Inside/Outside:

Migrants' Construction of Home in the Domestic Kitchen

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the everyday lives of middle class, inner suburban first- and second-generation migrants to Melbourne through their activities in the kitchen. It speaks to current and past work on multiculturalism, food culture and identity in order to develop an exploration of the ways in which migrants create senses of belonging, self, and home in the contexts of cultural difference and diversity. It looks at the ways in which migrants use the kitchen as a space of becoming. It also addresses how a migrant constructs personal ideas of what it means to be Australian in order to place him or herself in relation to it. The process of migration often engenders both a fragmentation of identity and a fragmentation of sense of belonging - the ways in which migrants return to totalities of self through activities in the kitchen are the main focus of this thesis. Additionally, it shall be looking at the influence of the outside world on the home and how this affects the process of becoming that a migrant goes through in his or her new country. This process requires pragmatism with regards to identity construction and performance – a negotiation between the home and host nation and between the past and present. Migrants often use activities in the kitchen to creatively recreate the past and, in doing so construct a sense of 'homeliness'. This involves developing and reaffirming networks and relations through which a migrant can develop a space in which to belong. Furthermore, it shall be exploring ideas surrounding individualism and agency in creating identity as well as how the negotiation between creativity and reproduction in producing meals speaks to the creativity of identity performance that exists within an individualist framework. Additionally it shall look at what happens when control over identity performance and self-representation on the part of the individual is lost.
This is to certify that

i. **The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters except where indicated in the Preface,**

ii. **Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,**

iii. **The thesis is 31480 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.**

_________________________________________

ZOYA GILL
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC,
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PROLOGUE

Am I Mauritian? No. I am of a Mauritian mother. Am I Iranian? I certainly don't act Iranian. But then what is an Iranian...It doesn't bother me but I think about it all the time...I'm neither of those two but through the great affirmation I've had through people and support in my career and life from people who have put me forward as a multicultural symbol, I feel Australian. But if it wasn't for them I don't know what I'd be...They've really sculpted me into something...They've made me feel like me...And I see how proud they are of all the musicians and actors and people they work with...So then they all feel like themselves and I guess that's the Australia they're making

This excerpt from an interview with one of my participants goes some way in encapsulating the lived experience of various first and second generation migrants living and working in Melbourne today. I met Nina, the woman who spoke those words, at an event I attended as part of the Melbourne Festival 2011. A dancer, singer and percussionist of Iranian and Mauritian background, Nina was born in Tehran to an Iranian father and a Mauritian mother. Her family moved to Sydney when she was young and now in her mid-30s, she has been living and working in Melbourne for over a decade. Nina is actively involved in a variety of groups and organisations that identify themselves as ‘multicultural’. In particular she often works with Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV), an organisation that, among other pursuits, seeks to promote the arts within culturally diverse communities.

Nina’s home is in an inner northern suburb of Melbourne – a loft space above a small performance venue/artist’s studio. Nina’s life seems to be constantly
filled with music, art and a community of performers. Her studio apartment is accessed by a set of steep steps that open out into a large brick lined room with polished floorboards that is filled with records, CDs, wall hangings, instruments and drums from all over the world. Pride of place is a large daf – a Persian drum which sits on an inlaid Persian side table to one side of the room. According to Nina, this drum is part of her recent desire to explore her Persian heritage through music and dance; a heritage she does not feel a close connection to.

The open-plan space is split into a sleeping area that is tucked round a corner, a spacious living/dining area and a kitchen space with a large formica-topped island, shelves of herbs and teas and a rather old-looking stove. Above us is a mezzanine level which, according to Nina, serves as a space to ‘store all her secrets’. As well as, it seems, her and her partner’s wardrobes. It is easy to see in such a space why Nina does not often like to have people in her home. Everything is on display; there is little separation between public and private space so once a person enters the house it ceases to be a realm of privacy.

Nina is a kind and welcoming host. I spend time with her as she is preparing lunch for herself – a simple potato, cauliflower and green leaf soup flavoured with just garlic and a little salt. Nina is passionate about food and her passion is directed not by her ethnic background but by her desire to care for her body as a performer. She eats only organic produce, simple flavours and seldom cooks anything beyond steaming, blanching or boiling. In conversation Nina’s ethnic background does not seem to inform much of her culinary life, but the prominent positioning of the drum and the inlaid table and her desire to explore her heritage suggests that it does inform other parts of her life. She sees herself as a multicultural symbol; an identity that has developed for her out of her role as a performer. She is involved with a variety of bands and performers from Hip Hop to Samba, from Ska to Indigenous roots music. The fact that Nina’s culinary life is not directly associated with her migratory history indicates that people’s sense of identity
and relationship with food is influenced by a variety of processes and there is a need to recognise and explore this.

Nina is a fascinating example of many of the people I encountered over the course of my research. I have used Nina as an introductory example instead of another person for whom food and cooking is more intimately bound up with their migratory history to show the variations that can exist in the tensions between cultural background and individual agency. Nina professes to be disconnected from her heritage and yet it informs much of her work as a performer. She claims to not be attached to her mother and father’s culinary backgrounds and yet is adept at cooking Mauritian sauce rouge and Iranian tadik, despite her lack of interest in eating them. She tells me she dislikes inviting people into her home and yet is a welcoming and enthusiastic host. Indeed, she once staged a performance in her apartment in which she cooked for the audience and told stories about her family. She is, like most people, a composite of contradictions. It is in the exploring and unpicking of these contradictions that we can begin to understand the varied, complex, lived reality of migrants.

Most of my participants live in the inner suburbs of Melbourne and they interact with a variety of different people from a variety of different backgrounds on a day-to-day basis. They feel a sense of flexibility in their self-expression and, as a result feel a certain sense of freedom in what it means to be Australian. For them, the way they live their lives both in and outside the home has an element of individuality and volition. This is not to say that they are not influenced by and feel connected to a variety of different networks and communities – cultural or otherwise. However, this thesis aims to reflect the lived experience of the complexity of identities that exist for a particular type of first or second-generation migrant in Melbourne’s inner suburbs. The people I worked with are all middle-class and feel accepted and at home in Australia. In this thesis I shall be exploring the ways in which these people construct and maintain their sense of belonging in Australia and do so
through the negotiation and performance of a complexity of identities. In particular I aim to talk about contemporary ideas surrounding ethnicity and multiculturalism through food culture and from within the domestic kitchen – a place which is often off limits to researchers such as myself.

