apology from the ‘Other’.</td>
<td>Safeeya’s mother – othered Australian</td>
<td>boundary diffusing</td>
<td>risking resisting critical othering critical recognising</td>
<td>voice self-narration critical cognition critical action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Safeeya’s mum ‘othered Australian’ stormed into the centre to resist how her culture was presented at the centre to celebrate multicultural term. A ‘Chinese’ dancer’ came to the centre that morning to perform ‘Chinese’ dance. For Safeeya’s mum, this dance was nothing
‘Chinese’ and she spoke as a ‘Chinese’ to disrupt the tokenistic constructions of her ‘Chinese’ culture. The table revealed all the elements with which Safeeya’s mum contested what was represented as ‘Chinese’. Safeeya’s mum through ‘critical othering’ and ‘critical recognising’ of her own ‘self’ resisted multicultural practices that presented stereotypical images of her culture. By doing so, especially with ‘Other Australian’ she made her ‘voice’ heard. This can lead to ‘critical action’ and transformation of ‘Australian’ and ‘migrant’ identities, and attitudes and understandings about equitable cultural practices.

Although the table and systematic analysis represented and predicted such material effects, the counter discourse of Gina, ‘Other Australian’ did not lead to this. As a listener and an observer of sequential events since morning, my observations told a different story. The ‘Chinese’ dancer presented and spoke about ‘Chinese’ culture in a stereotypical fashion, with colour red, dragon and depicted dancers as warriors, who wore long nails and used fans and umbrellas to fight their enemies. I found the whole incursion highly problematic and when Gina took me aside later to discuss, I presumed that she was going to challenge what was presented in the name of multicultural practice. However, Gina spoke about the inappropriateness of presenting fans, umbrellas and nails as weapons with children. This was my first day with her, and being committed to my study and her friendship, I silenced and suppressed my resisting and risking behaviour. I heard my ‘voice’ in Safeeya’s mum, yet the exchange that followed with Gina, ‘Other Australian’ only reinforced the ‘Power’ of ‘Australian’, as she denied her boundary with ‘Australianness’ by saying, “You know when you asked us, who is an Australian weeks ago, I was totally confronted. I was thrown back. Then I stopped and thought what it is to be an Australian, I couldn’t find an answer. It is confronting, because being an Australian is something we take for granted”. By saying that she took being ‘Australian’ for granted and that it was confronting to think about it. She further silenced any further conversations that disrupted this identity. She retained and maintained the ‘Ownership’ and ‘Power’ of national identity ‘Australian’ and ‘Self’, and my silence contributed to the reinforcement of current multicultural practices, and the ‘Power’ of ‘Australian’.

Thus, the ‘boundary diffusing’ discourse is a subjective disposition that is marginal. The ‘othered Australian’ is able to contest dominant practices related to multiculturalism, and structural discourses that endorse the recognition and acknowledgement of ‘migrant’ and ‘Australian’ identities in particular ways. As events unfolded at that time, I felt that this discourse had the propensity to disrupt these identities to realise the ‘voice’ of ‘othered’ only when exchanged with ‘Other Australian’, who was also committed to ‘critical action’.
I again could only visualise this highly complex tangled exchanges as a postcolonial image, and I replaced the analysis table as below.

Later, that evening after it was challenged by Safeeya’s mum, Gina still maintained the identity of ‘Australian’ with strategies of Nationalising ‘Self’ as ‘Australian’. Theorising that thinking about this identity was confronting, thus eluding critically talking about this identity. She was able to realise and maintain the ‘Power’ of ‘Australianness’ by speaking as ‘Other Australian’ and legitimised the Celebration of multiculturalism.

Gina, initially presented the activity by ‘othering’ what was Chinese outside the identity of Australian and limiting the culture to tokenistic Celebration of cultures. By doing so, she also ‘Othered’ the identity of ‘Australian’ as an unspoken identity in the centre.

I chose to silence myself, although I wanted to challenge like Safeeya’s mum. I suppressed my resistance and did not risk my study and Gina’s acceptance, to realise my subjective power. Thus I reinforced the Power of Australian.

Safeeya’s mum expressed her resistance that evening and she extracted an apology from Gina. She contested her ‘migrant’ identity by bringing to note her own image as a Chinese, practicing her culture in Australia.

Image 6: Contesting ‘Australian’ with boundary diffusing discourse

By building on the above images, I transformed the table, ‘Postcolonial discursive elements’, which I used in postcolonial discourse analysis of ‘Other and othered Australian’ with one complex image. For my postcolonial Ganga the tabled format was colonising, and it limited the representations of discursive choices and how these interacted with each other in a dynamic manner. The river Ganga’s estuary is a space crisscrossed with a network of rivulets and creeks, and this is the space before the ever changing India Ganga meets the ocean. I named this image which I used to symbolise our postcolonial subjectivities and interactions tangled with our emotions as, ‘Postcolonial estuary of contesting ‘Australian’.

This image below to me represented the complexities submerged in postcolonial Australia and in my postcolonial Ganga.
I take Ganga, my inner voice, our ‘othered’ voices, the above image, and the silenced question from chapter 7, to navigate to chapter 9. Much was said and heard about ‘whiteness’ and its role in colonising, normalising, nationalising and dominating, in my Ganga’s streams and courses. My postcolonial Ganga did not want me to centralise her coloniser, as she felt that it usurped her power. Ladson-Billings (2004) amply comments that critical race theory writers use stories, to provide the additional “voice” and power, to enable people of colour to speak with their experiential knowledge. Therefore, in my next chapter my postcolonial Ganga tells our stories, as and with ‘othered’, and how we feel and what effects we realise when ‘they’ contest ‘us’ with ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’. As discourses are directly related to material effects (Gee, 2010), my Ganga and I chose our stories of ‘othered Australian’, to expose the daily material effects realised by us (othered Australian), as we contested the ideological ‘Australian’ with ‘Other Australian’. In my final discussion chapter, I represent my ‘voice’ with ‘I’, using which I beseech Ganga, my inner ‘voice’ to make meaning of our exchanges. My Ganga-my inner voice in her absolute
postcolonial form delves deep to surface daily realities that were tossed amongst us, as postcolonial subjects. She uses the image above, which now brims with discursive exchanges to illuminate how we, as transformed postcolonial subjects, ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ contested the ideological ‘Australian’ for the very last time.

Before we leave, I trace my final silenced question, which I now reword after the postcolonial transformation,

- How did the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily cultural practices of ‘Australian’ (Other Australian) and ‘not Australian’ (othered Australian) subjects in Australia?
Chapter 9

Ganga ‘othering’ to contest postcolonial subjectivities

I gathered at the end of chapter 7, the attachment of ‘Other Australian’ to the ideological ‘Australian’ and how they shaped, or ‘Othered’ this identity repeatedly, every time they encountered Ganga, the data. In my previous chapter, I transformed the boundary ‘speakers’ into postcolonial subjects, to identify the postcolonial elements embedded in the discursive mobilisation of postcolonial subjectivities. In this chapter, my focus is on inquiring how ‘whiteness’ and the ideology ‘Australian’ was reinforced and resisted subjectively and strategically, to unravel the material effects linked to our everyday discursive choices. With ‘I’ to represent my many, I invite Ganga to interact with me and lead me to engage with the second part of my third research question by transforming this slightly to represent its postcolonial disposition. I have transformed ‘reshape’ to ‘contest’ to represent postcolonial resistance with and against dominance, and the ‘othered’ to ‘øthered’ to reflect our postcolonial ‘øthered’ voices.

- How to reshape (contest) identities in othered (øthered) voices?

Before going further, I would like to bring to note the transformation of postcolonial subjects. The ‘Other Australians’ (OA) are subjects, who speak as ‘Australian’ with boundaries of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’, and ‘øthered Australians’ (oA) are subjects who are differentiated and ‘othered’ by boundaries of ‘colour’ and ‘difference’ (culture/ethnicity/language/religion). My postcolonial Ganga has always been with me, and I use her voice to make meaning of my ripples, the disruptions that churn my layered subjectivity, as we contest ‘Australian’ in ‘øthered’ voices. The ‘Other Australian’ voices are in the background for my postcolonial Ganga to illustrate later how they affected and effected our daily practices.

Contesting Complex(ion) of ‘Australian’

The following are our complex(ion) stories, how and what we felt and realised, when ‘Other Australian’ defended, denied and diffused the power of ‘whiteness’.

My Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Pookey mum, Thora’s mum, Sidya’s mum and Sheri Pookey (4 yr. old girl), ‘øthered Australian’, played with Cheela, but became very frustrated when Cheela ignored her to play with See and Fairy. Gina (OA) always said that See (OA) and Fairy (OA) were the most powerful girls in the room, and gaining acceptance into their peer group is difficult.
Pokey’s mum is ‘othered Australian’. Pokey’s mum and I not only shared the same ethno-linguistic background, but also a passion for cooking. We usually talked about our favourite dishes and what we cooked the night before, and we end up making plans to open a restaurant when I conclude Ganga.

Thora’s (3 yr. old girl’s) mum, ‘othered Australian’, loved to wear her jewellery, especially her anklets, and Thora did the same too. The staff thought that she was traditional and less modern, but Thora’s mum believed that she was very strong and wanted to be accepted for who she was.

Sidya’s (3 yr. old girl’s) parents, ‘othered Australian’, and I frequently spoke about India’s caste system and all the discrimination and injustice that resulted from it. We always wondered whether India would ever be able to come out of this ingrained structural atrocities.

Sheri, ‘othered Australian’ staff worked with Selma ‘othered Australian’ in the room. Her family migrated to Australia when she was very young. Sheri, Selma and I had the best time when we re-organised the store room.

I met Sheri and Katherine (OA), the two room leaders, and explained my study by saying that I was going to engage with children to gather their attitudes about friendship groups. Sheri remarked that Thora and Sidya always played together and she encouraged that because they shared the same ethno-linguistic background. I spoke to Sheri later, as I perhaps related to the ‘brownness’ we shared about my concerns about segregating children, especially by colour and language.

It was sleep time and as the children slept “I never thought about this, until you started talking about colour. You know I had always dreamt about marrying a white man and I am married to a white man now. Right since I was young, I only wanted to marry a white man. I don’t know why I don’t like dark skin. May be, it was because I was teased here at school because of my skin colour when I was young. But I didn’t think that really did affect me, but may be it did” (Sheri). “Sheri, I am very sorry to hear that, because the same thing happened to my children and you are not much older than my son. I am really very sorry to hear that you were teased” I apologised. “No, like I told you it doesn’t matter, but you know you can do what you want in the room, change anything, talk about anything with children. I understand, I don’t have a problem” (Sheri) “Can I use this as data?” I confirmed. “Yes, because it happened and I didn’t think it mattered” (Sheri). (N: 28/05/10-h)

I was moved to tears, as we shared our stories and how our colour was ‘spoken’ in Australia. I understood why Sheri encouraged Thora and Sidya to play together, as she was deeply affected by what she had experienced when she was young. She spoke of the origin
of her current relationship with ‘whiteness’ and ‘darkness’. I decided not to expect Sheri to ‘speak’ colours with children, but I ‘spoke’ with Sheri’s permission. My ripples began,

- What is Sheri’s current complex(ion) discourse?

In the other room, Pookey bluntly said that she did not like brown skin and that she was ‘white’ on the very first day. I was immediately alarmed, and raised this with Katherine, but she felt that she didn’t have to address this. I silenced myself and could not help but speak to Pookey’s mum about Pookey.

> It was pick-up time. Pookey’s mother and I shared many topics that were common. “Pookey says, she doesn’t like brown skin and that she is white” I started hesitantly. “Someone here has told Pookey that she is black and yucky, so they won’t play with her. She was so upset when she came home. It took us so long to console her. But how do I say this to the staff here. I haven’t said anything” (Pookey’s mother). (N: 21/06/10-j)

Pookey had experienced what Sheri and my family experienced two decades ago. In the other room, Thora ritualistically picked up books and puzzles to find images of ‘coloured’ individuals to talk about ‘our colour’ and ‘our India’. Sidya always sat quietly with us. I spoke to Thora’s and Sidya’s parents.

> One morning during drop off when I raised Thora’s interest skin colours with her mum, “My daughter is like me. She is strong, she talks openly about what is important for her..... she speaks what is right and stands up for herself” (Thora’s mum). (N: 21/06/10-a)

I gathered that Thora’s mum had no hesitation in ‘speaking’ colours with children, and believed that this reflected Thora’s strong sense of self. I spoke to Sidya’s mum.

> Sidya’s mum came to pick her up. “Thora has been openly talking about skin colour with me and Sidya and many other children around. I don’t stop this discussion and I just wanted to know if this is okay with you” I asked her. “You know what in this country someone has to talk about colour. I will tell you what happened in my son’s school. A few weeks ago, a boy had called my son “blacky” and that he won’t play with him. My son was so upset when he came home and he refused to go to school the very next day. I reassured him and I went with him to speak to the teacher. The teacher said that she won’t believe my son, as the other boy could not have said something like that. How dare she passes something as serious as being called by names as a lie. It is real for my son and our family, as we go through this everyday. I think if you can make Sidya feel that it is okay to stand up for herself and feel it is alright to be who you are that is all I ask of you” (Sidya’s mum). (N: 17/06/10-g)
I heard another story of discrimination, and the teacher’s unwillingness to take action. My postcolonial Ganga lamented that Pookey too was gravitating towards ‘whiteness’, and I decided to continue to risk and resist to ‘speak’ colours with children. Therefore, I carried books, ‘All the colours we are’ and ‘Colours of us’ in my bag daily, and whenever I had conversations of colour with children, I purposely involved Pookey as I read with children. Another ripple followed,

- How was I attached to ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australian’ when I decided to practise complex(ion) with children?

Hearing my free interactions with children about our complex(ion), Katherine and Gina (OA) arranged for a meeting to question my actions. They accused me of discrimination, because I did not let Pookey believe that she was ‘white’. They defended not just their ‘whiteness’ but their ‘Australianness’ by nationalising ‘Self’ as ‘just Australian’. They theorised Pookey’s behaviour as social development and my concerns inhibited her sense of belonging. Thus, they took control of my behaviour and my interactions with children.

Children continued to ‘speak’ and nationalise colours, as they classified, ‘Self’ as ‘white’ and ‘Australian’, and Pookey and I as ‘not Australian’ because we were ‘black’. Gina and Katherine avoided ‘speaking colours’ with the book, ‘All the colours we are’, and theorised that children were too young to understand the concepts. Later, Gina justified her inaction by saying she was ‘white’ and had ‘nothing’ to talk about, and concluded that I could ‘speak’ colours only because I am ‘brown’. Katherine expressed her desire for ‘tan’, and used this to justify her anger about being called ‘white’. Katherine and Gina avoided taking responsibility to contest ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australian’, even as they heard children conceptualising the ‘white Australian’. And another couple of ripples churned my postcolonial depths,

- What and how did Katherine’s and Gina’s complex(ion) discourses affect and effect postcolonial subjects?

Pookey’s contest with ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ continued,

“No, I am white, I am Australian” (Pookey). “But Pookey, remember what we read in ‘Colours of us’, you are like, peanut butter and is it white?” I asked. “Okay, I am Indian like Prasanna and I am from Melbourne. I am both and so I am a bit white” (Pookey). (N: 1/09/10-c)

- Why and how did Pookey and I modify our practices discursively to accommodate ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’?
Ganga, there are too many ripples, help.

I: Ganga, I was affected when I heard Sheri’s story about her past and its current influence on her relationship with ‘whiteness’. Can you explain, Sheri’s current complex(ion) discourse?

Ganga: Can’t you see that she is discursively committed to the boundaries of ‘whiteness’, (see p. 195). Sheri has been teased and she has now submitted to the power of ‘whiteness’. You heard her say that she doesn’t like ‘dark skin’ because she was teased, and she had always dreamt of marrying a ‘white’ man. Isn’t she ‘self-othering’ and ‘gravitating’ towards ‘whiteness’?

I: Why didn’t she think about this earlier?

Ganga: Can’t you see as an ‘othered Australian’, Sheri has gained ‘subjective power’ by ‘self-correction’ and ‘submission’ to ‘whiteness’. She would find it hard to disrupt the power of ‘whiteness’ and she will only contribute to the perpetuation of this ‘Power’. That is why she did not challenge Thora’s and Sidya’s play behaviour.

I: Okay, what about me. My children and I were discriminated. How was I attached to ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australian’ when I decided to practise complex(ion) with children?

Ganga: You too were discursively responding to ‘whiteness’, but you tried to challenge its ‘Power’, by resisting and risking your study and your presence in that centre. That is why you became upset when you heard Pookey say, “I don’t like brown skin, I am not brown, I am white”.

I: But why?

Ganga: This was the subjective disposition that you took (see p. 201) because of your postcolonial subjectivity and your role as a participatory action researcher, you acted to ‘diffuse power’ even though you were ‘othered Australian’. You did not want Pookey to become boundary committed, as you heard from Pookey’s mum that she was teased here at the centre. Remember Sidya’s mum’s angry outburst, and she wanted someone to talk about colour. You know Skattebol (2003) and Atkinson (2009) warn practitioners that children do enact discourses of racism discreetly, when adults fail to acknowledge and address children as socio-political enactors. I understand that being a ‘brown’ subject, with your experiences and marginal connections to ‘whiteness’ you decided to ‘risk’ to ‘resist’ the inaction of Gina and Katherine, ‘Other Australian’.
I: But Katherine and Gina heard children defending national identity of Australia by ‘Hierarchically othering’ our skin colour, and ‘Othering’ ‘whiteness’. Yet, they maintained children do not see colours in Australia. Ganga, authors caution that the practices that leave ‘whiteness’ unnamed and unexplored, in combination with acting ‘colour-blind’ leaves discriminatory beliefs about certain differences to be left unchallenged (Hayes, 2001; de Freitas & McAuley, 2008). What and how did Katherine’s and Gina’s complex(ion) practices affect and effect postcolonial subjects?

Ganga: Prasanna, see p. 181, children realised their ‘Power’ when they claimed ‘Ownership’ of ‘Australian’ identity, so they maintained their ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’. After all, Gina and Katherine did that too, remember the meeting, “You know, we are both just Australians. Why do you have to call us white? How do you think we would feel when you call us white?” (Gina); “I don’t know why you have to tell Pookey is brown, when every other kid in the room is Australian. You tell her she is brown and that she is different” (Katherine). They were trying to maintain control and ‘Power’ by claiming ‘Self’ as ‘Australian’, thus ‘Nationalising’ and defending their boundary of ‘white Australian’. They were ‘Theorising’ and ‘Legitimising’ their inaction to negate your challenge.


Ganga: They just shifted their discourse strategically to retain their ‘Power’. With ‘Boundary denying’ (see, p. 186), they could easily divert children’s and particularly your influence from challenging their attitudes and understandings of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’. I heard Gina say, “mmm... that is surprising, I don’t know why they say that in children’s book”. When the child asked, “But, how come Australians are white, when it is hot here, because sun makes us go brown doesn’t it”, Katherine eluded this “Hey, I dare you to read those words at the bottom, go on read it”. Remember, how Gina and Katherine gave you a space to put your books and photos of children’s hands in a separate corner to be brought out when you were there. Can’t you see they were ‘Limiting’ your presence to effect ‘Insulation’ and ‘Avoidance’ for ‘Self’. It is ‘Power’.

I: What ‘Power’?

Ganga: The ‘Power’ of supporting ideological ‘Australian’, they are being loyal ‘Australian’ subjects. They are reinforcing what the structures demand.
I: Is there no way out for ‘othered Australian’ who resist ‘whiteness’. Is that why, Pookey and I modified our practices to accommodate ‘whiteness’?

Ganga: Of course, by now you had both become highly ‘boundary conscious’ of your ‘othered Australian’ status. Pookey wanted the ‘subjective power’ of owning ‘Australian’, so she chose to have ‘bits of white’. You wanted your study to continue. You realised you will be punished by the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’. Both of you, ‘self-regulated’ and effected ‘self-correction’ and ‘suppression’. Move on, get over it.

**Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Seaweed, Seaweed’s mum and Jan**

**Seaweed** (3 yr. old girl) ‘othered Australian’, hugged me as soon as I walked into the room, “Prasanna you are from India” (N: 1/06/10-d). Seaweed followed me everywhere, and made artwork and drawings for me to take home. Her favourite sweet was gulab jamun and jalebi, and we made these at the play dough table.

**Seaweed’s mum**, ‘othered Australian’ spoke to me about Seaweed’s dislike for her brown skin colour the very first evening. She found my topic fascinating and she wanted to read current understandings and practices about children’s identity development.

**Jan** ‘othered Australian’ staff worked with Amelia closely. Jan and I shared many ‘othered Australian’ conversations unique to us, and Jan used to make notes of new ideas and understandings that came from our conversations.

Seaweed’s mum spoke to me as I introduced myself,

“I know, she goes on about her skin colour. The staff here said not to make a big issue about this, as she is doing so for attention seeking. We don’t say anything we just ignore” (Seaweed’s mum). (N: 1/06/10-h)

I believed otherwise, but I kept quiet, as this was my first day at this centre. I had observed Seaweed saying ‘I don’t like brown skin’, and use skin colour to categorise people as ‘Australian’ and ‘Indian’.

“I don’t like brown skin” (Seaweed). “Why, do you say that, I have brown skin just like you and so does your mum, she has brown skin”, I said. “I like my mum, you have brown skin too. But I don’t like my brown skin. I like white skin”, Seaweed replied. “But you can’t say that, you should like your own, whatever colour. I love my yellow skin, or that is what they say I have and I love it” (Jan) hugged Seaweed and looked at me and said “I am shocked to hear this, you should like your skin Seaweed”. “Okay, If we draw ourselves Blob what colour would you choose” I asked. “White” said Seaweed and then looked at Jan, “No, purplzy white skin colour, alright” (Seaweed). (N: 8/06/10-e)
This was not the first time Seaweed has commented about her ‘brown’ and ‘white’ skin. I had been concerned, as I observed Seaweed’s repeated expressions of dislike for ‘brown’ and a desire for ‘white’. The next time when Amelia (OA), Jan and I got together, Amelia opened the conversation by ‘speaking colour’ with Jan and I. When Amelia said that she worried about Moo and Plafe, I assumed that she was going to point to our ‘othered difference’, and I was ready to defend our ‘brownness’ and our layered boundaries. But Amelia narrated the ‘cruel difference’ in her ‘white world’ and not in us. She reflected on how it affected people of colour. Amelia justified a need for critical action, by drawing upon the attitudes of her extended family to people of colour. She regretfully added that we were all ‘Australian’, despite our coloured ‘differences’.

“Amelia, you don’t have to share this with me, but you have because you have been there feeling uncomfortable, like me about our silences. This happened years ago. My daughter came home from kinder one day and said that she was called dirty because she was brown, my reaction was anger and to seek justice. But I was silenced when my son who was diligently doing his homework asked her not to worry, because it is not as bad as being called poo for being brown and he was called that at school. Amelia, Seaweed still says that she doesn’t like being brown and that worries me” I said. “I know, I am shocked” (Jan). “She sees the reality of colours in her family. This morning I observed children playing with wooden figurines and they made families of the same colour and refused to mix up colours, Seaweed just got up and left.” I added. (N: 11/06/10-g; 15/06/10-k)

I shared our stories of discrimination in Australia with her, and Jan joined us, and we decided to engage in ‘critical action’ to challenge ‘whiteness’ and the image of ‘white Australian’. Amelia wanted to have a think to change current practices and understandings. I felt more ripples swirling,

- What complex(ion) discourses enabled Amelia, Jan and I to commit to challenging ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’?

With my newly found ‘voice’, I shared critical literature (Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Hage, 2000) and websites (Britkids - http://www.britkid.org/index.html; Racism no way - http://www.racismnoway.com.au/; UNICEF - http://www.unicef.org/crc/ ) with Amelia and Jan, and we planned to circulate newsletters to families on making family books. By recognising the current practices that centralised and nationalised ‘Australian’ in particular ways, Amelia decided to make a sample family book by naming her identity as ‘white Anglo-Australian’ and associating this with her family’s immigration many years ago, to disrupt the ‘normality’ of ‘whiteness’ and its unspoken nationalised ties with ‘Australian’.
We contested ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ together every afternoon for change, and continued to actively make plans and use structures to our advantage. Due to these exchanges, Jan began to name ‘Australian’ and made note of this identity.

“I want to write it down, white Anglo Australians. I thought they were the Australians” (Jan).
(N: 13/07/10-g)

- Why was it important to name the ‘Australian’?

I now take my ripples to Ganga.

I: Ganga, Amelia was committed to change, and that wasn’t to do with ‘Power’. What complex(ion) discourses enabled Amelia, Jan and I to commit to challenging ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’?

Ganga: Amelia’s affiliation with ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ was different to Gina’s and Katherine’s, yet it was related to ‘Power’. She discursively practised to ‘Diffuse Power’ (see, p. 191). Didn’t you notice she said, “I worry about Plafe and Moo... I cuddle these children...But the outside world is cruel. I know it is different out there. I am from that world Prasanna. I am white, like you say”. Amelia’s strategies were ‘Critical othering’ in combination with ‘Critical Othering’, she outlined the ‘difference’ in her ‘white’ world and how it affected people of colour.

I: But, she wanted all individuals to be subjectified as ‘Australian’.

Ganga: Remember, you can’t avoid this in modern, western societies (Taylor, 2004; Appadurai, 2006), and especially with Australia’s political system focused on promoting one national identity to manage diversity (Stokes, 1997; Rizvi, 2005). She did this with ‘Critical Recognising’; she didn’t automatically claim national ownership of her identity. She planned to name and present the ‘migrant’ origin of her family through family books, just like all ‘othered Australian’. That is why it was important to name that ‘Australian’ with you and Jan. Didn’t Jan reconceptualise how she perceived ‘Australian’? Didn’t this made you speak up and realise your ‘voice’? You collaboratively shared literature and ‘critical understanding’ to initiate ‘critical action’.

I: Ganga, now tell me how did the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily complex(ion) practices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ subjects in Australia?

Ganga: The complex(ion) discourses of ‘Other Australian’ ranged from ‘Boundary Defending, to Boundary Denying, and later Boundary Diffusing’. While, ‘Boundary
Defending’ was most evident in children’s discourses to claim ‘Power’ and ‘Ownership’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’, the adults like Gina and Katherine, practised ‘Boundary denying’ discourse (see, p. 186). They denied their ‘white privilege’ (McIntosh, 1988), and still covertly perpetuated ‘Power’ of ‘Whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ by ‘Nationalising Self’, ‘Eluding’, ‘Voiding’ and ‘Limiting’. This is a powerful, structurally supported discourse, to defend the national identity as a national subject. You found your ‘white hybrid’ didn’t you in Amelia, she ‘Diffused Power’ with you and Jan, ‘øthered Australian’. She was ready to engage in a marginal discourse, to reconceptualise ‘Australian’ identity, by challenging the status and ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’. Remember her strategies (p. 191), things will change.

I: What about the ‘øthered Australian’?

Ganga: Their discourses ranged from ‘boundary committing’ like Sheri. Initially you strongly resisted thinking you could diffuse power. But, you are ‘brown’, you forgot your place. What power do you have to diffuse? You have to find your ‘voice’ first like you did with Amelia. You learnt your lesson from Gina and Katherine. These ‘Other Australian’ made you and Pookey ‘boundary conscious’, and you now know you have to ‘self-regulate’ and ‘suppress’ all your postcolonial resistance. Let us see what you did next.

Contesting Forbidden Fs of ‘Australian’

In the following, Ganga contests the food, faith and festival of ‘Australian’.

Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Sheri, Selma, Fatima, Varuna, Aruna, Santa and Bikky

Sheri (øA), I have discussed her profile earlier.

Selma ‘øthered Australian’ staff and I worked very closely together, and we shared much laughter, music and tears. She loved watching Bollywood movies and was fascinated by the complexities and the diversity that existed in the social practices of India.

Fatima ‘øthered Australian’ loved cooking. Being a vegetarian, I seldom ate what was served at the centre, and Fatima would bring some of the most delicious vegetarian dishes for me.

Varuna ‘øthered Australian’ worked part-time, and she loved sweets. Ladoo was her favourite sweet and I always took sweets to share with Varuna.

Aruna ‘øthered Australian’ quietly supported Katherine (OA) in the room, and seldom spoke to me. When they celebrated multicultural term, she had a small Sri Lankan flag and the national anthem pinned on the notice board in the room.
**Bikky** (4 yr. old girl), ‘othered Australian’ often would philosophise with me about Allah. She wanted to know whether Allah was real or not, or whether Allah was a boy or a girl.

**Santa** (4 yr. old boy), ‘othered Australian’ had a keen interest in marine biology and botany. We brought our collection of shells, pressed flowers and leaves to show each other.

This was Sheri’s last day at the centre and she kindly agreed to set aside some time for the interview.

“How does culture affect your daily life?” I asked Sheri. “You know Sri Lankans eat different types of food, you know the food we eat. We eat rice and curry. He (her son) has Australian food too and Sri Lankan, so he knows both cultures and adapts to it and won’t be afraid to say he is Sri Lankan (Sheri). “Do you bring your culture outside, to the centre?” I asked. “I don’t think I have totally shown my culture. They know I am Sri Lankan and I eat curry, but I haven’t brought Sri Lankan food for them to taste” (Sheri). (I: 8/07/10)

I was surprised when Sheri classified what she ate as ‘Sri Lankan’, and something as ‘Australian’. Having distinguished these boundaries, she also ensured that as a family her son was exposed to both cultures through food. Acknowledging her culture with food was about developing a strong sense of ethnic identity in her son. I remembered what Selma said in her interview.

“Culture is who you are. Who you are, you want to keep private. When I came to this centre no one asked me whether I am Muslim or this, they just take me. It is because how I present myself. I struggled so hard initially when I came here. But now I have made it here and I want to forget about all that happened before. You know we eat different food and everything being Bosnian, our pans and what we make they are different too. But we have Aussie stuff too, we go to Bosnian clubs a lot but Aussie restaurants too. Like my daily life we do the same things, like everyone, get up and drink coffee and come to work” (Selma). We came to the end of our interview, “Thank you Selma, do you have anything to ask me?” I asked before we brought the interview to a close. “What does cultural identity mean to you, what about you?” (Selma) “For me it is complex. And Selma, I agree with keeping things private. But if we keep things private how will others know about many ways of being in this world and accept many ways of being and thinking. This is where I struggle. Imagine you have a grandchild and you want to send this child to this centre, do you think he or she will be able to grow up knowing who they are, if they come here to this centre?” I asked. “Mmmmmm... I don’t know” (Selma). (I: 17/06/10)

I concluded Selma too was strongly conscious of her cultural origin. For Selma, her culture was her religious identity, ‘Muslim’. However, this was something that she privatised to be accepted ‘like everyone’. Sheri and Selma seemed to have reconciled with
‘hybrid’, dual cultural enactments. They had similar perceptions about eating or having ‘Australian’ food, and excluding what was theirs from what was ‘Australian’. I must have slightly disrupted Selma’s thoughts with my cultural dilemmas.

*That evening, “You know after the conversation we had, I am seriously thinking about this. But Prasanna, I feel you can’t change anything here. You have to change once you are here”*.  
*Another day, “You know till now, I used to think what is at home is there, leave it when you come out” (Selma). “But you said yesterday (during our interview), culture is who you are and it is everything you do, how can you leave this at home when you come out, because you are you, that culture whether you are in or out isn’t it?” I asked. “Otherwise they will say, go back to your country, go back to where you came from. So change is good. We came here with nothing and we have everything now. So we get used to leading two lives. One for home and one for outside. That is how you manage. You have to forget who you are when you come out. But maybe I can change this for my grand children. They can then say with pride, I am so and so. (N: 17/06/10-h; 7/07/10-b)*

I could sense Selma’s silencing, and she feared being rejected by ‘Other Australian’. Selma recognised the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’, and I had kindled her urge to regain her sense of self, yet, she felt nothing would change. I heard fear and helplessness in Selma’s voice, and I decided to work with the most approachable ‘Other Australian’ at that centre. My ripples started again,

- What affected the discursive practices of Selma’s and Sheri’s?