I came to this research topic partly as a result of my personal position as the daughter of a British woman and a Kenyan man of Indian descent. I myself have experienced the complexities that surround identity and the role that life within the home plays in informing that identity. Much of my life growing up was centered around the kitchen and around my Anglo-Celtic British mother’s relationship with her Indian mother in law – a relationship that flourished as a result of their interactions in the kitchen. On a personal level, therefore, it became apparent to me that food and cooking can play an important role in mediating and forming relationships and in developing and understanding identity.

The kitchen itself is a space within the home that in some circumstances blurs the line between public and private. Often it is a space that is used for socialising, yet at the same time it acts as a hub for domestic activity. It occupies an unusual space in which the guest is able, in many ways, to get an insight into the private workings of a person’s home; whether they do their dishes regularly, what they eat on a regular basis, whether or not they defrost their fridge. The kitchen, particularly within homes that display an ‘open plan’ internal structure, is a space of performance whenever a person enters the house. And when there is not a guest in the house, it is still by no means an unimportant space in the development and presentation of self. For most people what they eat and how it is prepared is an important part of their daily routine. For people such as Nina, health plays a vital role in food preparation but for others cultural practice or time efficiency is of utmost importance. Whatever the driving force, food plays an important role in people’s everyday lives; it is a means by which to gain an insight into the lived experience of a person.
This lived experience, in the case of my informants, is one of fluidity, negotiation and, in many cases, hybridity. With this thesis I aim to contribute to current ideas surrounding food culture, multiculturalism, ethnicity and identity by exploring the ways in which relatively new Australians contribute to and ‘make’ Australia for themselves. In many instances this process is an individual one in which the construction and development of a person’s identity is based largely in their creation and maintenance of a sense of home and belonging in a new country, a process which is essentially separate from their heritage. In other instances it is one that is intimately connected to already existing cultural models whereby migrants can easily place themselves within an established hybrid identity whilst at the same time negotiating a particular, everyday sense of self. One that is, whilst being tethered to a seemingly immobile cultural model, still nonetheless flexible and complex. Throughout this thesis I am to explore how middle class migrants in the inner suburbs of Melbourne construct a sense of comfort and belonging within their homes and the ways in which this influences their belonging within the Australian context as a whole.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) nearly one third of all people in Melbourne were born outside of Australia\(^1\). Additionally, 82% of all first generation migrants live in a capital city\(^2\), first generation migrants make up over a quarter of the Australian population and second generation migrants


\(^2\) http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2071.0Main%20Features902012%E2%80%932013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2071.0&issue=2012%962013&num=&view=
nearly half of the population of Australia are first or second generation migrants. Australia is a nation of migrants and, as such, the experiences of migrants warrants attention.

Australia has a varied and somewhat troubled past with regards to immigration, starting with the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 - the foundational basis of the White Australia Policy (Cronin, 1993: 89). It was not until after the Second World War, and recognition by the government that Australia's much needed population growth could not occur without immigration, that a concession to a more diverse set of immigrants was allowed (Kabala, 1993: 16). However, a policy of assimilation was enforced, shifting eventually in the mid 1970s to one of integration as a result of the recognition of a need for an overhaul of immigration policy, particularly after the Galbally Inquiry (Rubenstein, 1993: 148-9). Tavan writes of the late-1950s idea of ‘the right of nations to preserve their ‘social homogeneity’ (2005: 236), describing it as a racial concept in socially acceptable terms but one that allowed people to be judged on an individual and not on an ethnic or racial group basis (ibid.). In the limited parameters of the day, therefore, non-British and non-European migrants were gaining a foothold in public perceptions of Australian national identity. In less than 20 years this foothold progressed into a swathe of major immigration reforms that shifted the definition of Australian citizenship from one based in Anglo-Celtic culture and ethnicity (Batrouney, 2002: 48) in the late 1940s to the Australian Citizenship Act of 1973 that allowed all migrants, regardless of country of origin, to apply for citizenship. This change continued from the 1970s to the present day to the point where, according to the 2011 census, eight of the top ten countries of origin for migrants arrived since 2007 are non-European.  

3 ibid.
4 ibid.
5 http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2071.0Main%20Features902012%E2%80%932013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2071.0&issue=2012%962013&num=&view=
The mid-20th century, therefore, saw the beginnings of a gradual shift away from a racially-based and exclusive definition of national belonging and citizenship to one based in common rights and obligations. Previous to this shift in the rights of non-European immigrants, there were still groups of non-Europeans living in Australia. Before the Immigration Restriction Act, the gold rush of the mid to late 19th century resulted in the doubling of the population, a number of whom were of Asian or Middle-Eastern origin (ibid.: 42). Batrouney suggests that after 1901, however, the politics and expressions of immigrant identities in Australia changed in the face of growing Anglo-Celtic nationalism (ibid.: 43). He discusses the ways in which Lebanese migrants occupied a unique place in Australia, being officially grouped with Asians but unofficially recognised as different due to their physical appearance, bilingualism and the presence of a high number women among them – compared with the largely male migrant populations of other Asian groups (ibid.). According to Batrouney, the Lebanese immigrants conformed to this grouping and fought to be recognised as European in order that they might gain the rights that accompanied that definition (ibid.: 46). The form that the Lebanese identity took altered as policies regarding immigration and citizenship altered, he writes that the Lebanese community displayed a ‘readiness...to accept the prevailing public mores and government policy and only to oppose them when their interests were manifestly at stake’ (ibid.: 57). In this way, there are a number of similarities between the Lebanese Australian community presented by Batrouney and many other migrants and migrant communities - the identity constructed and presented by an individual or by a group is in many ways a pragmatic one, and one that reflects or attempts to work within the dominant discourse. Throughout my thesis I intend to demonstrate the ways in which migrants negotiate the various influences on and desires regarding their identities, and specifically in relation to food and the domestic kitchen.