Cathy, the ‘Other Australian’ named ‘Self’ as ‘white middle class Anglo Australian’, and had expressed that she wanted her staff to express their culture, colour and celebration, the attributes she experienced when she participated in their celebration, in their homes. She believed she had a history that she needed to share with staff to enable equitable practices of all cultures. Yet, Cathy never ‘spoke’ the history of ‘white Australian’ with staff to explore its influence on current practices. She came back with the questionnaire to say that she could not answer anything, because her ‘white middle class Australian’ culture was ‘nothing’ compared to all the colour, food and celebration ‘othered Australian’ had. After years of immigration and influences of many cultures, she believed the identity of ‘Australian’ was still unlike the ‘othered’. I silently participated in the ‘celebration’ of multiculturalism, with a ‘Chinese dancer’, Indian festival and Vietnamese festival, with ‘othered’ colour and culture. And another ripple followed,

- How were the cultures of ‘othered Australian’ and ‘Other Australian’ represented?
Cathy’s expressions of what was ‘Australian’ echoed in the voice of her staff.

Aruna walked in to the office from the kindergarten. “Have you returned your questionnaire Aruna” (Cathy). “No, but what do I write, I have no culture. I am just an Australian and those questions are hard and difficult for me to answer” (Aruna). “Really” I said. “Yes, I even asked my daughter, whether she knew something, but she said the same. We don’t have a culture, as we are just Australians” (Aruna). “That is fine, you don’t have to do it, if you feel that way” I replied. (N: 22/09/10-a)

Aruna too proclaimed to be ‘just Australian’, ‘nothing’, ‘no culture’. I wondered, why Aruna resorted to imitating the discursive practices of ‘Other Australian’, when many ‘othered Australian’ spoke how they were influenced by ‘Australian’.

During my interview with Fatima, “You know this is not my real name. My real name …….” (Fatima). “Really, why” I asked. “My husband has changed his name too. We gave our children Christian names, because we did not want them to be different from everyone here” (Fatima). “Mmm” I nodded. “You know, my husband says, in this country [Australia] you can’t look different or be different. He has changed his name to sound the same” (Fatima). “To sound the same, what do you mean, same as” I asked. “You know, the same as like the people here [Australians]. We even named our children with Muslim names and gave them normal, Christian names, so that people do not discriminate them and they don’t get hurt” (Fatima). (I: 10/06/10)

For Fatima regulating their Muslim identity was to do with safety. She and her family had to hide their ‘difference’ behind the ‘normality’ of the identity of ‘Australian’ and Christian names.

You know people never knew I was a Muslim here. Even now I don’t talk about it. You know how it is if you say you are a Muslim. One day the cook offered me something and I said, it is pork, I won’t have it. Then she asked me, why don’t you like the taste of pork. That is when I said no, it is because of my religion. I am a Muslim. She was so surprised. One thing is I never bother to tell anyone or show anyone I am one. They [Australians] think if you are a Muslim, you know you have to cover your face, this and that and I am not a Muslim like that. Fatima too and Varuna, we are all Muslims, but we don’t fit into that box they expect” (Selma). (N: 22/07/10-f)

Selma expressed how she resisted the stereotypical image of her religious identity. I could sense that this was her expression of strength and not her weakness, because she felt that she defied the images constructed by ‘Other Australian’ for Muslims. I definitely couldn’t challenge Fatima’s and Selma’s choice of silencing, as I am not a Muslim and would never know what it is to risk this ‘difference’. I did not want to speak for and about them.
It was the final week of Ramadan, I mentioned to Varuna about a program on the rehabilitation of terrorists in Indonesia. “That is why some people even hesitate to say they are Muslims. A staff in this centre does not want to be identified as Muslim. You know what Australians think of Muslims. But I tell her, you shouldn’t hide who you are. She is worried, she says, ‘No, Varuna, don’t tell anyone, they will think it is not okay’” (Varuna). “That is why for me this is complex” I said. Varuna added, “You know you shouldn’t talk about religion with others in Australian society” (Varuna whispered). (N: 1/09/10-b)

Varuna too warned me about what ‘Other Australian’ thought of Muslims and silenced any further conversations about religion. Every story of ‘Muslim’ staff approved their silence to be accepted within Australia by ‘Other Australian’.

I could not speak about Islam as a non-Muslim, and yet I felt compelled to act with their silences. Id was coming closer and I approached Cathy to celebrate Id at the centre with staff to ‘normalise’ Islam as ‘Australian’ faith and festival. Cathy, diverted my conversation with EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), and she again insisted on her blandness in comparison to our, ‘othered Australian’ colour, faith and celebration. I explicitly outlined the celebration of ‘Other Australian’, and coloured this with green, red and gold, with carols and bells. Cathy came back to stress on its ‘everydayness’, and eluded by voiding hers. I smiled and remained silenced. My ripples were twofold,

- When Muslim staff choose to silence their identity, how do I speak for and about Muslims in Australia?
- Is ‘white middle class Australian’ culture really nothing?

All the staff including those who were ‘Muslim’ began to prepare the rooms and the children to celebrate Christmas. My postcolonial Ganga surfaced as Cathy and I discussed the relevance of celebrating Christmas at the centre. Cathy promised to challenge the ‘normalised’ practices of particular faith in Australia with staff, but never did. The month of November came and the red, green and gold in every room spoke of what we celebrated, and whose festival we all took responsibility to celebrate. The ‘Other Australian’, their religious tradition, remained publicised as everyone’s religion and tradition.

Pokey, Bikky and Santa were waiting for me near the gate and as soon as I entered, Bikky dragged me inside “You know we never have a Christmas tree in our house” (Bikky). “Why?” I asked. “Because we are Muslims, shhhhh… We only have Bairam, and it is fun” (Bikky). “But, why are you whispering?” I asked. “I have to, because everyone has a Christmas tree here” (Bikky). “I don’t. Do you Pokey” I turned to Pokey. “No, I don’t” (Pokey). “What about Bairam, what do you do?” I asked. “We have lots of sweets. I love this sweet, like it is like
Baklava... and I get lots of money” (Bikky). “Hey, I don’t have a Christmas tree either. We have Bairam for Christmas. My mum says our Christmas is Bairam. Christmas is Bairam for Australians, my mum says. I have sweets and get lots of money too” (Santa). (N: 24/11/10-a)

I noticed that Bikky had learnt she had to whisper her food, faith and festival ‘difference’, baklava, Islam and Bairam. Santa too had learnt from his mum, Christmas was ‘Australian’ and their Bairam wasn’t ‘Australian’. Their silencing continued, as ‘othered Australian’ Muslim staff and children self-regulated their identity practices in Australia to mimic what was ‘Australian’. The ‘Other Australian’ food, faith and festival practices became ‘everyone’s’, and therefore what was ‘Australian’. My ripples grew stronger,

- Should I name the food, faith and festival of ‘Australian’, if so how I do this?
  Won’t I be engaging in colonial discourse, the practice that I oppose?

Ganga, help me. I can’t go further, I am confused,

I: Ganga, Selma and Sheri justified the distinctions of their food and/or faith by centralising those of ‘Australian’. What affected the discursive practices of Selma’s and Sheri’s?

Ganga: I think you need to refer to p. 197 again. They are enacting their ‘othered’ subjectivities through their ‘boundary conscious’ discursive practices. Remember, how Australia’s multiculturalism celebrates ‘migrant cultures’ in a similar fashion. It is around an empty space that is regarded as ‘Australian’. It is the most popular public discourse as highlighted by Frankenberg (1993). Therefore, ‘othered Australian’ who subscribe to this feel that they need to exaggerate their culture and keep this to themselves, as uniquely theirs. But, Selma’s discourse was slightly different, as hers was to do with fear of being asked to ‘go back to where she came from’ by ‘Other Australian’. So she worked hard to practice “hybridity” (Bhabha, 1994, 1996) with no power or strength attached to it. Therefore, she not only distinguished hers as ‘different’, but also ensured that this was not exhibited, by an overt expression of her acclimatisation to what was ‘Australian’. Every ‘othered Australian’ above was not exploiting “colonial ambivalence” through “hybridity”, as Bhabha (1994) proposes. They effected ‘suppression’ or ‘submission’ through ‘self-regulation’ and ‘self-correction’, they realised the ‘subjective power’ of being accepted as ‘Australian’ without disrupting the dominance of ‘Other Australian’. Thus, ideological dominance remained ‘Insulated’, with added effect of ‘Self-proliferation’.

I: Do you mean like Gandhi (1998) claims, postcolonial hybridity is not always empowering? Isn’t Australia multicultural, isn’t what is Indian, Sri Lankan and Bosnian are
a part of what is Australian? How were the cultures of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ represented?

Ganga: Yes, it is. Did you see how Cathy, the ‘Other Australian’ used this empty space to represent what was ‘Australian’, and felt intimidated, “I think of myself as just Australian, so I don’t really wonder about that much. But when you ask what it is to be an Australian, like you did once, it is confronting”. However, she simultaneously branded Selma’s and Fatima’s ‘difference’, “It is not that it is not there, when I attend weddings and celebrations of staff like Selma’s and Fatima’s they are so rich and colourful and vibrant. So different and interesting” (Cathy). The ‘Other Australian’ was ‘Nationalising’, ‘Othering’ and ‘othering’ simultaneously (see, p. 186). This is about ‘Other Australian’ maintaining ‘Power’ and ‘Ownership’ and most of all it effects ‘Insulation’, and they are able to protect ‘Self’ from being influenced by ‘othered’ boundary practices. I know, you are still puzzled why she came back to say, “But what culture do I have to talk about. I am boring, I am nothing. There is no colour, celebration or food. Tell me about it. I am just ordinary. Nothing to talk about”. This was to avoid taking responsibility for all her influence in subjectifying individuals as ‘Australian’. You heard Aruna, ‘othered Australian’, how she discursively committed to the boundary of ‘Australian’ (see, p. 195), by saying she didn’t have a culture, she is ‘just Australian’. This was to realise that ‘subjective power’ that national identity offers. Again, this is what the structures of Australia recommend, for all individuals to proudly say, ‘I am Australian’. So it is a powerful discourse.

I: But Ganga, the ‘Other Australian’ struggled to reflect about their practices of cultural inclusion.

Ganga: I know, I heard Gina after she was confronted by Safeeya’s mum (σA), for representing her Chinese culture with a stereotypical dance. The ‘Other Australian’ was stunned, “You know it is hard for me. How do I this, I am only Australian. Like I told you about Safeeya’s mum and when I asked her whether she cooks Chinese, she said lasagne. Debbie is an Australian and I am Australian. I know what we eat. It is easy for me to talk about it. I don’t know about you and Safeeya’s mum. Don’t worry, we will find a way”. What did she do, she ‘othered’ all the ‘migrant’ groups, by still maintaining what was ‘Australian’ as an empty space, nevertheless present (see, p. 186). She made you celebrate Indian, Vietnamese festivals with ‘Indian sweet’ and ‘Vietnamese cake’. You celebrated all those so called ‘multicultural’ festivals with them, for the same ‘subjective power’. You are guilty too.
I: I agree. Ganga, you listened to Selma, Fatima and Varuna, and they chose to silence their faith practices to protect themselves from ‘Other Australian’. They lived with ‘suppression’ and ‘self-correction’ (see p. 197). Aren’t they ‘Australian’ too, isn’t being Muslim another way of being ‘Australian’? When Muslim staff choose to silence their identity, how do I speak for and about Muslims in Australia?

Ganga: I can understand your struggles. But this was no surprise, as Haque (2001), Kunzman (2006), and Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) discuss how recent world events have triggered in believing Islam as a threat to society’s solidarity, especially to those like America, Australia, United Kingdom and Germany. That is why all the ‘Muslim’ staff chose to silently suppress their identity practices, and believed this is what they had to do unquestioningly. I know speaking for and about ‘Muslim’ staff, would be like Spivak (1999) says, usurping the ‘voice’ of “subaltern”, as the coloniser and the colonised both speak and decide for ‘othered’. Alternatively, Kunzman (2006), Hodder (2007), Peterson (2008), and Whittaker, Salend and Elhoweris (2009) recommend the inclusion of speaking faith ‘differences’ with children as a part of the school curriculum. This, they believe promotes an understanding of all faiths and how it influences the daily lives of individuals and groups and most of all opens up discussions to arbitrate internalised prejudices.

I: I tried, you know how Cathy theorised with EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), and diverted my conversation and we ended up silencing suppression.

Ganga: I told you, the ‘Other Australian’ was covertly avoiding taking responsibility and regulating your influence by “Legitimation” and ‘Avoidance’. (see, p. 186), and that is to do with boundary denying discourse.

I: Is ‘white middle class Australian’ culture really nothing? Should I name the food, faith and festival of ‘Australian’, if so how I do this? Won’t I be engaging in colonial discourse, the practice that I oppose?

Ganga: You know what Leonardo (2002) and Rose-Cohen (2004) comment upon denying the culture of ‘whiteness’. You are hurting those who have a culture, do you want to be and become your ‘white’ masters. You observed how every staff, including ‘Muslims’ took responsibility to celebrate the religious tradition of ‘whiteness’ in public spaces. Cathy ‘Other Australian’ eluded when you asked about Christmas celebration, despite all her talk about ‘fairness’ by stroking her cheek. This is what democratic liberalism does to you, it results in ‘Self proliferation’ of dominant practices. Cathy kept wondering, that the staff and families leave their cultures at the door. They surely will, if ‘Other Australian’ does not take
responsibility to look into their influence on ‘othered Australian’. Leeman and Reid (2006), and Vickers (2002), argue that cultural pluralism that is established around ideologies of liberalism and universalism privileges the unnamed dominant race can be likened to “democratic racism”. Selma, Varuna and Fatima, they all knew the ‘Power’ and religion of ‘Other Australian’ and they feared this ‘Power’. Do you want to contribute to perpetuating this ‘Power’ that comes from boundary denying the privilege of ‘whiteness’?

I: I apologise Ganga, I really want to ask your opinion about the following.

**Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Plafe, Moo and Jan**

**Plafe** (4 yr. old boy) ‘othered Australian’ had been attending this centre full time since he was an infant. His best friend was Sheep (OA), and he followed and supported Sheep most of the time.

**Moo** (3 yr. old girl) ‘othered Australian’ was very quiet, a part timer, and got very attached to me. I commented on Moo’s ability to roll perfect rotis, and Moo’s mother spoke about how much they enjoyed making roti together as soon as they got home.

**Jan**, as included earlier.

My second day at this centre, and I observed children playing in the home corner.

*Sheep and Plafe brought some wooden blocks from the block corner and began to build on top of the fridge. “What are you building”? I asked Plafe and Sheep as they stacked the wooden blocks in the home corner. “I am building a chimney for Santa to come and give me presents” Sheep replied. “Me, too” added Plafe. “Is this for Christmas? But Christmas is at the end of the year, just before you start school and you have many, many days to go” I added. “Yeah, but we are getting ready for Santa” Sheep replied. “Me too” seconded Plafe. “You know I read that you celebrate Diwali too, guess what I do too, Plafe, just like you” I commented. “No, we only celebrate Christmas, don’t we Sheep?” replied Plafe. (N: 8/06/10-a)*

Amelia (OA) had commented earlier, Plafe was a follower; he copied what Sheep did, and said. I could sense that he was deliberately avoiding speaking with me about his background, and just wanted to be ‘like Sheep’. I remembered the first day I was introduced to him, he said, “I only speak Australian like Sheep. Don’t I Sheep” (N: 1/06/10-a). Then I was more concerned with how he defined ‘speaking Australian’.

*We were seated at the play dough table. “I am making, pronti, pronti”. Moo pinched a bit of play dough and kneaded it and rolled out with a rolling pin. “See, Prasanna, have some. This is how my mum and nannu makes it” offered Moo. “Can I have some, I love roti. But I can’t have too much, because I get itchy” (Seaweed). Moo said, “it is pronti. I have it all the time. I have it...*
with yoghurt. You tear it like this and dip it and eat”. Plafe sits afar with Sheep and watched us talk about roti. (N: 8/06/10-b)

This was Moo’s favourite activity, and she made roti, and most children in the room knew this was her favourite dish. Seaweed and Tin (øA) used to join us, to talk about their roti preferences, but Plafe never did. His silencing continued. Jan and I were in the yard.

“Prasanna, this is so wrong. My nephew who goes to school, now does not want to take noodles or rice anymore. He doesn’t even talk to my sister-in-law when she goes to school. I feel bad. We have to do something. Everything is food, noodles or bread. He now only takes sandwiches. How bad is that? I am worried. My son might do the same. I don’t want my son to grow up thinking being Chinese is bad” Jan said worriedly. “I understand, I used to feel the same too. My son used to bring food home without eating from kinder. During primary school it was hard, he would only take sandwiches but bring the whole thing back, because he didn’t like eating them, but would not take anything else. I don’t know by the time he got to secondary school he had lots of Indian and Sri Lankan friends, they all used to take rice with vegetables and dhal. He said because there were so many in their group the boys could not tease them about the food. I still felt that is not going to change anything” I said. “I am worried we have to do something. I really am interested in this (my study). Here in this centre, it is all the same. It is different where I used to work before. They were close to migrant resource centre. They used catering to have different food all the time. So children and staff got used to eating different types of food. Here it is the same, very Aussie (Jan). (N: 8/06/10-f)

Jan and I shared our ‘othered’ experiences, and for Jan, rejection of noodles could lead to rejection of one’s ‘Chinese’ boundary identity, and she spoke with her experiential knowledge. I told her how my son overcame this by excluding ‘self’ with peers who ate similar food, those from South East Asian community. Jan challenged current practices at the centre that failed to practise ‘difference’. This was her key concern. I had always questioned just presenting food to include cultures. Jan challenged my understandings; how will children know about practising ‘difference’ if I don’t express and exhibit ‘difference”? I critically thought about Plafe’s behaviour and I resolved to engage in discussing my ‘different’ food, faith and festival practices. Plafe’s behaviour changed, and he began to engage in conversations that reflected his ethnic origin with confidence. I shared my observation with Jan and Amelia,

“Plafe has started to speak Hindi, and talk about his background in front of Sheep, and he stands up for himself. He debated with Sheep about Santa the other day, as he continued to argue that Santa at the shopping centre was not real, just a man in a costume. I used to think
props are not needed, but if you don’t have that food around or someone to talk about different ways of doing things children never seem to then talk about it” I said excitedly. (N: 25/06/10-d)

Amelia too had observed Plafe’s recently found confidence. Amelia (OA) again suggested using EYLF (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) to include ‘othered’ ways of viewing the world, and Amelia, Jan and I collaboratively worked on strategies to do so. Amelia went on holidays and what followed shattered my confidence in action research, and my own conduct.

It was lunch time. Plafe was not eating. He continued to laugh, talk and just push the sausages around on his plate. “Plafe, you should start eating. Look most of your friends have finished what was in their plate” I said. “I don't like this, can I leave it?” Plafe asked me. “Plafe eat your food. No, tricks this time, stop talking and eat your food” Annie (OA) spoke to Plafe. “He asked me if he could leave it” I informed Annie. “Stop talking and eat. Don’t worry about him, he has been doing this since he was 6 months old. He talks too much and he doesn’t eat his food” Annie said. “Did you hear that, Annie says that you have always been not eating your food, come on, what is going to make you eat?” I asked Plafe. “I will if I can have rotis. I love roti” Plafe replied. (N: 28/06/10-b)

When Plafe turned and said, ‘roti’, I wondered whether our shared background and his newly found confidence had made him openly state his desire.

“What is it, I don’t know. I haven’t had that before” Jan asked me. “It is just flat bread and it is made fresh and we have it with dhal or vegetables” I explained. “Or even butter” Plafe added. “You can even have it with jam, it is yum” (Tin, φA). “We have to make it then for these children” (Jan). “I don’t think we should just make it for Moo, Tin and Plafe, all the children in the group can have it. Then they won’t feel different. We have bread and similarly we can have roti one day a week in the menu. But it is hard to make Jan, you need practice to roll out the roti. It is hard” I said. “No, you can buy it in bulk at the Indian shop. That is what my mum does. She buys lots of it and heats it up when I go home every day” (Plafe). “My mum does that too” (Tin). “We can do that then, that is not hard” Jan reassured me. (N: 28/06/10-c)

I enacted my role as a participatory action researcher, and I was elated as we planned to make roti for all the children regularly. I shook as I heard the voice of ‘whiteness’, Pat (OA), a 3 year old boy, defended the boundaries of ‘whiteness’ and screamingly refused to have roti because he was ‘white’ and ‘roti’ was for ‘brown kids’. I challenged him, “You should try... I have roti, and bread like you” and Pat spat at me. I did not mind being spat at and that he rejected ‘roti’, but he rejected our ‘brownness’, a fate that we hadn’t and can’t
escape unless ‘whiteness’ gets coloured. There was a morbid silence, and children consoled me. Jan and I quietly waited for Amelia (OA) to return.

The next week when I was in the room, “I am going for my lunch, I am hungry” I said. “What are you having for lunch Prasanna?” asked Kangaroo (OA). “I brought roti, remember, the flat bread” I replied. “Oooh, stinky poo, smelly” Pat and Princess (OA) waved their hands in front of their noses and laughed together. I stayed back rather than leave for lunch then. I sat with the children at the lunch table. “I am not having roti tonight Prasanna, I am having rice” Moo said.

(N: 13/07/10-e, f)

Pat again ridiculed our ‘difference’. I decided never to speak about roti again. Moo too changed her practices, and she said that she was having rice that night.

The next week, Amelia was back from her holidays. I entered the room and sat down, Moo came and sat in my lap, looked at me and said, “Prasanna, I don’t like you because you have brown skin” (Moo). We were shocked, adults and children alike. “You hurt my feelings by saying that. You are sitting in my lap and you also have brown skin”, I replied. “No, I am white, not brown” (Moo). “But you are brown, your mum and dad they are also brown”, I said. “No, my mum is white and I am white too” (Moo). “No, don’t tell my mum. But I am white” (Moo). (N: 14/07/10-d)

I shared the ‘roti’ incident with Amelia, wondering whether Moo’s behaviour was related to that. After all Moo’s favourite food was roti (pronti). Amelia consoled me and said that we could make roti every week with all the children, and she would ask Annie (OA) to get the ingredients. Annie had heard Pat’s comments about roti, and she believed that it was his personality. Annie asked me to download images of food and laminate this to expose children to diversity. The ripples churned my insides deeply,

- Should I have left Plafe to say and do whatever he wanted? Was my intervention into Pat’s food preferences wrong? Why did I say it?

The next day, I faced Katrina (OA), as Katrina suddenly questioned the conversation I had with Plafe about Santa at the shopping centre. Weeks ago, I agreed with Plafe when he said Santa at the shopping centres was a man in Santa costume. Katrina, the ‘Other Australian’ defended and guarded Australia and the identity of ‘Australian’, by insisting ‘98% of Australians’ as Santa believers. She continued the maintenance of this understanding by linking Santa’s veracity with religion, family value and childhood innocence, and made me feel like someone who had come to take all that away. Finally she connected roti and Santa by stating, what I said about Santa was like prohibiting me from having roti, and equated
my feelings as the same as saying Santa at the shopping centre was not real. She withdrew from the project that evening, and I was devastated.

- Did Amelia, Annie and Katrina discursively respond to the ‘roti’ incident?

Ganga, I still hurt from what happened, please help me understand.

I: Ganga, I am guilty, I could have kept quiet. Should I have left Plafe to emulate Sheep, ‘Other Australian’? Was my intervention into Pat’s food preferences wrong? Why did I say it?

Ganga: When you met Plafe, he was ‘boundary committed’, and he was ‘self-othering’ and ‘self alienating’ you, as you represented his ethnic origin (see, p. 195). You saw how he sought the approval of ‘Other Australian’ repeatedly and you wanted to change his behaviour. Taylor (2004) illustrates how this form of behaviour causes “existential dizziness” in migrants and they begin to ignore their own traditions, worldviews and language, and they allow to be absorbed by American whiteness. You can’t escape your knowledge, experiences and how they contribute to your understandings. You reacted to Jan, your role as an action researcher, and most of all your own boundary experiences of having samosa, gulab jamun and singing Hindi songs with Plafe. Jan was there to challenge ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ with you (see, p. 201), and she wanted to ‘diffuse boundaries’ with all the ‘self narration’ and ‘critical recognising’ you shared. You were both ‘othered Australian’ but you stood up against dominance, and you wanted your ‘voice’ to be heard. All of these make you who you are, and what you did. Added to this was your postcolonial subjectivity, you saw Pat’s ‘whiteness’ as soon as he said, ‘roti was for brown kids, and he was white’. I can understand your pain and your emotions. Pat, the ‘white kid’ made you, an adult feel like a ‘brown kid’. Such is the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ in Australia, you have experienced this before, did you forget?

I: So what did I do something wrong?

Ganga: It wasn’t wrong, you acted discursively to ‘resist’ and ‘risk’ your presence and your study. You challenged the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’, and most of all you tried to initiate change in the identity of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ (see, p. 201). Moo, was gravitating to ‘whiteness’ and many do. According to Derman-Sparks and Ramsay (2006), many studies conducted in America had concluded that very frequently, African American children wished or believed that they were ‘white’, whilst their European American counterparts seldom wanted to be ‘black’. What happened just reflected their studies.
I: But, not everyone reacted to what I said in the same manner. Did Amelia, Annie and Katrina then subjectively respond to the ‘roti’ incident?

Ganga: Of course they did. Amelia, the ‘Other Australian’ was your ‘white hybrid’. She embraced what you brought, your ‘difference’, your experiential knowledge, and everything you stood for. Remember, she was ready to challenge ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ the moment you walked in, you realised your ‘voice’ with her (see, p. 191). Annie was ‘Boundary denying’ (186), so she ‘Theorised’ and ‘Legitimised’ her inaction by justifying what Pat said was his personality. You know how she understood, Plafe’s reluctance to eat, “Stop talking and eat. Don’t worry about him, he has been doing this since he was 6 months old. He talks too much and he doesn’t eat his food” (Annie). How did she handle Palfe’s refusal to eat? She did not acknowledge the culture behind what was being served every day, but blamed Plafe’s talkativeness. Therefore, automatically she also suggested that you present images. Katrina took the uppermost control of the nation and national identity (see p. 181), as she was ‘Boundary defending’ fiercely, and she wanted to protect the identity of ‘Australian’, from you, the ‘minority’. You know how Appadurai (2006) talks about minority/majority language and how it creates hierarchical relationship and marginalisation. Like Spears (1997) comments, you, Jan and Amelia were those individuals who could topple the structure, her ‘Power’. This ‘Other Australian’, first engaged in ‘Othering’ to outline what was ‘98% Australian’ and she ‘Hierarchically oothered’ you as a threat to children’s innocence and ‘Australian values’. Remember, how she connected food, faith and festival by saying, “What if I say, you can’t have roti to you? How would you feel about it? It is like that. You have to leave things as they are sometimes. Nothing has to change. For some minority Australia does not have to change”. She punished you for speaking ‘Santa difference’. She was just being a loyal ‘Australian’ subject, and she retrieved that ‘Power’ when she axed you. I still remember her final words, “We still like having you here you know. That is not the problem. Saying Santa is not real is a big problem. That is wrong, I know it is the truth, but it is a mistake to say so”. You forgot your colour and your origin; after all you will never be accepted as ‘Australian’, if you practice ‘difference’. Only by pledging your loyalty to this identity ‘Australian’, you can get closer to being accepted. You did learn from it didn’t you?

I: Ganga, you know how much it affected me, but that is what she wanted me to realise I suppose. I became cautious to disrupt what was already in Australia and ‘Australian’ again. Ganga I understand now, how the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily
‘Forbidden Fs’ practices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘øthered Australian’ subjects in Australia? I will tell you.

The ‘Boundary Defending’ ‘Other Australian’ maintained the food, faith and festival of ‘Australian’ with definite ideas about majority and minority. She was there to guard and punish anyone who challenged this identity with the realisation of ultimate ‘Power’. The ‘Boundary Denying’ ‘Other Australian’ on the other hand was soft, and her ‘Othering’ put ‘Self’ down and elated the attributes of ‘øthered’. Nevertheless, she too maintained the practices of ‘øthered’ as being outside what was ‘Australian’. She swaddled and cocooned the identity of ‘Australian’ with covert ‘Power’, by making me feel cherished, but never allowing my ‘øtheredness’ to influence the daily practices of what was ‘Australian’. The ‘øthered’ either submitted, and felt contented although distanced from their own kind, or suppressed, felt helpless, and surrendered to the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’. The ‘Boundary Diffusing’ ‘Other Australian’, worked with ‘øthered’ to disperse ‘Power’, and enabled our ‘voices’ to be heard. I was devastated when the centre withdrew. I miss my ‘white hybrid’, and she was willing to walk with us, and with our ‘øthered’ complexities.

The saddest outcome from this was even young ‘Other Australian’ children like Pat defended ‘whiteness’ aggressively, and young ‘øthered Australian’ children became conscious and suppressed and submitted to the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’.

Ganga: Not bad, what about the next boundary layer.

Contesting Tongue ties of ‘Australian’

The following are identity practices of how we contested the language of ‘Australian’.

Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Pookey and Pookey’s parents

Pookey’s parents ‘øthered Australian’, migrated to Australia not very long ago, and they speak five languages fluently. They said that they wanted Pookey to believe she can be both and it is okay to be both in front of everyone.

Bella, ‘øthered Australian’ staff, had been most conscious about providing choices for children. She often challenged what this meant, and whose choice and how these choices were still adult centred. Bella and I had the most intense discussions about poststructural theories, and the practicality of their application.

Pookey’s mother introduced Pookey by saying that she could speak Tamil. When I spoke in Tamil, Pookey was very reluctant, and she said that I should only speak in English and not Tamil at the centre. I approached mum during pickup.
“Do you know Pookey always says that I should speak in English and not Tamil here. She also
says Tamil music for home and car. She doesn’t even acknowledge if I speak in Tamil” I
commented to Pookey’s mum. “Actually, this is something we are noticing too. She always
speaks in English to us. It never mattered earlier when my parents were here, as she would
speak in Tamil to them and English with us. But now she insists on responding only in English
even if we speak in Tamil to her..... She doesn’t speak on the phone to my parents, because she
has to speak Tamil” (Pookey’s parents). (N: 21/06/10-b; 20/07/10-g; 4/08/10-a)

As a speaker of English as Additional Language (EAL), and as a mother, I knew how
Pookey’s mother felt when Pookey refused to speak in Tamil. My deepest feelings and
emotions are linked to Tamil, and I would never be able to share those feelings with my
children if they did not speak Tamil. I persisted with my Tamil speaking at the centre, and
Pookey continued to ignore me. I spoke to Cathy (OA) about this, and I shared what I heard
from Pookey’s parents. This was brought up during the meeting which was arranged for me
to re-explain my study to Katherine and Gina (OA). Cathy explained her attachment to her
linguistic background by saying that she missed hearing ‘Australian’ when she was
overseas, and Gina accused me of speaking in a language that everyone couldn’t
understand, and that I should accept Pookey’s reluctance to speak Tamil.

I went into the other room after the meeting. “Selma (øA), you will tell me if it is not okay to
speak in Tamil with families and Thora and Sidya won’t you” I requested. “We were told off too,
been there Prasanna. That is why I tell you nothing will change. They have the power. Although
the Australians are migrants and come from somewhere, they think they own everything. It is to
do with power. Otherwise they will say like I told you, ‘go back to your land’. Don’t get me
wrong, I don’t want to say I am finding it hard or I have been treated badly, but my experience is
just move on. See you need to change” (Selma). (N: 28/07/10-d)

I did not expect this reply from her. Although she did not ask me to stop speaking Tamil,
her reply did not permit me to resist ‘Other Australian’ who controlled our linguistic
environment. But, she spoke about the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’ in excluding us, if we
did not change as expected. The ripples in me were bubbling again,

- Should I have ignored Pookey’s first language attrition, and should I only speak
  in a language that everyone understood?

I resisted and continued to speak Tamil with Pookey. After many weeks, she replied to my
question in Tamil, without just nodding or shaking her head in front of her peers, and I
shared this with her mum that evening.
This change was acknowledged by many bilingual staff at the centre, and discussions around languages development in children became central. During the staff meeting, Bella suggested a change in language practices of all staff to aid the cultural identity development of especially bicultural/bilingual children.

“We can sing songs, like I beg of you one thing. Each staff if you could translate one song in the child’s language it is so good for the child who is speaking that language.” (Bella) (N: 22/09/10-b)

Most staff with EAL agreed, but Cathy, the ‘Other Australian’ immediately defended the identity of losing something ‘really Australian’. I had always believed Cathy embraced change and ‘difference’, but this time she was reluctant to invite newness. I felt deeply troubled, and my ripples became worse,

- What was Cathy discursively practise when she said, ‘we are losing what is Australian’?

Ganga, I just don’t understand, help.

I: Ganga, all those early childhood theories speak of supporting children’s first language, especially to retain generational ties (see, Siraj-Baltchford & Clarke, 2000; Arthur, 2001; Chantler, 2004; Clyne, 2005; Fleer & Raban, 2005). But, Gina and Katherine, ‘Other Australian’ early childhood staff questioned my attempts to do so. You tell me, should I have ignored Pookey’s first language attrition, and should I only speak in a language that everyone understood?