According to Berry, this negotiation is important if a migrant is to feel comfortable within their new home (2010). He suggests that those immigrants who retain a connection to their culture of origin while also interacting with and working within the ‘society of settlement’ have a far greater chance of
'psychological and social adaptation’ than those who reject either group (ibid.: 279). I find Berry’s analysis of migrant adaptation and acculturation to be rather rigid, separating it into four possible categories: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation (ibid.: 284). Although he does concede that there are intermediate points between these categories (ibid.: 292), his analysis does not easily allow for the unique complexities that all migrants face. He does, however, make two points that are especially interesting in the context of my thesis: that the style and relative success of adaptation is as a result of the environment the migrant lives in (ibid.: 291) and that one should be aware of the influence that migrants themselves have upon the society of settlement (ibid.: 282). These two points are, in the context of my thesis, interrelated. I aim to explore the ways in which the outside world influences the domestic lives of my various participants and, in doing so, influence the ways in which they construct their identities. Berry suggests that the neighbourhood a migrant lives in influences his or her adaptive success (ibid.:291) – I would take this further and suggest that it would also have an influence on the comfort that a migrant feels not only in the outside world but also in their own domestic space. A city-dweller is part of and interacts with both the immediate neighbourhood and the city as a whole. Communities and networks in these spaces influence their self-understanding and self-representation. In my thesis I shall show how the home is a space that is open to influence and change from forces outside of it. Ingold, referring to psychologist James Gibson, suggested that the mind is not ‘inside the head’ but ‘out there in the world’ (2000: 3). He uses ecological psychology to argue that, in some ways, the individual develops much of his or her sense of self and ways of thinking from practical engagement with the environment (ibid.: 168).

Sayad suggests that it is important to focus on immigration because it ‘constitutes the limit of what constitutes the national state’ (2010: 166). According to Sayad, the study of immigration and immigrants reveals the nature of national identity and what it means to be part of a nation-state: ‘Thinking about immigration basically means interrogating the state, interrogating its foundation and interrogating the internal mechanisms of its structuration and
working’ (ibid.:167). I use this example by way of showing that an exploration of migrants and their experiences can reveal and bring into question concepts surrounding national identity and what it means to be Australian. Whilst Sayad follows a structuralist approach in his analysis of migrants and the nation-state, he does raise some points that are salient with regards to my thesis. For Sayad, the immigrant experience is necessarily one of domination by the host nation (ibid.:174) and an inability of the immigrant to fully belong to the host nation or have autonomy over the construction of his or her identity (ibid.:175). Within this thesis I aim to explore the ways in which first and second generation migrants express and exert a level of volition and control in the presentation and representation of their identities. In other words, my thesis aims to move away from domination-resistance dichotomies such as those suggested by Sayad to show that the experiences of migrants can be far more complex.

These complexities of experience show a level of individualism in construction of self and of home. Rapport and Dawson suggest, in response to the ubiquity of global mobility and migration, that ‘there are no traditionally fixed, spatially and temporally bounded cultural worlds from which to depart and to which to return: all is situated and all is moving (1998: 23). They go on to look at meanings surrounding home and the way they have changed in the face of this movement. According to them, home has become a mobile concept, no longer an unmoving centre (ibid.: 21) and, as a result, has become increasingly ‘individuated and privatized’ (ibid.: 27). In this way, a migrant has a greater ability to construct a home and a sense of belonging in a new nation. It is this ability and the way in which it is enacted that I shall be exploring.

HOME, FAMILY AND GENDER

Pierre Mayol, conceiving of the home as a far more centered and unmoving place, suggests that it is important, particularly for those living within a contemporary city. It is a ‘protected place...where the pressure of the social body on the individual does not prevail’ (Mayol, 1998a: 146). It is a place where the
individual can develop ‘ways of operating’ outside of the exterior space (ibid.: 147). In this way, the home, according to Mayol becomes a place that ‘reveals the personality of its occupant’ (ibid.: 145). Indeed, Higuchi suggests that the home exists as a result of the creation of boundaries (1983: 197), and Millard’s discussion of the importance of colour with regard to houses shows that, even without entering it, a person’s home can be shown to be an expression of identity, of placing oneself within a certain framework with regards to class, culture and history (1994). Mayol’s analysis is somewhat limited – implying that the home is a place in which the essential nature of a person is exposed. There are, however, a number of places and, indeed, a number of personalities that can be revealed in them. The home, therefore, is a place through which one can begin to understand certain ways of being for its occupants.

Murcott suggests, however, that we must look beyond the home and ‘the boundary of ordinary family life’ in order to adequately understand the household (1997: 42). She argues that the concept of the nuclear family gathering around a family meal is not simply a thing of the past, but in fact never existed as a ubiquitous form (ibid.: 38). Murcott’s argument shows that the idea of the home and the family meal is a complex one, historically as well as in the modern day. My thesis aims to show, however, that the meal is an important part of daily life and is a conduit by which we can begin to understand the everyday lives of migrants to Melbourne.

Murcott’s suggestion that the household extends beyond the home (1997: 42) allows me to highlight that the idea of the family, the household and the home is open to objects, ideas and values from the outside. Hirschon focuses on this inside/outside connection in her analysis of ‘essential objects’ in the households of a Greek town (1993). She suggests that the kitchen is a “marginal’ item’, bridging the separation between inside and outside through the bringing of food into the house to be processed (ibid.: 71). Furthermore, she discusses the importance of the moveable chair, which is taken outside in the afternoon and people sit on pavements, chatting and watching the neighbourhood (ibid.). The chair and the use of the pavement as part of the house demonstrates one of the
ways in which, physically, the home can extend beyond the house, in much the same way that for Murcott the household extends beyond the home. The home and household are not entirely bounded and shut off from the outside world – they are influenced by and, in their turn, influence the world beyond. I intend, therefore, to explore the ways in which activities within the kitchen and activities outside of the home interact and influence the ways in which first and second generation migrants view themselves and what it means to be Australian.

Historically, and globally, the home has been described as a realm associated with the female (André, 1981; Carsten, 1995; Christensen, 1988; Straight, 2005). As Bilinda Straight writes ‘the modernist idea of home as stable center of safety and domestic virtue often assumes women as the very embodiment of that center while men offer financial support to enable women to uphold home’s ideal qualities’ (2005: 1). Straight is critical of this concept, seeing it as idealised and not reflective of lived reality (ibid.). Nevertheless, she still sees the home as space of contest and constraint of and by women with regards to traditional roles and expectations (ibid.: 2). It is the space in which, traditionally, most work is done by women, and this separation still exists to a certain extent. The American Time Use Survey of 2012, for example, shows that 83 percent of women spend time doing household activities, compared with 65 percent of men. Furthermore, women spend on average half an hour more per day than men on these activities. Abarca suggests this is a legacy of the Victorian conception of the home as ‘the place of both leisure and the threshold of social moral values where women remain responsible for providing both’ (2006: 21). In other words the home is under the jurisdiction of the woman, but whereas the public sphere is a space of action, change and dynamism, the home is traditionally seen as a constant and stable environment; an unalterable place of tradition. Abarca separates place and space, with place indicating the physical and stable boundaries of a location and space being defined by the daily social interactions that occur within it (2006: 19). In this way, according to Abarca, a place can be seen as being devoid of progress and change, whereas space is a

6 http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.nr0.htm
7 ibid.
location in which the actor within it can engage in an active and adaptive process of becoming. Therefore ‘when women define the kitchen as their space they engage in their own everyday acts of agency’ (2006: 22). In other words, when the Mexican and Mexican-American women Abarca refers to begin to see their kitchens and their homes as spaces that they can change and upon which they can enact their will, these spaces cease to be constant and unchanging places of tradition and instead become active and dynamic spaces of becoming.

This idea of the kitchen as a women’s space is emphasised throughout numerous ethnographies and research projects in which the domestic production of food is placed firmly within the hands of women. From Sutton’s Remembrance of Repasts (2001) to Bradby’s analysis of healthy eating amongst Glaswegian Punjabis (1997), to Bourdieu’s discussion of luxury and necessity in relation to food (2005a), the active role of men in the kitchen is conspicuously absent. In the case of Sutton, for example, his fifth chapter ‘Doing/Reading Cooking’ is primarily concerned with the ways in which knowledge regarding cooking is transmitted – either through hands-on learning or through cookbooks (Sutton, 2001). Almost every person mentioned in the chapter is female; from the women on Kalymnos who carry out the vast majority of the food preparation to the subjects (and often the writers) of the cookbooks discussed. There are two men mentioned within the chapter who cook – a man on Kalymnos who described himself as a self-taught experimenter (Sutton, 2001: 141) and a professional Italian-born chef who was the co-author of an Italian-American cookbook (Sutton, 2001: 150). Sutton himself suggests that these men fit with the ‘chef/experimenter’ idea, as opposed to women who ‘have tended in the past to cook in an oral tradition of kinship transmission’ (Sutton, 2001: 141). In his discussion of the gendered separation of cooking, Sutton mentions Luce Giard who, like Sutton, stresses the gendered aspect of cooking, as well as the importance of embodied learning and knowledge transmission (Giard, 1998 cited in Sutton, 2001: 126). Giard implies that the kitchen is a female space and that ‘culinary activities are for many women of all ages a place of happiness, pleasure, and discovery’ (1998: 151). A number of theorists discuss the idea that the kitchen is a woman’s space and that cooking is inherently bound up in a woman’s identity. Bourdieu, for
example, mentions that the French phrase for a devoted housewife is *pot-au-feu* – a boiled meat dish that takes a significant amount of time to make (1984: 186-7). In this way, cooking, food and the home are represented not just as the activities and the place to which a woman belongs but also as the very essence of her identity. Conversely, the man is represented by a pair of slippers in France (ibid.), reflecting Abarca’s view of the home as a place of leisure for men and labour for women (Abarca, 2006: 21).

Despite the wealth of published material that explores the gendered division of labour in the home, gender roles are not the focus of my thesis. I have focused on them in this section in order to demonstrate that gender divisions can and do exist within the household. In the context of my participants, however, this division was not often apparent in the kitchen. The limits of my project required that I shut off certain avenues of research and an in-depth study of gender was one of these avenues. The extent of material on gender shows that it is a topic well trodden and well covered – and rightly so. In this thesis I am not suggesting that gender is unimportant, nor am I suggesting that it is absent in the domestic interactions of my participants. Instead, I wish to show that the kitchen, while being a space in which women construct a sense of belonging, is also a space in which the occupant - *regardless of gender* - constructs a sense of belonging. My focus is directed towards migrants, towards the interactions between inside and outside and towards the active process of becoming. The relations between male and female does indeed form part of these interactions and processes - and indeed an aim of this introduction is to encourage the reader to be aware of these possible divisions - but they are not the driving force behind my analysis.

Throughout my research I came across a number of examples and situations that show the gendered division to not be as clear-cut as some writings may suggest. This is not to say that it does not still exist, but that it is not a rigid separation. Men take part in kitchen activities beyond those of the experimenter/chef suggested by Sutton, Giard and others (Sutton, 2001, Giard, 1998). Jean Duruz touches upon this change, suggesting that the increased activity within the kitchen on the part of the husband in her example was as a result of a
'hybridisation' of the labour process, brought on by his wife's refusal to eat or cook anything other than Anglo-Celtic cuisine (Duruz, 2000: 294). In reference to the labour process, Duruz asks 'Are its divisions less sharp, with no longer a necessary allocation of all kitchen work to the female member of the household?' (ibid.). This raises the point that I wish to address at this juncture: that, amongst certain groups and within certain cultures, the kitchen has ceased to be an exclusively female space. It is still, however, a realm of becoming, a space in which processes of negotiation and identity creation take place. But these processes are not restricted to women, at least in a contemporary middle class urban context – the focus of my fieldwork.