Ganga: I don’t think you have fully understood the ‘Power’ of discursively practise ‘Australian’. Did you hear Cathy say, “although ... everyone spoke English, I was dying to hear someone who spoke Australian”’. She was ‘Nationalising’, ‘Othering’ what was ‘Australian’. Then Gina and Katherine followed, and they wanted you to stop talking in Tamil with Pookey’s parents and accept Pookey’s loss of first language by ‘Theorising’ to ‘Legitimise’ their inaction and maintain ‘Insulation’ of ideological ‘Australian’. Viruru (2001) questions such attitudes as she equates such restricting attitudes towards languages as dominant acts aiming to colonise the ‘othered’. However, every ‘Other Australian’ with their ‘Boundary Defending’ discourse (see, p. 181), took ‘Ownership’ and as I always say, maintained their ‘Power’, the power with which they controlled the identity of the nation.
and their subjects. Even Selma ‘othered Australian’ knew that, and she acknowledged the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’, and ‘critically recognised’ their ‘migrant’ beginnings (see, p. 197), but stood powerless and resorted to ‘silencing’. The ‘Other Australian’ wouldn’t want to think they are like us, because to be ‘othered Australian’ is to be secondary citizens, we don’t have that ideological support, but they do, as they are protecting what is ‘Australian’, their national language, as law abiding primary citizens. You know about Citizenship test for migrants (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006), that tests one’s proficiency in English before granting Australian citizenship. Theirs is a powerful discourse. You ‘risked’ and ‘resisted’ (see, p. 201), you wouldn’t listen, you have to learn to move on, like Selma says. Why do you have to be so tied to your postcolonial ideologies?

I: Ganga, they are not my ideologies, they are real, aren’t we in a postcolonial cauldron, isn’t Australia a postcolonial nation, and I don’t want to become ‘boundary conscious’ (see, p. 197). When I heard Cathy at the staff meeting, I was shocked. You heard what she said, “Road to Gundagai and many more like that. It is really very Australian. For me I miss that, I wish we would start singing those again, we are losing what is Australian with all this new stuff”. Isn’t this English, sounded very English to me! What was Cathy discursively practising when she said, ‘we are losing what is Australian’?

Ganga: You stick to your ideologies as ‘real’ and what right do you have to accuse others. Cathy was protecting ‘Australian’, again by ‘Boundary Defending’ (see, p. 181), as she was overwhelmed with what all the change you with ‘othered Australian’ brought in. As a loyal ‘Australian’ subject she had to maintain the identity of the national subject. Like Loomba (2005) comments, in most settler countries, the group that is politically governing these lands and peoples believes they have an indigenous identity, separate to their colonial beginnings, but the colonised still see them as their colonial masters. Cathy, and many ‘Other Australian’ feel that they have separated from their colonial ties, but you know that their tongues are still tied to our colonial masters, and their ‘Power’ is realised as a result of this. The ‘Other Australian’ stopped your ‘othered’ influence didn’t she?

I: Okay, it is all to do with ‘Power’. I will tell you how the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily ‘Tongue ties’ practices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ subjects in Australia. The ‘Other Australian’ believe that their national linguistic identity is unique, and this understanding comes from the nationalisation of language, that stems from colonial monolingual understandings of nation, national identity and national language. They defend and guard their national linguistic environment from change. This is how ‘othered Australian’ succumb and submit to ‘Power’, like Pookey, Selma and Bella and
many others. I am still not convinced, change is possible, Amelia was an ‘Other Australian’, she was concerned when Plafe said that he spoke Australian like Sheep. Jan ‘othered Australian’ too resisted monolingual environment, she read and sang in Chinese at the centre with all the children. Remember how we decided to add books and magazines in varied languages in children’s library bags to take, we were ready to embark on ‘critical action’ together, ‘Other and othered Australian’.

Ganga: I see, you still have your courage and optimism, dream on. I have to leave soon.

I: Please stay with me, this is my final boundary stream.

Contesting Terra strikes of ‘Australian’

In the following discussions I have included the ‘voices’ of Amelia and Cathy (see Chapter 7 for their background information), the ‘Other Australian’ who dared to risk and resist what was ‘Australian’ with Ganga, ‘othered Australian’. Due to their marginal disposition, in many ways, I felt they were ‘othered’ too.

Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Jan and Amelia

The backgrounds of Jan and Amelia have been included earlier.

This was my second day with Amelia and Jan. During our lunch break, I shared my concerns with Amelia, especially Seaweed’s dislike for her brown skin, and how she spoke of national identities using our skin colour (N: 8/06/10-h).

“I know we had white Australia policy up until the 1970’s” (Amelia). Jan joins us as most children are sleeping. “What policy, I don’t know” (Jan). “Like people who were not white were not allowed into Australia. People like you [Jan] and Prasanna were kept out of Australia with deliberate policies by the government” (Amelia).

Amelia, ‘Other Australian’ recognised critical historical events that could still attribute ‘whiteness’ with the ‘Power’ of owning ‘Australianness’ the national identity and controlling the national borders. She created an environment of political awareness. I felt extremely comfortable speaking to her and Jan, and at that time, my participatory action research seemed realisable. Our exchange of stories continued, we all found our ‘voice’ as we narrated our ‘othered’ experiences.

“Oh, I can’t believe that really. No wonder, when I walk down the streets or shop, I am always seen as ‘not normal’. No one has really attacked me but I know Aussies think I shouldn’t be here. They think Australia is just for them. But we are all here. I work and my son goes to school and we do everything like you but” (Jan).
Jan spoke to Amelia as if she was not intimidated or inhibited by Amelia’s ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’. As Amelia heard Jan, she empathised and understood how ideologies were circulated by media and traditional practices of multicultural inclusion. I felt and sensed change, a change we could envision, grasp and enact together.

“See the media doesn’t show that. They always say things like ‘Unaustralian’ and that is usually a migrant or an aborigine. I do talk about cultures and do all that next term but what does that do. We do different countries of the world, but what does that mean? I know these children won’t feel so accepted when they go out. But we just do it because it has been done like that always. Let us do Anti-bias curriculum and can you tell me how we can change this. Let us send a newsletter to parents about what we can do next term. We have to start somewhere and I don’t want to do what I have always been doing” (Amelia).

The ‘voice’ of ‘othered’ grew louder, as we schemed to change what was perceived and presented as ‘Australian’.

“I sang in Chinese the other day, you were not here. Some children sang. Princess (OA, 4 yr. old girl) asked me, why are we singing this. I told her that this song is Chinese and it is my language. She said immediately, ‘oh, Chinese make everything’; I was hurt” (Jan). “What is wrong in saying that?” (Amelia). “No, it is not that. It is what she implied” I corrected. “Yes, that is not what it means, you know how everyone goes on and on about how everything here is made in China and Chinese are taking over, it is that” (Jan). “See, I would have never thought that being what I am” (Amelia).

Jan and I stood together with our ‘othered’ experiences and understandings, and Amelia stood outside us, and I underlined and named her. Jan and I felt the hurt, inflicted by a young child, with the ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ she possessed.

“You are white, how can you like us, your experiences are different” I added. “Yes, I was hurt. I told her, Yes, Chinese make everything because we are clever” (Jan). “I hope it is okay to say you are white Amelia. I don’t know otherwise how to say you are different from me, and we are different. I am not the same and I don’t want to be accepted only if I am like you. Please let me know if you don’t like being addressed like that, we can think of something together” I apologised.

The above stirred my coloured visions, and my categorisation of individuals. I called Amelia ‘white’ and later apologised.

“Don’t be silly, you are making us think. You will have to tell me, otherwise I just do the same thing done for years and years. If you never have shared this, I would have never thought it is wrong when Princess said, ‘Chinese make everything’” (Amelia).
Amelia willingly entangled herself with our complexities, and she was with ‘us’, the ‘othered’ and I excluded her. These were not just ripples, but my emotional waves.

I ask you now Ganga, tell me,

I: Why did I call Amelia ‘white’? Was I engaging in unwarranted dualistic understandings of events?

Ganga: Where do I begin, remember the first time you met Katrina, just before this conversation with Amelia, what did she tell you, “There is nothing wrong with Australia. It is like an umbrella. There, Remi is Indian, she is Sri Lankan and they are as Australian as I am”. You heard how she defended Australia (see, p. 181) by symbolising the nation with an image of shelter and saviour, that is ‘whiteness’ and that is colonialism. Katrina, ‘Other Australian’ would only accept those who were loyal to ‘Australian values’. In the name of unification, she wanted to subjectify and dominate all individuals under this ‘umbrella’, the nation and the national identity. I think you saw that too, and you challenged her vision by asking her to unpack ‘Australian values’. She sensed your postcolonial resistance and she excluded and accused Greeks, Italians and the owners of this land of keeping to their groups, and justified her ‘Ownership’ and ‘Insulation’ of maintaining ‘whiteness’, the ‘whiteness’ that is attached to colonialism, not just the colour as ‘Australian values’. You have read Frankenberg (1993), and Katrina practised that “Essentialist racism”; she definitely believed outsiders as a threat to Australia’s solidarity. You heard her when you said that you were going to the council to find out about the name of that land before colonial occupation and what did she say, “It is NAIDOC week soon, but if you are having indigenous flag, we should also have Union Jack displayed”. That is ‘whiteness’ and she wouldn’t let go of that ‘Power’, her control on the colour of this nation. The ‘Other Australian’ wanted to retain visions of the “imagined community”, the nation that is Australia founded upon “Bristishness” and all that was “Anglo-Saxon” (Stratton and Ang, 1998).

I: But Ganga, this country declared that it was multicultural and abolished ‘White Australia Policy’ (1901), remember the famous speech by Grassby (1973). And I saw and called Amelia ‘white’ that is wrong.

Ganga: You are nothing more than colonial clone, you are unable to get past your humanistic ‘we are all the same’ attitude. Allard (2006) calls this a myth, “taken for granted truth”, and White (2002) states this understanding stems from western enlightenment discourse of humanism and individualism. You think you are all strong and postcolonial,
but you operate within the same discourse and you too are reinforcing the ideological ‘Australian’. Otherwise, why would you have doubts with calling Amelia ‘white’? Your subjective experiences were different and that did surface from that exchange. The ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ possessed by Princess, a 4 year old ‘Other Australian’ could hurt you and Jan, because you didn’t and could never own these.

I: But, we had similar visions and hoped for similar changes. She was willing to ‘Resist’ and ‘Risk’ to bring about equity and justice, to empower all individuals and cultural groups as ‘Australian’. Her ‘Critical othering’, in combination with ‘Critical Recognising’ enabled our ‘othered voices’ to be heard. She wanted to practise ‘difference’ for different practices to be acknowledged as ‘Australian’. Wasn’t she the “race cognisant” that Frankenberg (1993) talks about?

Ganga: Yes, she was all that (see. P. 191), but even she couldn’t escape the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’, and she knew you couldn’t as well. Remember Amelia’s last words, I still do, “What does Katrina know about living in this white world? She is white and lives in this white world, but for children like Moo and Seaweed what they feel and go through day after day is a reality. I hope we are able to continue to work on skin colours consistently even after you leave”.

I: So, ‘white Power’ Ganga, is that what influences cultural identities of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’?

Ganga: Do you still doubt it. Let me go.

I: One last one.

Ganga contests ‘Australian’ with Mary and Cathy

Mary ‘othered Australian’ staff always spoke with me about teaching children to love, care and share. For Mary that was the ultimate goal of early childhood educational care.

Cathy (Other Australian), see Chapter 7 for background information.

I heard from many ‘othered Australian’ staff about the lack of respect, care and affection as values of, or what ‘Australian’ was. I became more and more concerned, as there seemed to be no end to their dichotomous constructions against, ‘Australian’. I specifically remembered what Mary said when I first met her,

“Because in Australia we are in a bottle. Australia advocates multiculturalism, but everything is the same. Because you are so scared to be yourself in fear of rejection, being rejected. You can’t
emerge and show who you are. I have a baggage, a baggage I came here with. But I have put it
down to just fit in with what is here. To emerge as what is Filipino there is no strength. It will
disturb what is already here. I do want to do that but not many people will hold hands with me, if
I do that. I am a Filipino and I want to be that. My husband understands me for that and if we
have children I don’t want to bring them up like Australians. I want them to love and share and
show their emotions and feelings” (Mary). (N: 17/08/10-e)

I wanted to change this by speaking with ‘Other Australian’. I had become quite attached to
Cathy, as we had such lengthy discussions and she repeatedly wondered about cultural
participation.

“You know the funny thing is since you came here I am much more aware of many differences. I
am white middle class Anglo Australian and I took that for granted. This society fits my values”
(Cathy). You are truly different, when did you become aware of your difference that you are
‘other’, and began to name yourself as white middle class Anglo Australian” I asked. “But,
many staff and families don’t think about white Anglo culture and values about independence,
they think Aussies don’t care about their children and it is not that. It is just a different way of
caring about children” I said. (N: 6/10/10-g)

Cathy recognised her privileges, and she named her group and how the national culture fits
her values. I immediately shared my observations.

“I know but it is childcare, we just have to bring them up like that, that independence is
necessary. All theories talk about its importance. I was looking out the window this afternoon at
the play group with their Chinese mothers. The mothers fed them, wiped their faces. These
children will go to school and it is not that they will be failures, because the mothers help them.
For some reason here, we think this is not school readiness. But this is Asian culture” (Cathy).

Cathy said these were her cultural values and reverted to distinguishing ‘Asian’ culture, like
Kitten’s mum and simultaneously normalised what was practised with school readiness.
Then she blamed it on training as follows.

Cathy and I met to discuss our focus for my final staff meeting. “Thank you for all your time and
understanding. I think sometimes there aren’t cultures, because when I speak with you we share
similar goals, values, aspirations and expectations. So is culture not there or it doesn’t matter” I
commented. “No, no, culture is there, we react similarly to an event but we respond differently.
Like, you are passionate and fiery and your culture has taught you to respond with so much
feeling and emotion, where as my culture has taught me to be aloof and respond with much more
control and diplomacy. I am slow and bland” (Cathy). (N: 26/10/10-c)
Cathy distinguished our cultures, as being not exactly the aspirations and goals that we share, but more to do with how we respond to events. I felt may be she was stating something that was more obvious to her, because she was seeing my culture as an outsider. I came back to how cultures were segregated by families and staff again.

“I should write about this conversation, especially because families seem to alienate themselves as if their culture is different to what is Australian. Staff do it too. But we need to show that is not what you want and that you keep wondering why staff do not bring their cultures into their practices” I replied.

Therefore, I underlined perhaps we could enable staff and families to transform what is ‘Australian’, from being private to public practice.

“Staff are not trained to think critically, they just do the same thing. You have to do something at uni to train them to think differently” (Cathy). “Yes, agree it is to do with training, but were you taught differently that you are now thinking differently Cathy? You say white Anglo, middle class Australian when you talk about yourself” I asked. “Why can’t staff see their cultures? Staff do not have the time and are not trained, so they just prod along. Anyway we will make them see cultures” (Cathy).

Again, she said that it was my responsibility and I had to do something different, and this was my last chance and I and I repeatedly nudged her understandings of her ‘white culture’ and what it stands for in terms of early childhood educational care and cultural inclusion. Cathy agreed to speak with staff, and she spoke.

“I know it is the white Anglo culture to say ‘you’ll be right mate’ to a child who is crying or needs help and it is so white, because we think we all have to....” (Cathy). There was silence and restlessness. (N: 27/10/10-c)

Cathy risked and named her culture, but she was punished.

“Do you know, I don’t think the staff liked it when I said white-Anglo culture. I know the staff, especially Tina is sensitive. They are Australian and they keep it like that” (Cathy). “I am sorry. I think I started it” I apologised. “No, no. This is what it is. I should not have said it. That took away all the warmth and cosiness we had at the start” (Cathy). (N: 27/10/10-d)

She lost their friendliness.

The next day as Cathy and I were having lunch, “The staff meeting, I didn’t feel okay. I should not have said white Anglo, I know it doesn’t go very well with staff. I understand what you mean,
but the staff here are tired. You have to train them at uni to think critically” (Cathy). (N: 28/10/10-c)

We were back to where we began, and I couldn’t understand, my ripples were getting murky.

Ganga come back, I need some clarity.