Of the ten participants with whom I conducted extended interviews and house visits, four are men and are either the primary or shared cooks within their households. Of the six women, five are (or have been) married and of those at least two have husbands who share cooking duties (although the wives are still the primary cooks). As can be gleaned from this short description of my participants, the ways in which cooking duties are divided up are complicated and different in each household. DeVault suggests that 'the activities involved in feeding family members are understood as “womanly” activities, and therefore contribute to the ongoing production of gender in families' (DeVault, 1991:95). DeVault, however, was writing over twenty years ago and much has changed since then. I would suggest that the idea of feeding as an inherently female activity is not the case for many families, and particularly those in which both parents work. In the case of migrant families, many come from environments in which a man would never cook for his family; the new urban, time-poor situations they find themselves in often necessitate a blurring of these boundaries. These complexities and differences are points of interest that warrant further exploration. Moving on from the physical space of the home, I wish now to turn to ideas of homeliness; the abstract feeling of home and totality of self in the face of fragmentation and displacement.
Hage's discussion of migrants focuses on the idea of home and belonging (1997). He uses the term 'home building' to refer to the 'feeling of being at home' (ibid.: 102), a feeling which is constructed by the dweller out of ‘blocks of homely feeling’ such as ‘security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility' (ibid.). According to Hage this feeling of being at home involves feeling in control of one’s surroundings (ibid.) and of ‘intimations of lost homelands' (ibid.: 104), in which migrants use nostalgia positively as a strategy 'to provide a better base for confronting life in Australia...a base from which to perceive and grasp Australian opportunities' (ibid.: 108)\(^8\). These intimations can take a variety of forms, one of which is food. Seremetakis, for example, suggests that food acts to form part of a 'landscape of artefacts' by which ‘people...have the perceptual means for seeking identity and experience’ (2005: 302). Sutton sees food as a ‘cultural site', a means by which to not only symbolise but also create and recreate social connections and divisions (2005: 315). This reflects Douglas' discussion of food as a 'field of action' (1984: 30), and one that can change whilst still retaining its meaning. She writes that '[e]thnic food is a cultural category, not a material thing. It can persist over fundamental material changes so long as the feeling of ethnic distinctiveness is valued' (ibid.). Whilst the use of the term ‘ethnic’ is problematic, Douglas’ argument that the importance of food and the meaning attributed to it can persist regardless of material changes is an important one. In this thesis I shall be exploring the meaning that arises out of and is given to activity in the kitchen and the ways in which these activities can alter, desist, be revived and criticised. In spite of this it is possible for meaning to remain, as Counihan writes, ‘[f]oodways are a prime domain for conveying meaning...food constitutes a language accessible to all’ (1999: 15). What should be remembered, however, is that the meaning itself can change, be reassigned or disappear altogether. What does remain is the desire to construct a ‘feeling of being at

\(^8\) Compare this analysis with Rapport and Dawson’s view of home as mobile and decentered (1998) and one is aware of how complex and varied arguments surrounding the meaning and nature of home and belonging are, both within and without academia.
home’ (Hage, 1997: 102) and food often, if not always, plays a part in this process of construction.

This construction of home in the face of the displacement and fragmentation as a result of migration is the focus of Sutton’s discussion of food as a ‘cultural site’ (2005: 305). Much as with Hage, Sutton sees the evoking of homelands in the construction of a new home as important. Sutton, however, focuses on the sensory nature of the experience (ibid.: 306), suggesting it creates a feeling of ‘wholeness...[a] sense of emotional/embodied plenitude’ (ibid.: 308). What marks Sutton out as different from Hage is that he is focusing on people for whom this experience is temporary (ibid.) – he appears to view this nostalgia not as positive and as part of a process of construction of home and belonging but as an act of looking backwards. Food, for Sutton, appears to be used as a means by which to evoke an old home, not a means by which to create a new one.

The displacement and fragmentation discussed by Sutton creates new forms of interactions that transcend borders and localities. This ‘transnationalism’ involves the development of ‘familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political’ relationships (Bailey, 2001: 414) that often mean a migrant is connected both to their country of settlement and country of origin. Construction of a home in the country of settlement, therefore, is one that often does not just evoke the home country but can explicitly involve it. Giddens’ discussion of globalisation reflects this, suggesting that ‘traditional’ institutions have changed significantly in the face of the fragmentation and the shifts that occur as a result of globalisation (2002: 19). Transnationalism is a facet of globalisation – connections and interactions that transcend the local. What Giddens reminds us, however, is that this fragmentation does not result in a complete loss of local and community identity and interaction but can instead heighten it (ibid.: 13). People are not fragmenting into entirely isolated individuals, as is suggested by some proponents of post-modern theory, who I shall be addressing later, nor are they subject to rigid structures. Instead, they are constructing feelings of home that transcend borders while at the same time potentially heightening local connection.
In the introduction to *Anthropology and the Individual* Miller refers to the separation that exists between modern and post-modern conceptions of society and the individual (Miller, 1995). Modern theory assumes a structuralist approach to culture, one in which the individual is subsumed into the macrocosm of society, with the individual simply being a component part of the greater structure. In this conception, a member of society is socialised through processes that include everyday interaction with a culture in which is embodied the societal norms and expectations (Miller, 1995: 4). This is in contrast to the post-modernist approach, which argues that we are currently in a phase of dissolution of the family, of class, of local community and of the structures of society itself. As a result, ‘the individual...has to stage and create his or her own identity’ (Gram-Hansen and Bech-Danielsen, 2004: 22), without the structures and order that came before. As a result, within the post-modernist approach, society as it exists today is a disparate collection of separate, shifting and agentic selves. Miller critiques this approach, arguing not for a return to modern theory but instead an awareness that ‘[i]ndividuals still live in society, society always included individuals. The more important question...[is] how these two entities exist in tandem’ (Miller, 2004: 6). This is one of the questions that my thesis intends to speak to. I shall be looking at the ways in which migrants, in their processes of 'home building' evoke their individuality while at the same time interacting with the structures, networks and relations that surround them.

Returning briefly to Hage, for him multiculturalism acts as one of these structures – imposing what Brubaker and Cooper would call 'the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions' (2000: 15). According to Hage there exists a ‘cosmo-multiculturalism’, which ‘conceives of ethnicity largely as an object of consumption’ (Hage, 1997: 99). Elizabeth Buettner suggests that often the first point at which a member of a host nation may encounter a migrant culture is through restaurants (Buettner, 2008). It is often the way in which a nation may proclaim its diversity and multiculturalism, stating the prevalence of various food shops and restaurants as evidence. Buettner suggests, however, that this
superficiality can act as a means by which to avoid the divisions, the problems, and the tensions that can and do exist in multicultural societies (ibid.). She suggests that through familiarising and localising migrant cuisines they become the positive face of multiculturalism when in actual fact, to cite Buettner’s quote of playwright and director Jatinder Verma: ‘I do not think that imaginatively we have become multicultural. I think that in diet we have absolutely, but I don’t think that has translated from our stomachs to our brains yet’ (Buettner, 2008: 898). According to Hage and, to an extent, Buettner, ethnicity becomes something to be consumed and the ability of a migrant to become fully part of the host nation becomes reduced; they simply become feeders in the ‘multicultural fair’ (Hage, 2000: 118). This thesis aims to look at the ways in which migrants become part of the host nation, step across from the periphery of feeder to the central role of consumer and in doing so enact a process of ‘home building’.

In summary, the central aim of this thesis is to explore how it is that the migrants I worked with construct a sense of home and belonging in their host nation. The literature tells us that this involves adaptation, a sense of freedom in expression of self and a practical engagement with the world. I am carrying out this exploration using food as mediator because it acts as a cultural site and means by which to understand everyday life. The construction of a sense of home is important as it addresses the fragmentation that can result out of migration. This construction involves not just interaction with the host nation but also with the nation of origin and with feelings of nostalgia and connections to the past.

** METHODOLOGY **

The fieldwork I carried out involved going into people’s homes and spending time with them while they cooked a daily meal. I asked that the meal not be different from what would normally be cooked and, while cooking I interviewed my participants about their families, countries of origin, experiences in Australia and relationship with cooking. Additionally, I would often stay to eat the meals I
helped prepare and would often be joined by other members of the household or friends of the participant. I chose the kitchen as a point of entry as it is neither a fully private nor a fully public space in the house. It therefore provides an interesting insight into the relationship between inside and outside in the everyday experiences of the migrants I worked with. My fieldwork was limited mainly to the kitchen, as the more private areas of the home were not accessible to me. In many cases, however, I did spend time in dining rooms, living rooms gardens and open plan living spaces. My main focus, however, was the kitchen and the activities within it. Gaining access to a person’s home seemed to present a challenge when I first began my fieldwork – within the relatively short amount of time provided within a Masters project I was dubious as to whether I would gain the trust of enough people in order to provide a reasonable body of data. I therefore limited myself to a small number of case studies (as can be seen in the table provided) and spent as large an amount of time with them as possible. Being able to study the food habits of migrants within the private sphere provides a different insight from those studies that have focused on public spaces such as restaurants. By doing so I intend to speak to existing studies on domestic kitchens and the migrant experience and, thus contributing to understandings of both.

In the initial stages of setting up my fieldwork I faced a number of problems. I arrived in Melbourne in February 2011 having previously spent a year in the city as an exchange student in 2008. As a result I already had a number of friends and therefore (I hoped) a stepping-stone for sourcing participants. This proved, in fact, not to be the case. Most of my friends and acquaintances either have family who have been living in Australia for a number of generations or they were not interested in taking part in my research. I instead had to turn to alternative methods for gathering participants.

I initially decided to involve myself with community groups and events around Melbourne in the hope of forging links with migrants who might attend. I focused particularly on those groups that defined themselves as ‘multicultural’ or were targeted towards migrants. In approaching the groups I would initially email the
organiser or leader in order to ensure that I was welcome. In a number of cases I was declined or ignored. In the cases where I was welcomed, I would then tell everyone involved about my research and attempt to generate interest among them. It was because of this that I ended up becoming involved with a sewing group in Brunswick, a monthly food swap in Coburg, a women’s DJ collective round the corner from my house and a craft group in Footscray. Despite my efforts to ingratiate myself with the members of these groups I was unable to gather any informants from my weeks of effort and involvement. Nevertheless, this proved to be a useful (and steep) learning curve that forced me to become more forthright in my future requests for interviews.

My first interview came as a stroke of luck when a close friend emailed me with the contact number of a classmate of hers - a woman who is married to a second-generation Italian and who seemed interested in helping me out. After that first interview I continued to struggle until the leader of the Footscray craft group told me about an event that was on as part of the Melbourne Festival in September 2011. It involved twenty strangers gathering for lunch at a venue in North Melbourne. We were to each bring a dish that represented our migratory history and be filmed eating together and interviewed about our backgrounds and relationship to food. The film was then to be used in a stage performance by the director and writer of the one-man show – a Pakistani who had moved to London with his family at a young age. This event proved to be the starting point for most of my research. I emailed all the participants after the event with an outline of my research topic and a request for interviews. Most of my informants from that point on had either taken part in this event or were friends of people who had taken part.

The sourcing of most of my informants from this one event had an impact on my research in a number of ways. Firstly, many of people I interviewed and cooked with were involved in the arts sector – as performers, managers, writers or artists. Additionally, much of this art was associated with multiculturalism, food, and ‘ethnicity’. As a result most of my informants were middle-class people who were passionate about food and eager to talk about their migratory history and
their self-understanding and identification. Secondly, almost all of them knew each other, or knew of each other – either as a result of the food-sharing workshop or from professional interaction and collaboration. This placed me in a network of relationships, allowing me to more easily converse and form connections with my participants through small talk about mutual acquaintances and interests. It did, however, mean that my research field became limited to middle-class, ‘cosmopolitan’ migrants who, for the most, part feel at home in Australia. In detailing their experiences of living in Melbourne they expressed a sense of ease and an overall lack of exclusion or discomfort. This is not the situation for a great many migrants to Melbourne or, indeed, in the rest of the world. What my method of obtaining participants meant was that I did not encounter those people for whom the migratory experience was an overall negative one. This raises the question, therefore, of what enables some migrants to easily negotiate their new country and what prevents others from doing so. This is a question I shall be addressing within this thesis.

The way in which I developed a network of contacts and participants is reflective of the experiences of many anthropologists who carry out ethnography in an urban environment. Gmelch and Zenner outline some of the issues faced by urban ethnographers:

> [G]aining access to informants is usually more difficult in cities than in villages. With less outdoor space available, urbanites tend to spend more time inside and therefore they are less observable to the fieldworker and not as easily approached. The nature of urban work and constraints of time are also important. Most urbanites are employees...and must keep regular hours...Hence, in urban societies potential informants may be unavailable for much of the day.