I: What happened to Cathy, why did she do this to me? I just wanted her to unpack with staff, the underlying culture of what was practised in early childhood settings, I didn’t ask for much did I?

Ganga: Do you really think that is not asking much. You were asking for a slice of ‘white Australian Power’. Didn’t you pick up how she eluded and changed her strategies? Go back to p. 186 to refresh your memory with ‘Boundary denying’ discourse. To me she was a perfect example of what Frankenberg (1993) would call discursively practising “colour power evasiveness”, akin to colonial discourse. You were blinded by your commitment and your friendship with Cathy.

I: Ganga, you are too severe, remember she began by naming who she was, ‘white middle class Anglo-Australian’ and she acknowledged her privilege, as a culture that was practised by the society. She was not evading, this was ‘Critical Othering’ and ‘Critical Recognising’ (see, p. 191).

Ganga: But, see then how she named the mother who was feeding her child, as ‘Asian’ culture. Why? For all you know this mother perhaps is a second or third generation Australian. She was practising ‘Australian’ culture wasn’t she, why ‘Asian’?

I: Yeah, may be. But then why do you say she was practising colonial discourse? Isn’t that just Australian?

Ganga: You are confused indeed. What is nation and nationalism? These are constructs that are propagated to dominate people, by invariably producing the ‘other’ against one central culture (Young, 1995; Ashcroft et al, 2000; Hage, 2000). Therefore, it is a discourse of dominance. This is about centralising ‘Self’ through nationhood and national identity and positioning ‘other’ around the centre. That is what is problematic for many authors as they say it results in racism and hierarchical, comparative relationships (Brooks, 2002; Weedon, 2004; Leeman & Reid, 2006; Connolly, 2008; Merenstein, 2008). Colonialism is a discourse of dominance, and as Loomba (2005) states, one need not necessarily separate the
coloniser and the colonised in postcolonial societies, but resisting any form of dominance is resisting colonialism. Therefore, the discourse of dominating groups with narrow constructions of national identity ‘Australian’ is a colonial discourse. Moreover, what about Katherine’s ‘Union Jack’ and Cathy’s ‘Road to Gundagai’ and ‘really Australian’; aren’t these symbols of colonialism? You are contributing to the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘colonial dominance’ with all your confusion.

I: I told you I am confused. But Cathy did it in the end. It is the staff, they were reluctant.

Ganga: You want me to believe this. No, you pushed her and she reluctantly agreed. Remember she started by ‘Theorising’ with staff training and ‘Legitimising’ her inaction. She wanted you to act remember, rather than acting, she was ‘Insulating’ ‘Self’, and didn’t want to lose the ‘Power’ of being in the nucleus. She was denying her boundary (see. p. 186).

I: Just like Said (1978), you are regarding all acts of ‘Other Australian’ through colonial discourse, and you are working with stringent dichotomies.

Ganga: Okay, so be it. Anyway she was brought back into the system by the staff. They taught her a lesson. Do you think they retracted all the warmth and cosiness? No, she lost her ‘Power’, the ‘Power’ that came from being a loyal ‘Australian’ subject. Hall (2003) specifically underlines how this ‘Power’ is directly linked to practising one’s subjectivity, and ‘Power’ leaves when the subject fails to practise that subjective behaviour. She went on and on about it and came back to ‘Boundary denying’ for that ‘Power’. Go on you do it; it is your problem, not hers. She is warm and cosy again with being ‘just Australian’.

I: Tell me, how did the ideological ‘Australian’ effect and affect the daily ‘Terra strikes’ practices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ subjects in Australia?

Ganga: I will say it one word, ‘Power’. I quote Foucault below.

“Here the shift did not consist in analysing Power with a capital “P”, or even institutions of power, or the general or institutional forms of domination. Rather it meant studying the techniques and procedures by which one sets about conducting the conduct of others”.

(Foucault, 2010, p. 4)

This is the ‘Power’ with which the behaviours of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered Australian’ were controlled. Remember Weedon (1987) and Blaise (2005b) talk about ‘power’ in poststructural feminism. According to Weedon (1987), power is the vehicle of
control or the lack of it in the choice of a discourse by that subject, and subjective identities
e are made political and central to serve the interest of some groups. Weedon (1987) makes
identity central, as it attaches specific subjective discursive practices with power. Therefore,
the discourses that maintained the ‘Power’ of nation and national identity effected and
affected daily practices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘oothered Australian’. Not to forget the
national identity of ‘Australian’ is still attached to ‘whiteness’ and colonial symbols of food,
faith and festival, language and cultural dominance. This is what you were contesting as
‘Other Australian’ and ‘oothered Australian’, because for both groups expressing their
commitment to the ideology that is ‘Australian’ gave them ‘Power’ or ‘subjective power’
respectively. When you Amelia or Jan, resisted and disrupted this, remember, how you were
punished, and silenced. Remember what Katrina, ‘Other Australian’ said the day you
started, “We can’t let everyone in, this is our country shouldn’t we have a choice. Like I told
you Australia is an umbrella. We live together as Australians”. Therefore, at any given
time, those who naturally possess the attributes of national subject, are also endowed with
‘Power’ (Hage, 2000). The ‘Power’ to claim ‘Ownership’, ‘Self-Proliferate’, ‘Insulate’ and
‘Legitimate’ the maintenance of ‘Australian’, the ideological national identity (see, p. 181).
Now, you think about who had that ‘Power’.

I: I know ‘white Other Australian’. But Amelia challenged ‘Australian’, she was ‘white’,
and possessed all those cultural layers, yet she ‘Risked’ and ‘Resisted’ that ‘Power’ of
‘whiteness’.

Ganga: But she collaborated with you and Jan, the ‘oothered Australian’, who ‘resisted’ and
were willing to ‘risk’ their ‘subjective power’ (see, p. 191, 202). Together, you wanted to
change current understandings and practices about ‘Australian’ and ‘whiteness’. There are
many Katrina, Cathy ‘white Other Australian’, who with discourses of ‘Boundary
Defending’ and ‘Boundary Denying’ control ‘Australian’ and ‘Power’, and many Aruna,
Selma and Sheri, ‘oothered Australian’, who with discourses of ‘boundary committing’ and
‘boundary conscious’ reach out for ‘subjective power’ by becoming and being ‘Australian’.
Their discourses are supported by structures, and that is why you couldn’t expose or resist
colonial dominance. You know what Spears (1997) and Elliott (2010) say, the structures
have to support you to resist, or you need large groups of Amelia practising ‘Boundary
diffusing’ discourses with ‘oothered Australian’ like you and Jan.

I: What is all this about then? If all our daily cultural or boundary identities are mere
arbitrations of ideological ‘Power’, were our efforts to contest ideological ‘Australian’, in
‘oothered’ voices futile? You heard what all those ‘oothered Australian’ parents and staff said.
Mary said she would never feel strong practising her ethnic origin in Australia, and she said Australia’s multiculturalism is a fallacy, the ‘bottle’ that is ready to burst. Dora’s mum, ‘othered Australian’ said, “You know I am not like her, I am Chinese, I am Chinese. I never felt left out in Australia. It helps if you are western, so that you are not excluded and you feel Aussie. I am different from other Chinese here. I am not like them because I am western. Not so traditional, that way I am not excluded”. Is ‘Power’ omnipotent and omnipresent and indestructible?

Ganga: You tell me now, how you see the operation of ‘Power’.

I: Ganga, you brought to surface our undeniable daily reality, that we were all colonised by the ideological ‘Australian’, who represented, and was represented by the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’. I summarise below the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ through our silences and voices.

Our daily early childhood practices were silenced by ‘Power’ when,

- ‘Other Australian’ children overtly claimed the national identity with ‘whiteness’ and excluded ‘othered Australian’ with ‘brownness’.
- ‘othered Australian’ children denied their ‘brownness’, by developing a dislike for ‘brownness’ and a desire for ‘whiteness’, to show their commitment to ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’.
- ‘Other Australian’ staff defended ‘Australian’ identity by overtly negating their ‘whiteness’, its presence and its ‘Power’, or covertly denying their ‘whiteness’ and its ‘Power’ by expressing a desire for ‘tan’.
- ‘othered Australian’ staff and parents, who were discriminated and whose children were discriminated due to their ‘brownness’ were silenced because no one would ‘talk’ colour in this country.
- ‘Other Australian’ children defended ‘whiteness’ by colouring food with ‘white’ and ‘brown’, and ‘Other Australian’ staff used this to deny and defend the food, faith and festival practices of ‘Australian’.
- ‘othered Australian’ children whispered or ignored their food, faith and festival practices to show their commitment to ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’.
- ‘Other Australian’ staff repeatedly denied they have ‘nothing, no colour, no culture, no celebration’, and ‘nationalised’ ‘whiteness’ with ‘everyday’ and ‘everyone’ practices, and yet yearned for the colour, culture, and celebration of ‘othered Australian’ as ‘different’ to ‘Australian’.
‘othered Australian’ staff and children feared practising their ‘different’ food, faith and festival because of their experiential knowledge about the ‘Power’ of ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’, and thereby resolved to publically practising ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’ to be seen and accepted like ‘everyone’.

‘Other Australian’ children and staff defended ‘white Anglo-Saxon language’ by saying they spoke, heard and sang ‘really Australian’, when they spoke, heard and sang in English.

‘othered Australian’ children and staff muted their first languages to be heard speaking only ‘white Anglo-Saxon language’ as speaking ‘Australian’.

‘Other Australian’ staff defended and shut the borders of Australia and the identity of ‘Australian’ to all that is outside ‘whiteness’ through ‘Self’ declared ‘Australianness’.

‘othered Australian’ staff and parents succumbed to the power of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ to be accepted as ‘Australian’.

‘Other Australian’ staff excluded ‘othered’ cultural practices by naming these outside ‘Australianness’ and simultaneously maintained unnamed practices of ‘whiteness’ as ‘just Australian’.

‘othered Australian’ staff, and postcolonial Ganga walked away with feelings of despair when their ‘othered’ voices were never accepted as ‘everyday’ ‘everyone’ practices in multicultural Australia, and ‘whiteness’ remained as ‘just Australian’.

Our daily early childhood ‘othered’ practices were voiced by ‘Power’ when,

‘Other Australian’ staff named their ‘white racial identity’ and how ‘whiteness’ had been historically privileged by nationalism, and had silenced individuals and groups, who did not naturally possess this identity.

‘othered Australian’ shared their experiential knowledge with ‘Other Australian’ to work against ‘white’ privilege and racial discrimination that stemmed from nationalising ‘whiteness’ as ‘Australianness’.

‘Other Australian’ staff observed how ‘othered Australian’ children were becoming absorbed into ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’, and critically acted with concern and haste to include ‘othered’ experiences, including food, faith, festival and languages as ‘everyday’, ‘everyone’ practices.
‘othered Australian’ staff communicated their observations and experiences to collaboratively modify our practices and understandings to challenge ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’.

‘Other Australian’ staff showed willingness and eagerness to reconsider and enact changes in current early childhood practices and understandings to reconceptualise the identity of ‘Australian’ with all children and families.

‘othered Australian’ staff, and postcolonial Ganga felt that their ‘othered’ voices were valued and heard to walk away with feelings of pride in realising their critical multicultural Australia, where ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’ was allowed to be repeatedly questioned to reflect flexibility and multiplicity.

Thus, the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ discursively affected and effected our daily early childhood practices to be silenced and voiced. Even young children realised the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and expressed this by their silences and voices. Kowalski (2007) comments that as early childhood teachers need to constantly question how we were contributing towards young children’s development of attitudes towards their own group and those of others. I understood from above that we all contributed to children’s attitudes about groups bound with and without ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’. Weedon (2004) and Wenger (2008) recommend the development of flexible identities in all children, and this still remained a challenge till the very end.

My postcolonial Ganga silently surged towards the ocean, and I trundled to my final chapter, to make meaning of everything that my Ganga was.
Conclusion

Contesting ‘Australian’: in othered/Othered/othered voices

Ganga, my inner voice in the previous chapter, brought to light the influence of ‘Power’ in enacting boundary or cultural identities in Australia. The ‘Power’ connected to ‘Australianness’ and especially ‘whiteness’ was central to all our cultural identity enactments? I began my study to contemplate how identity constructs such as, ‘culture’, ‘nation’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ central to current, modern and western societies (see Pang, 2001; Bennett, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Weedon, 2004; Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006; Rosaldo, 2006; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) are enacted in early childhood settings in Australia. I specifically focused on early childhood (3-5 years of age), as this is seen as a critical stage when children develop ideas about the identity of personal and collective ‘self’ in relation to the ‘other’ using language (Meill, 1995; Schaffer, 1996; Epstein, 2009). I briefly retrace my voyage with Ganga and all her varied forms, and the cultural identity ‘truths’ (my contextual understandings stemming from that body knowledge) that I encountered with boundary ‘speakers’.

The ‘othered truth’ and enacting cultural identities

Having acknowledged my partiality towards postcolonialism due to my subjective experiences and knowledge, I navigated my foremost course with Ganga the data, to decolonise my postcolonial beginnings. I initially channelled Ganga through theories of social psychology (Hall, 2006; Crisp & Turner, 2007; Benet & Sani, 2008; McKinlay & McVittie, 2008) and psychoanalysis (Eastrorpe, 1999 & Lacan, 2002). I observed expressions of ‘othering’ in children’s (3-5 years of age) and early childhood practitioners’ or staff’s language that established ‘difference’, the ‘othered truth’. This ‘othered truth’ evidenced that we, as boundary ‘speakers’ not only categorised and classified the collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ (Indian/Chinese/Filipino), we also used ‘difference’ to attribute these identities with layers (boundary streams) that determined which collective identity we could own. Young children classified who was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ by predominantly using complex(ion), our skin colour.

Young children’s awareness and their capacity to engage in such categorisation has already been acknowledged by many authors (Tacagni, 1998; MacNaughton, 2001; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Targowska, 2001; Skattebol, 2003; Derman-Sparks and Ramsay, 2006; Epstein, 2009). However, staff, especially those who named their collective identity as ‘Australian’, were uncomfortable in addressing complex(ion) with children, and therefore, ‘white Australian’ attitudes circulated without much discussion and disruption. Authors
caution that the practices that leave ‘whiteness’ unnamed and unexplored, in combination with acting ‘colour-blind’ leaves discriminatory beliefs about certain differences to be left unchallenged (Hayes, 2001; de Freitas & McAuley, 2008), and Weedon (2004) calls this as “everyday racism”. I sadly gathered that ignoring ‘whiteness’ affected not those who possessed it, but those who didn’t, as we were not just excluded as ‘not Australian’, but were shunned with dislike by our own ‘brown’ kind.

Adults, parents and staff too classified what was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’, and they used attributes such as language, culture, food, faith and festival and abstract values to do so. While some who named their collective identity as ‘Australian’, believed that as ‘Australian’ they possessed specific traits that had to be left undisturbed, there were those who believed that as ‘Australian’ they possessed ‘nothing’ in comparison to ‘everything’ (colour, food, faith and festival) the ‘not Australian’ had. The ‘not Australian’ speakers too conceptualised what was ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ and modified their behaviour to express their adoption of what was ‘Australian’. Thus, the process of re-categorisation (Crisp & Turner, 2007) of many ethnic groups to be and become committed to the collective group ‘Australian’ was evident in the expressions of those who spoke as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. However, the re-categorisation had also resulted in dividing us as ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’. This course with Ganga surfaced the most critical ‘othered truth’, the shaping of that collective group ‘Australian’ by those who ‘spoke’ as ‘Australian’, especially when Ganga, the data disrupted or questioned the identity of ‘Australian’.

The ‘Othered truth’ and shaping cultural identities

The identity of ‘Australian’ became central to cultural identity enactments, and having established this ‘othered truth’, I inquired the structural language that was involved in ‘Othering’ the identity ‘Australian’. I diverted Ganga to navigate the second course with theories of ideology and hegemony (Fairclough, 1992; Althusser, 2008; Gee, 2010) that underpin the influence of institutional language in our identity behaviours. I specifically chose statements from the renowned speech by Grassby (1973) that proclaimed the demise of ‘white Australia policy’, and from current multicultural policies of Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, 2006). I summarised the process of ‘Othering’, through which the identity of the nation Australia, and the national subject ‘Australian’ was ideologically conceptualised and circulated. According to Stokes (1997) and Rizvi (2005), the thrust of nationalism into its society by the politics of Australia has been the key agenda to manage cultural diversity and reduce ethnic tensions. I then reengaged with narratives of
‘Australian speakers’, those who spoke as and about ‘Australian’, especially when they encountered Ganga, the data that challenged and tried to bring about change in the identity of ‘Australian’.