(Gmelch and Zenner, 2002: 128).

It is true that I was not able to gather participants by simply approaching people – this was as a result not only of the fact that I was working within an urban environment but also because of the nature of the research I intended to carry out. My initial intent was to develop a relationship with at 7-10 people or families
and spend a number of hours with them in their kitchens as they prepared a daily meal. Additionally I intended to get them to keep a diary for 2-3 days in which they would outline what they ate, what food and ingredients they bought and moments throughout their day which they thought might be useful for my research – moments at which they felt a cultural difference with a person they interacted with, for example. Doing this, I hoped to gather information in my participants’ own words. Additionally, I hoped that it would solve some of the problems faced by the lack of time I was able to spend with all my participants due to their busy lives. They all had jobs, families and commitments that meant interviews and kitchen visits were often difficult to organise. Unfortunately, the diary concept was not popular amongst my participants and I was unable to rouse up enough enthusiasm for it. I suspect that this is as a result of most of them not having enough time to commit to a diary. Despite time commitments, however, I was able to carry out a number of interviews and spend many hours in people’s homes cooking with them, inquiring about their cooking and encouraging them to talk to me about their lives and, in particular, their experiences as migrants.

The fact that my field of interest was the homes of strangers provided me with a challenge. With the relatively short amount of time I had to carry out my research, I was initially concerned that I would be unable to establish enough rapport and trust with people for them to allow me into their homes and delve into their lives. I found, however, that a number of factors were in my favour. Firstly, as mentioned previously, many of my participants knew each other and, as a result, already had a certain level of trust. Furthermore, the role I established for myself with my participants proved helpful. Foster and Kemper write of the importance of establishing a role for oneself and states that it is often a circumstantial and not a planned one (2002: 140). I reacted to each situation individually, but I approached each informant in a similar way. I found that highlighting my position as a migrant aided me developing a rapport with my informants. I am a second-generation migrant in the UK and a first-generation migrant in Australia. Furthermore, my father was a second-generation migrant to Kenya and my mother spent a number of years living with him there. Migration,
in my family, is commonplace with cousins, aunts, and uncles scattered across the globe. My position as a mixed-race migrant, therefore, was one that many people found affinity with and proved a useful launching-off point in conversations.

When talking to my participants I explained to them that even the most seemingly mundane activities and comments could be of interest. I did this in order that I might prevent them from cooking something out of the ordinary for my benefit and to make them aware that what they may see as unimportant or ubiquitous may in fact be of import. Bestor discusses the difficulty that an anthropologist can face, ‘that even people who are trying very hard to provide useful suggestions frequently fail to recognise their own experiences as worth mentioning’ (2002: 149). My task, as is the task of all anthropologists, was to encourage people to talk about their lives, to guide the conversation to topics of interest while at the same time encouraging them to talk freely. By encouraging casual conversation, I hoped that my informants might touch upon those topics and issues that I may not have been aware were of importance. I began all my interviews with a questionnaire. It focused largely on cooking and eating habits but was seldom the main focus of any conversation. It instead served as a starting point and means by which to steer the conversation back to the centre should it drift too far. Ideally, I would have liked to have carried out informal conversations with all my participants but for most of them, time and scheduling issues meant that I was only able to spend a limited amount of time with them, therefore necessitating a semi-structured interview method - at least for the initial interaction. I found that I would use the questionnaire at the beginning, particularly while cooking with my participant. Eventually, however, the conversation would gain focus and I would be able to continue in a more improvised manner. The nature of the conversations that took place while cooking and while eating were markedly different. Those that took place while cooking were far more focused on the topic – it felt more like an interview. Once we sat down to eat, however, the conversation would become more fluid. This

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9 This questionnaire acted simply as a conversation-starter and did not provide much useful information; therefore I am omitting it from this thesis. It asked general questions on cooking habits, how the kitchen is used and the relative ease or difficulty of sourcing ingredients.
could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, other members of the family would often join for the meal, thereby altering the dynamic of the interaction. Secondly, it simply felt uncomfortable to continue an interview dynamic while eating. The time while eating the meal instead became an ideal point at which to generate a rapport with the people concerned and allow for a more casual conversation. These conversations often generated interesting information and allowed for more elaborate exploration of topics. The combination of cooking and eating together, therefore, resulted in my being able to carry out two different styles of interview and therefore gather a wider range of data.

When carrying out my research I began by outlining my thesis topic, ensuring that I explained it clearly and simply. Many of my participants had heard of anthropology but were not entirely sure what it entailed. My main way of explaining myself was that I was a student carrying out research on migrants’ lives and their cooking habits. I recorded their consent to take part in my research, provided them with the requisite contact details and ensured that they were always aware of the times when I was recording them. Furthermore, I emphasised that pseudonyms would be used and that they would be able to pull out of the project at any time and request that their details and data not be used. None of my participants halted their involvement with my research but many showed an interest in reading my thesis after completion. This raises an issue that Foster and Kemper discuss in relation to carrying out ethnography in the urban context, or indeed, in most contexts in the current day – that of working with literate, educated informants who are interested enough in the topic of the research to want to see the end product (Foster and Kemper, 2002: 143). They write that ‘we must become more concerned about their privacy, and about the harm that careless revelations might cause them’ (ibid.). To this end, I ensured that I used only that data that my participants knew I was collecting and made sure not to use any information that was explicitly ‘off the record’. Caplan highlights that, when carrying out fieldwork and when writing anthropology, one must be aware of the audience (2003: 23). I am potentially writing not just for other academics but for the subjects of my research and the wider public (ibid.: 24-5). The ethics I should conform to, therefore, are not solely those generated by
the academic community but also those generated out of mutual respect and friendship with my research participants. To this end, I am aware that my research is open to criticism and contestation from those I am writing about. Throughout my thesis I have aimed to be faithful to the voices and perspectives of my participants. Naturally, my viewpoint and my voice cannot be excluded from the work and may well conflict with those of my informants. This thesis, therefore, stands as my view on the perspectives and lives of those I worked with. I have been as faithful to the data as possible but, in all likelihood, aspects of it could be seen to be a false representation by those whom I am attempting to represent.