By navigating this course, I established connections between institutional language and the language of ‘Australian speakers’ as they shaped, or ‘Othered’ the identity of ‘Australian’ in particular ways. This ‘Othered truth’ enabled me to make meaning of the subjective commitment of ‘Australian speakers’ to this identity ‘Australian’, and how this influenced the maintenance of this identity as incontestable or be less influenced by ‘not Australian difference’. I agreed with several authors (see Ang & Stratton, 1998; Arber, 1999; Tavan, 2004; Aveling, 2002; Leeman & Reid, 2006; Holmes et al., 2007) who regarded the discourse of multiculturalism as being less efficient in eradicating racism, as it still centralised the ‘white Anglo Australian’, with migrant and indigenous groups as ‘other’. Therefore, what was established as ‘not Australian’ was ‘not white/not Australian difference’, and these dichotomous understandings were left uninterrupted due to the commitment of ‘Australian’ subjects to the ideological identity, ‘Australian’. This is when my postcolonial subjectivity surfaced and I understood that the identity of ‘Australian’ was ‘Othered’ and shaped by ‘Australian speakers’ both children and staff, with ‘whiteness’ and colonialism, the discourse of dominance. This discourse, or ways of thinking, acting and being, that positioned ‘Self’ as superior, in my study as the national subject, with peripheral ‘other’, the ‘migrant’, as either dangerous and aversive, or exotic and desirable (Said, 1978), influenced most of our daily cultural practices. This brought me back to the very stance that I tried to avoid, and I reconciled with my postcolonial subjectivity that was influenced by my experiences with ‘whiteness’ and colonialism in Australia, and navigated with my Ganga in search of another cultural identity ‘truth’. I transformed all boundary speakers into postcolonial subjects, the ‘Australian speakers’ as ‘Other Australian’, and the ‘not Australian speakers’ as ‘othered Australian’ and resumed my voyage with my Ganga, as my postcolonial inner voice.

The ‘othered truth’ and contesting cultural identities

I could not convince myself that ideological interpellation of categorical identity was the destiny of all postcolonial subjects, as Spears (1997) argues, structures are made by individuals, and therefore, all individuals have the propensity to reinforce and resist structures. I re-embraced postcolonialism not just to identify and acknowledge how the ideological ‘Australian’ was discursively reinforced everyday, but also to identify and recognise how this was discursively resisted by both ‘Other Australian’ and ‘othered
Australian’. I used ‘Postcolonial estuary of contesting Australian’, an imagery to keep me afloat in this space that brimmed with our subjective interactions and actions. I invited Ganga, my postcolonial inner voice to enable me to decipher my ripples, my own trepidations, and to make meaning of how we as ‘Other Australian’ and ‘øthered Australian’ reshaped or contested identities discursively. The ‘øthered truth’ that Ganga surfaced for me, was that whether we reinforced or resisted, we contested the ideological ‘Australian’ identity through our ‘øthered’ silences and voices evident in our daily practices. I came back to where I began still colonised by ‘whiteness’, as I realised the ‘Power’ of ‘Other Australian’ that punished the resisting voices of ‘Other Australian’ and ‘øthered Australian’. I heard my son’s voice again tinged with mockery, as my imagination of ‘white hybridity’ remained submerged under the depths of Ganga. With my unrealised imaginations of hybridity as a reality for all individuals and groups, I now contemplated with my ‘whiteness truth’ that my Ganga and I uncovered from my study.

My realities with ‘whiteness truth’

My participatory action research methodology surfaced bitter ‘whiteness truth’, as follows. It is painful to act collaboratively against the ideological ‘Australian’ with ‘øthered Australian’, who has endured discrimination due to their ‘non-whiteness’ in terms of skin colour, faith and/or language. Coloured children wanted to find strength in their ‘brownness’ by talking about it. As a coloured ‘øthered Australian’, it was highly improbable to collaboratively challenge the ideological ‘Australian’, as we are not only positioned as ‘not Australian’, but our voices are discarded and punished with absolute exclusion and withdrawal from claiming ‘Australian’. Therefore, without claiming the ownership of this identity ‘Australian’ it was very difficult to challenge it from outside, as the ‘Other Australian’ fortified and maintained its insulation. Those who naturally possessed the attributes of what is currently conceived as ‘Australian’ also possessed the ‘Power’ to disrupt this identity and diffuse its ‘Power’, as currently ‘whiteness’ is invisibly embedded into ‘Australianness’. I secretly observed the feelings of overwhelming discomfort and uneasiness in ‘Other Australian’, when their ‘Australianness’ was disrupted. Therefore, I, as ‘øthered Australian’ could never question what it is to be ‘Australian’, and I supposed,

- Should I have begun my experience with Ganga from my postcolonial standpoint to deeply analyse the operation of ‘whiteness’?
How do I begin to analyse the operation of ‘whiteness’ with ‘white’ researchers when it was still silently embedded in the daily realities of ‘Power’ and dominance?

As a ‘coloured’ researcher, with my ‘coloured’ realities, experiences and knowledge, will I ever be able to analyse the operation of ‘whiteness’ and its ‘Power’ with ‘white’ researchers?

If I do, who gets hurt and why, and who gets liberated and why?

I planned to conclude my Ganga with this unfinished inquiry, and I stumbled upon ‘whiteness’ being questioned by the following authors.

- bell hooks (1998) asks, when will ‘whiteness’ reposition ‘Self’ as ‘other’ to enable the decolonisation of ‘othered’ minds and imagination?
- Gorski (2008) poses, when will ‘whiteness’ turn its attention away from cultural ‘other’ and look inwards at ‘Self’ to recognise systems of power and hegemony?
- Arber (1999) proposes, when will ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ stop being sites that normalise dominance?
- Hayes (2001) pauses, when will ‘whiteness’ just wonder what it means to have ‘white’ racial identity that is seen as secure, safe, normal, casual and above all national?
- Leornado (2004) contests, when will ‘whiteness’ stop dodging scrutiny to acknowledge its multinational dominance?
- Finally, Rivière (2008) prompts, when will internalisation of ‘whiteness’ by non-whites become examined by both ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ researchers, to acknowledge our contribution in maintaining the hegemony of ‘whiteness’?

I now struggled to let go of my Ganga, when so many voices like mine questioned the realities of ‘whiteness’. I clung to my Ganga with my quest to make hybridity a reality for all, before she was transformed into a myth by the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’. I beckoned our ‘othered’ voices of resistance that my Ganga surfaced. The ‘othered truth’ that I promisingly discovered with ‘Other Australian’ indicated the possibilities of disrupting and diffusing this ‘Power’ with young children. I now begin to imagine with cultural identity ‘truths’ for the future of early childhood practices.
I imagine with cultural identity ‘truths’

Early childhood is a critical stage for one’s identity development in relation to collective identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Tacagni, 1998; MacNaughton, 2001; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Targowska, 2001; Skattebol, 2003; Derman-Sparks and Ramsay, 2006; Epstein, 2009). My study indicated that children were using such collective categories of ‘Australian’ and ‘not Australian’ to divide individuals and groups, thus triggering inequitable practices of many cultures in early childhood settings. Therefore, the development of flexible identities, combined with a capacity to challenge narrow constructions of ‘race’, ethno-linguistic, cultural and national identities in all children is vital for the future of multicultural Australia. My study also surfaced how as adults we were less able to respond to children’s and adults’ divisive expressions, due to being colonised by the ideological ‘Australian’. This ideology, just like the coloniser, epitomised and juxtaposed nation and national identity ‘Australian’, against the sporadic celebration of indigenous and migrant identities, to covertly dominate and subjectify all individuals and groups to practice ‘Australian’ in a particular manner. Through my study, I also understood as coloured postcolonial subjects, it is highly problematic to challenge ‘Australianness’ and ‘whiteness’ in Australia.

Therefore, if I am given a chance to conduct this study again, I will initially call for ‘white hybrids’, who work with young children, and want a future with all cultures and colours equitably being practised in Australia. The ‘white hybrids’ as ‘Other Australian’ will be willing to resist and expose ideological dominance, exploit ideological ambivalence and look into the influence of ideological ‘Australian’ in the silences and voices of all individuals, and especially in those of ‘othered Australian’. I imagine that we will together ask ourselves the following questions,

- How does one represent other cultures?
- What is another culture?
- How do ideas acquire authority, “normality” and even status of “natural” truth?

(Said, 1978, pp. 325-326)

Through this critical inquiry, we will clarify our subjective commitment to ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’, and I imagine ‘white hybrids’ and I taking early childhood practitioners, ‘Other/othered Australian’ on a liberating voyage with my Ganga, the data, and my postcolonial ‘othered’ voice. In this voyage, our commitment to the ideological ‘Australian’ will be ‘different’, as we will try and reposition ‘whiteness’ as ‘other’ by
talking histories of Australia and their relevance in current attitudes and understandings about ‘Australian’. We will enable ‘Other Australian’ practitioners to take a look inwards, in relation to the daily public early childhood practices (colour, food, faith, festival, language, national ownership) and its relationship with ‘whiteness’. Thus, we will stop for a moment to imagine what it is to be accepted automatically as ‘normal Australian’, and how this invariably dictates ‘othered’ voices and practices. Thus, as ‘hybrid Australians’, we will begin to recognise how we contribute to the propagation of ‘white dominance’, by ignoring how ‘whiteness’ is absorbed and internalised by all individuals in Australia. We will unravel how practices of dominance and denial hurt and inhibit the practices that promote multiplicity in the cultural identities of all individuals and groups in Australia.

I imagine, as ‘hybrid Australians’ we will take this new knowledge to our settings and we will reengage with ‘whiteness’ to challenge its accepted link to ‘Australianness’. We will reconsider our daily discursive practices with children, families, and staff in relation to colour, food, faith, festival, language and national ownership in early childhood settings. We will re-examine and reconceptualise categorical language used in early childhood guiding documents to reflect our multiplicity as, ‘hybrid Australian’. This awareness will lead us to constantly question our attitudes and understandings as ‘hybrid Australian’, especially by being vigilant to global movements and contextual events that position particular individuals and groups more prone to exclusion and discrimination in our society. We will reteach and relearn our new identity as ‘hybrid Australian’ with children, families and staff to build a community that embraces many ways of practising ‘Australian’ publically. We, as groups of individuals, will reclaim the structures to reconceptualise both ‘Australian’ and ‘migrant’ identities, thus keeping the boundaries of ‘Australian’ undulated and stretched to embrace ‘difference’ as they come. My sanctifying dip into my postcolonial Ganga has revealed to me that cleansing my embodied colonialism is impossible, as doing so will also make me oblivious to recognising its presence, and working against its dominance. Therefore, as long as the ‘Power’ of ‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ continue to circulate, so will my Ganga, “ever changing, ever flowing, ever the same”.
References


• Connolly, P. (2008). Race, gender and critical reflexivity in research with young


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• Lacan, J. (2002). The mirror-stage as formative of the I function as revealed in...


Danaher (Eds.), *Strategic uncertainties: ethics, politics and risk in contemporary educational research* (pp. 89-101). Flaxton: Post Pressed.


- Oxford: Blackwell publishing limited.


California: Sage publications limited.


Appendix

1. Participants’ information and data collection
The following is data log, which represent daily field notes from centre 1 and centre 2, which includes all participatory observations, informal communication between and with children, staff, parents and me. I have split some of the larger narratives that may represent multiple boundary streams (cultural layers) and boundary courses (paths of boundary enactments), for thematic analysis and discussion. I have dated and coded narratives with alphabets to identify and distinguish those used in my thesis.

The interviews are open ended, audio taped, face to face individual interviews, which I conducted with staff, on set dates and times at the centre. I have included the names of children, families and staff, whose voices I have quoted in my study.

Data log – Centre 1

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<tr>
<th>Focus children</th>
<th>Plafe; Seaweed; Tin; Moo;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Blob; Sheep; Princess; Pat; Tiger; Kangaroo;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Amelia; Jan; Annie; Katrina; Rani;</td>
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<td>Focus children</td>
<td>Pokey; Thora; Sidya;</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>Children</td>
<td>Bikky; Cheela; Leo; Ant; Lisa the zebra; See; Fairy; Feeniyan; Doggy; Puppy; Kitten; Dora; Batman; Superman; Santa;</td>
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<td>Families</td>
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19 April, 2010

Prof G.M. Macnaughton  
Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood  
Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
The University of Melbourne  

Dear Prof Macnaughton  

I am pleased to advise that the Humanities and Applied Sciences Human Ethics Sub-Committee approved the following Project:  

Project title: **Contesting identities: in othered voices.**  
Researchers: Prof G. M. Macnaughton, Ms M. M. Coady, P Srinivasan  
Ethics ID: 0932582  

The Project has been approved for the period: **16-Apr-2010 to 31-Dec-2010**  

It is your responsibility to ensure that all people associated with the Project are made aware of what has actually been approved.  

Research projects are normally approved to 31 December of the year of approval. Projects may be renewed yearly for up to a total of five years upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report. If a project is to continue beyond five years a new application will normally need to be submitted.  

Please note that the following conditions apply to your approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval and/or disciplinary action.  

(a) **Limit of Approval:** Approval is limited strictly to the research as submitted in your Project application.  
(b) **Variation to Project:** Any subsequent variations or modifications you might wish to make to the Project must be notified formally to the Human Ethics Sub-Committee for further consideration and approval. If the Sub-Committee considers that the proposed changes are significant, you may be required to submit a new application for approval of the revised Project.  
(c) **Incidents or adverse affects:** Researchers must report immediately to the Sub-Committee anything which might affect the ethical acceptance of the protocol including adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the Project. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of approval.  
(d) **Monitoring:** All projects are subject to monitoring at any time by the Human Research Ethics Committee.  
(e) **Annual Report:** Please be aware that the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers submit an annual report on each of their projects at the end of the year, or at the conclusion of a project if it continues for less than this time. Failure to submit an annual report will mean that ethics approval will lapse.  
(f) **Auditing:** All projects may be subject to audit by members of the Sub-Committee.  

If you have any queries on these matters, or require additional information, please contact me using the details below.  

Please quote the ethics registration number and the title of the Project in any future correspondence.  

On behalf of the Sub-Committee I wish you well in your research.  

Yours sincerely  

[Signature]  

Ms Jacky Angus  
Humanities and Applied Sciences HESC  
Phone: 83442074, Email: jsa@unimelb.edu.au  

cc: HEAG Chair - Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
P Srinivasan, PhD student
11 March 2010

Mrs Prasanna Srinivasan
Graduate School of Education
Education Faculty
The University of Melbourne
73 Glenelg Drive
Mentone
Vic 3194

Dear Mrs Srinivasan

**RE: Application to undertake research involving the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

I write to you concerning your application to the Early Childhood Research Committee (ECRC) to undertake research entitled “Exploring cultural identities with children”.

I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ECRC will support the research subject to the following conditions:

- The research is conducted in accordance with the documentation you provided to the ECRC;
- The provision of a copy of formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee approval letter;
- The provision of a final report to the ECRC at the completion of the research;
- The provision of a one page summary of the outcomes of the research and how this relates to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development;
- That you provide the ECRC with the opportunity to review and provide comment on any materials generated from the research prior to formal publication. It is expected that if there are any differences of opinion between the ECRC and yourself related to the research outcomes, these differences would be acknowledged in any publications, presentations and public forums;
- That you acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research; and
- The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter, after this time the approval lapses and extensions will need to be considered by the ECRC.
If you have any further enquiries, please don’t hesitate to contact the ECRC Secretariat on 03 9637 3629 or via email hood.suzanne.s@edumail.vic.gov.au. The ECRC wishes you the best in your research and we look forward to seeing the results in due course.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cleary
Chair, Early Childhood Research Committee
Hi,
My name is Prasanna Srinivasan and I am a student at The University of Melbourne. As a part of my study, I am going to be conducting a research project with you in your centre and your parents would have spoken to you about this. My supervisors are Prof. Glenda MacNaughton and Margaret Coady at the University of Melbourne. I can speak to you in Hindi or Tamil if you would prefer that and I can also talk to you about all that is written in this paper and what I will be doing together in your centre.

Aims
Through this study I want to find out who you are and how you play and talk with your friends and teachers. I would also like to find out with your help, how best early childhood centres can support children like you to feel strong and proud about who you are. As a part of my study, I am going to be researching with you in your centre and your parents would have spoken to you about this.

Who is the researcher?
I am a permanent resident of Australia who was born in and lived in India. I am a qualified early childhood teacher and have worked on funded research projects in which young children shared their ideas on culture and their identities with researchers.

What does your participation in this research involve?
- To allow me to observe, make notes about you and your family from your teacher.
- To allow me to play, talk, observe and make notes with you, when you play by yourself, with your friends and teachers.
- To have a chat with me about you, your friends and teachers. This will be audio taped, so that you can listen to this and talk to me about this later.

What information will be collected about you?
To learn what you know and think about yourself, I will talk with you informally during your time at the centre and make notes of you talking and playing with friends, staff and others. I will also gather some information about when you were born, your brothers and sisters and your family from the centre. I will make written notes of observations and tape record informal talks with you to produce accurate records of what I hear and see. If you want, your teacher can be with you when I am talking to you.

Why is this research needed?
This research will use your knowledge and experiences in early childhood settings to trial new ways of doing this and in doing so build new information about respectful ways of engaging with a child’s culture in early childhood educational care settings.

Can I choose to participate or not?
You don’t have to agree to work with me if you don’t want to and you are free to withdraw (don’t play, talk or allow me to make notes) at anytime if you consider it necessary. If you have any questions relating to this research project please feel free to contact me or my research Supervisors. If you agree can you mark or draw on this consent form and I can read out what is written on this form too.

What information will I have about what is happening during the research project?
I will share information gathered about you regularly with you, your teachers and your family, according to the protocols accepted at your early childhood setting.

My Teachers (The Research Supervisors):

Professor Glenda MacNaughton
Director, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC)
East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,
The University Of Melbourne.
Phone: 8344 4610    Fax: 9347 9380
Email: gmmacn@unimelb.edu.au

Ms Margaret Coady
Honorary Research Fellow
Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC)
East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,
The University Of Melbourne.
Phone: 8344 4792    Fax: 9347 9380
Email: m.coady@unimelb.edu.au

Me (The Researcher):

Prasanna Srinivasan
73 Glenenlg Drive,
Mentone Vic 3194
Phone: 9584 0293
Email: srin@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

Thanking you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Prasanna Srinivasan
Plain Language Statement: Parents/Guardians
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: Exploring cultural identities with children. (Contesting identities: in othered voices)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You and your child are invited to participate in Prasanna Srinivasan’s (the researcher’s) doctoral research study that is being supervised by Prof. Glenda MacNaughton and Margaret Coady at the University of Melbourne.

Aims
The study aims to explore how young children from the Indian sub-continent (focus children) build a sense of themselves and their culture (their identity) in early childhood settings. It also aims to find out how early childhood settings can best support these children to feel proud and strong in who they are and in their culture.

Who is the researcher?
The researcher is a permanent resident of Australia who was born in and lived in India. She is a qualified early childhood teacher and has worked on funded research projects in which young children shared their ideas on culture and their identities with researchers.

What information will be collected about your child
To learn about your child’s identity growth the researcher will talk with your child informally during their time at the centre, about their relationships with peers, how they see themselves and the things that they think are important to them. The researcher will also observe your child interacting with peers, staff and others to look at how relationships are being built between your child and their peers and between your child and other adults in the setting. The researcher will also gather some background information about your child from the centre. The researcher will make written notes of her observations and tape record her informal talks with your child to produce accurate records of what she hears and sees. The project is intended to commence in May 2010 and end by December 2010.

The researcher may wish to make notes of informal conversations that she has with you at the setting to be used in the study. The researcher will request your permission to use this information before she commences to make notes for the purposes of this study.

Why is this research needed?
Developing strong cultural identities is important to young children’s healthy growth and well-being. However, research suggests that finding the best way to teach young children about cultural identities, differences and diversity in Australia is often challenging for teachers of young children. This research will use children’s knowledge and experiences in early childhood settings to trial new ways of doing this and in doing
so build new information about respectful ways of engaging with a child’s culture in early childhood educational care settings.
Can I choose to participate or not?
Your child’s participation and yours in this study is absolutely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime if you consider it necessary. If you have any questions relating to this research project please feel free to contact the researcher or the research Supervisors. You and your child can choose to withdraw from the project and withdraw all unprocessed data from the study.

Keeping information on your child confidential
All data during collection and analysis will be stored in a locked cabinet and the name and contact details of all participants will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers. In the final report, your child will be referred to by a pseudonym. The researcher will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your child’s identity, however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify your child. The confidentiality of the information that your child provides will be maintained subject to any legal limitations. After the study is finished, all data collected will be retained and kept locked for 5 years in a locked cabinet at the University of Melbourne. The audio-recorded interviews will be stored digitally in a USB stick and will be ultimately destroyed by electronic erasure of the recorded material.

Talking about sensitive issues with young children
The researcher understands that the discussion of cultural identities, differences and diversity in Australia can be a sensitive topic. She will take extreme care and caution to prevent your child from undergoing any form of discomfort and unease. The researcher hopes that any such feelings would be minimal, as the researcher is from a similar ethno-linguistic background as yours and your child and by conducting interviews and interactions during children’s daily routine in the setting.

What information will I have about what is happening during the research project?
The researcher will share information gathered about your children regularly with you, according to the protocols accepted at your child’s early childhood setting. Your child’s educational carer will support your child through this process.

This project has received Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) clearance from the University of Melbourne and the number is included below and if you have any ethical concerns or complaints concerning ethical conduct of this research project, you can direct them to the address below:

The Executive Officer,
Human Research Ethics,
The University of Melbourne Vic 3010.
Phone: 8344 2073. Fax: 9347 6739
The Research Supervisors:

Professor Glenda MacNaughton
Director, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC)
East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,
The University Of Melbourne.
Phone: 8344 4610     Fax: 9347 9380
Email: gmmacn@unimelb.edu.au

Ms Margaret Coady
Honorary Research Fellow
Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC)
East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,
The University Of Melbourne.
Phone: 8344 4792     Fax: 9347 9380
Email: m.coady@unimelb.edu.au

The Researcher:

Prasanna Srinivasan
73 Glenelg Drive,
Mentone Vic 3194
Phone: 9584 0293
Email: srin@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

Please sign in the attached consent form if you decide for your centre and you to participate in this study. Thanking you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Prasanna Srinivasan
Project: Exploring cultural identities with children. (Contesting identities: in othered voices)

You are invited to participate in Prasanna Srinivasan’s (the researcher) doctoral research study. She is supervised by Prof. Glenda MacNaughton and Margaret Coady at the University of Melbourne.

Aims
The study aims to explore how young children from the Indian sub-continent (focus children) build a sense of themselves and their culture (their identity) in early childhood settings. It also aims to find out how early childhood settings can best support these children to feel proud and strong in who they are and in their culture.

Who is the researcher?
The researcher is a permanent resident of Australia who was born in and lived in India. She is a qualified early childhood teacher and has worked on funded research projects in which young children shared their ideas on culture and their identities with researchers.

What does your participation in this research involve?
This will require you and the support staff in your setting to be individually interviewed by the researcher for duration of 45-60 minutes, to gather information about your role in supporting children’s cultural identity and some of your background details. Your interviews will be tape recorded in order to ensure accurate recordings of what is said. The researcher will also collect resources, documents and policies used in the setting to support children’s development of such identities. The researcher will share the information she has collected with the children with you and the families and you will further be engaged with the researcher, staff and children in trialing newer ways of supporting cultures in early childhood educational care settings. Moreover, the research also involves you to allow the researcher to collect information on children’s play, interaction and behaviour by observing and having informal talks with focus children. You may need to support the children during this process and the following explains further about this. The project is intended to commence in May 2010 and end by December 2010.

What information will be collected about children?
To learn about children’s identity growth the researcher will talk with the focus children informally during their time at the centre, about their relationships with peers, how they see themselves and things that they think are important to them. The researcher will also observe them interacting with peers, staff and others to look at how relationships are being built between your child and their peers and between your child and other adults in the setting. She will also gather some background information about those focus
children from the centre and she will make written notes of her observations and tape record her informal talks with the children to produce accurate records of what she hears and sees.

**Why is this research needed?**
Developing strong cultural identities is important to young children’s healthy growth and well-being. However, research suggests that finding the best way to teach young children about cultural identities, differences and diversity in Australia is often challenging for teachers of young children. This research will use children’s knowledge and experiences in early childhood settings to trial new ways of doing this and in doing so build new information about respectful ways of engaging with a child’s culture in early childhood educational care settings.

**Can I choose to participate or not?**
The centre’s and your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime if you consider it necessary. If you have any questions relating to this research project please feel free to contact the researcher or the research Supervisors. You and your centre can choose to withdraw from the project and withdraw all unprocessed data from the study.

**Keeping information on your participation confidential**
All data during collection and analysis will be stored in a locked cabinet and the name and contact details of all participants will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. The researcher will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity, however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you. The confidentiality of the information that you provide will be maintained subject to any legal limitations. After the study is finished, all data collected will be retained and kept locked for 5 years in a locked cabinet at the University of Melbourne. The audio-recorded interviews will be stored digitally in a USB stick and will be ultimately destroyed by electronic erasure of the recorded material.

**Talking about sensitive issues with you and young children**
The researcher understands that the discussion of cultural identities, differences and diversity in Australia can be a sensitive topic. She will take extreme care and caution to prevent you and other participants from undergoing any form of discomfort and unease. Whilst working with focus children, the researcher hopes that any such feelings would be minimal, as the researcher is from a similar ethno-linguistic background as the focus children and by conducting interviews and interactions during children’s daily routine in the setting.

**What information will I have about what is happening during the research project?**
The researcher will share information gathered about children regularly with you and the families, according to the protocols accepted at your early childhood setting.

This project has received Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) clearance from the University of Melbourne and the number is included below and if you have any ethical concerns or complaints concerning ethical conduct of this research project, you can direct them to the address below:

The Executive Officer,
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Phone: 8344 2073. Fax: 9347 6739

**The Research Supervisors:**

Professor Glenda MacNaughton  
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East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,  
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Phone: 8344 4610 Fax: 9347 9380  
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Ms Margaret Coady  
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East Wing, Elisabeth Murdoch Building,  
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Phone: 8344 4792 Fax: 9347 9380  
Email: m.coady@unimelb.edu.au

**The Researcher:**

Prasanna Srinivasan  
73 Glenenlg Drive,  
Mentone Vic 3194  
Phone: 9584 0293  
Email: sрин@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

Please sign in the attached consent form if you decide for your centre and you to participate in this study. Thanking you for your time.

HREC: 0932582; Date: 9/09/12; Version: 2.1
Yours sincerely,

Prasanna Srinivasan
Project title: Exploring cultural identities with children. (Contesting identities: in othered voices)

Researchers: Prof. Glenda MacNaughton (Research Supervisor); Margaret Coady (Research Supervisor); Prasanna Srinivasan (Student Researcher).

I am aware that saying ‘yes’ means:

- Prasanna will be making notes about my play and conversation with my friends and peers.
- Prasanna will talk to me about the notes that she has made about my play.
- I will be talking with Prasanna about myself, my friends, play and my teachers.
- Prasanna will be asking for my ideas to set up the room and activities later.
- I can say ‘STOP’ to Prasanna anytime I want her to do so.
- I can choose a name that Prasanna can use in the project and Prasanna will take care and to make sure no one outside links my real name to everything that I say and do in the project.
- Once signed and returned, this consent form will be carefully kept by Prasanna.
- I understand that Prasanna will keep what I have said and this consent form in a safe spot.

This is the name I have chosen for myself, so that no one will know me and what I have said.

Drawing, writing or making a mark below means ‘yes’, I would like to be part of this project.
Consent Form: Parents/Guardians
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project title: Exploring cultural identities with children. ( Contesting identities: in othered voices)

Researchers: Prof. Glenda MacNaughton (Research Supervisor); Margaret Coady (Research Supervisor); Prasanna Srinivasan (Student Researcher).

This project, which explores the development and support for cultural identity in young children and rethinks newer ways of doing so, is a part of the research undertaken by the student researcher. Please discuss the project with your child before signing this form. A separate description of the project will be read to your child and she/he will indicate her/his own assent to it, only after having your consent.

Parent/Guardian’s Name:

Name of the Child:

Name of the Setting:

I consent for my child to participate in the project, understanding that it involves:

- Several individual informal interviews (total of about 30 minutes) with my child by the researcher, which will be audio taped.
- The recording observations of my child’s play and interactions with peers and staff.
- The student researcher interacting with my child to collect information about my child’s construction of cultural identity as a part of my child’s daily routine and engagement in the setting.
- The researcher implementing an action research program from June-December 2010, in consultation with my child, staff and families.
- The researcher will request my permission to make notes of informal conversations with her that may be used as a part of this study.

I am aware:

- About the aims, process and duration of the research.
- That my child’s and my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from this at any time without any penalty and withdraw my unprocessed data.
- That the project is for the purpose of research that benefits early childhood practices.
- That the confidentiality of the information that my child would provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal limitations.
- That as the sample size is small and this may have implications in protecting my child’s identity.
- That the researcher will take utmost care and security to maintain the anonymity of the participants, however, the protection of the anonymity of the participants cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants in the project.
- Once signed and returned, this consent form will be retained by the researcher.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: _____________

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia
T: +61 3 8344 8285 F: +61 3 8344 8529 W: www.education.unimelb.edu.au
Project title: Exploring cultural identities with children. (Contesting identities: in othered voices)

Researchers: Prof. Glenda MacNaughton (Research Supervisor); Margaret Coady (Research Supervisor); Prasanna Srinivasan (Student Researcher).

This project, which explores the development and support for cultural identity in young children and rethinks newer ways of doing so, is a part of the research undertaken by the student researcher.

Early Childhood Practitioner’s name: ____________________________

Name of the setting: ____________________________

I consent to participate in the project, understanding that it involves:

- One 45-60 minutes individual interview with the researcher, which will be audio taped.
- The researcher recording observations of the focus child/ren’s play and interactions with peers, families, other staff and me.
- The researcher collecting information on the resources, documents and policies used to support children’s development of their cultural identity.
- The researcher implementing an action research program from June-December 2010, in consultation with the staff, children and families.

I am aware:

- About the aims, process and duration of the research.
- That my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw from this at any time without any penalty and withdraw my unprocessed data.
- That the project is for the purpose of research that benefits early childhood practices.
- That the confidentiality of the information that I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal limitations.
- That as the sample size is small this may have implications in protecting my identity.
- That the researcher will take utmost care and security to maintain the anonymity of the participants, however, the protection of the anonymity of the participants cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants in the project.
- Once signed and returned, this consent form will be retained by the researcher.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
Exploring cultural identities with children
Research

Interview protocol – Early Childhood practitioner (ECP)

The interviews will be conducted in the form of in-depth conversation around the key, trigger questions stated below. Follow-up questions depend on the ECP and his/her responses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - ECP:
- Qualification
- Years of experience in the field
- Ethno-linguistic identity
- Role in the centre
- Gender

ECPs will be reminded about the interview procedure and will be informed about audio-taping the conversation. They will be informed that they have the choice to stop the conversation or not respond to questions at anytime. They will also be told that they have the liberty to question the researcher at anytime during the interview.

THE INTERVIEW AIMS TO EXPLORE ECP’S CURRENT:
- Understandings about theories of cultural identity development.
- Understandings about supporting children’s cultural identity development.
- Understandings about the influence of culture on children’s interaction and play behaviour.
- Understandings about the influence of significant others and the development of cultural identity in young children.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SAMPLE PROMPT QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE ECP’S CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE ABOVE:

Understandings about theories of cultural identity development
- What ideas/concepts/thoughts come to your mind when I say ‘cultural identity’?
- How does cultural identity influence one’s daily life?

Understandings about supporting children’s cultural identity development
- Do you believe in supporting the development of cultural identity in all children? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- How and in what way do you ensure children’s cultural identity is supported?
- What resources do you use?
- How often do you use these?
• In what way or how do you use those resources?

Understandings about the influence of culture on children’s interaction and play behaviour
• Do you believe all children are able to choose what, where, when and with whom they play?
  If yes, why? If no, why not?

Understandings about the influence of significant others and the development of cultural identity in young children
• Who and what influences children’s development of cultural identity?
• How do they/these influence children’s development of cultural identity?

DRAWING THE INTERVIEW TO A CLOSE:
• Draw discussion to a close
• Thank ECP for participation
• Check if they have anything else they would like to say
• Ask them if they have any questions for the researcher