In the coming chapters I shall be outlining and analysing my experiences carrying out fieldwork in Melbourne. This thesis is not aiming to speak to the experiences of all migrants but instead is a study of a number of middle-class, inner city migrants, many of whom are part of a loose network of performers and artists. In the coming chapter I shall be focusing largely on the home and the kitchen, looking at the ways in which people construct an identity and feeling of home through an interaction between the past and the present, between stability and change, and in the final section, between the home and the outside. This shift towards the outside world moves us into the following chapter, which will take a look at how the people I worked with construct a sense of belonging in interaction with the world outside the home. I shall be looking at communities, networks and how ideas of ‘Australianness’ influence behaviour and self-representation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>How participant was sourced</th>
<th>Nature of interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Mother and Father from Greece</td>
<td>Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>Three interviews – one in her house over tea with her mother and a friend, one in her car and one while eating lunch with Julia. Plus a further food-sharing workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanche</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>One cooking visit to her house and a further food-sharing workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Mother of a fellow anthropologist</td>
<td>Three visits to her house in which I cooked with her and ate with her family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Sister-in-law of Brenda</td>
<td>One visit to her house in which I cooked with her and ate with her daughter, niece and a friend. One dinner with her family and Brenda’s family at Brenda’s house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Brazil. Parents from China</td>
<td>Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>One interview at his office, two cooking visits to his house after which I ate with him, and a further food sharing workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederico</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>One cooking visit to his house - after which I ate with him and his wife - and a further food-sharing workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Parents From Greece. Lived in Greece for some time</td>
<td>Close friend of Anna's</td>
<td>Two cooking visits to her house – one accompanied by Anna and one cooking alone but joined for lunch by a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Father from Iran, Mother from Mauritius</td>
<td>Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>One interview, one cooking visit to her house after which we ate together. Attending a performance in her house in which she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cooked and danced for
the audience and a
further food-sharing
workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nunzio</td>
<td>Parents from Italy, Husband of a friend's classmate</td>
<td>One interview in an Italian café with him and his wife, a trip to a Mediterranean wholesaler’s. Two cooking visits to his house (one in which I joined his family for dinner and one in which I did not) and one occasion helping him cook for his catering business at an industrial kitchen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Parents from Greece, Friend of a food-sharing workshop attendee</td>
<td>Two cooking visits, neither of which involved eating together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasimah</td>
<td>Lebanon, Friend of a food-sharing workshop attendee</td>
<td>One interview and two cooking visits – one at which I ate with her and one at which I did not eat and we were joined by her friend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varun</td>
<td>Nagaland, Food-sharing workshop</td>
<td>One long interview at his offices and a further food-sharing workshop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER TWO: HOME, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND CREATIVITY

THE CREATIVE-REPRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP

In this section I shall be looking at cooking as a form of creativity and of reproduction. In particular, I intend to utilise Ingold’s and Hallam’s (2007) discussion of the inherent creativity and innovation that exists within culture, cultural practice and reproduction. I shall, using two extended case studies, look at the ways in which cooking is a creative and dynamic activity. Furthermore I intend to discuss the perceived stability of techniques, recipes and meaning. Through looking at the ways in which first and second generation migrants retain, adapt, reject and recreate ways of being in the kitchen I shall examine whether the dynamism and creativity of cooking is reflected in the process of migrants’ self-representations.

Wasimah is a Lebanese Christian who was born in Beirut in the 1960s and immigrated to Sydney with her family as child. She is an only child who grew up surrounded by cousins, aunts, uncles and distant relatives in the Western suburbs. She moved to Melbourne a number of years ago to pursue her career as a writer and performer and has spent a significant portion of that time living in share houses. This has been with a variety of different people – none of whom have been Lebanese women as, according to Wasimah, it is uncommon for Lebanese women to live like her.

For Wasimah, as in fact for most of the people I encountered over the course of my research, food is an important part of her life. What is interesting in the case of Wasimah, however, is how much she thinks about it in terms of her own identity and her connection to her past as well as her present. In addition to time spent cooking with her in her kitchen, she and I had a series of conversations that lasted over two hours in each case and very seldom strayed from the topics of food, in relation to family, culture and identity. What is patently clear to me is
that Wasimah is a woman for whom food is not just something that she eats but is something that she thinks with; it informs and is informed by her self-representation and self-perception.

Wasimah currently lives with three other people in a large two storey house in the inner north of Melbourne. The kitchen is the largest communal room of the house, lined and furnished almost entirely by wood that was cut and crafted by their landlord. It gives the kitchen the feel of a cabin in the woods; enhanced by the fact that half of it is a conservatory that opens out onto a sizeable garden with a large native tree looming over the windows. It is clear that this is the space in which most of the house spend their spare time. It is lined with shelves containing all manner of spices, dry goods and crockery. There are personal belongings scattered about the place in that comfortable way that makes a house feel lived in, not cluttered. On our first meeting Wasimah told me about how she likes to make *labneh* (strained yoghurt) by hanging homemade yoghurt in a muslin sheet on a hook out in the garden. She told me that her housemates like it when she does this as it makes them feel like they’re ‘living in a village’. On entering the house I begin to understand what they mean – the place feels isolated from the outside world; peaceful and as quiet as you can get in the city, except for when a train rumbles past on the tracks nearby.

During my first visit to her house we ate a simple soup of rice, yoghurt and mint accompanied by toasted bread topped with *manaesh* (a mix of olive oil and *za’atar* - herbs, sesame and salt). Wasimah chose it because it was the only thing she could make with one hand; she had injured her wrist a few days before. It was over Lebanese coffee after lunch that we began to talk in depth about her family, her food and her identity, continuing on a conversation we had began at our first interview a few months before.

Throughout our conversations the character of Wasimah’s mother was ever present, despite the fact that she lives in Sydney. Whether it was talking about altering dishes (she would never do something different in front of her mother), or the way that certain dishes or times of year evoke memories of her. Wasimah
learnt to cook from her mother and various other female members of her family and their techniques, methods and relationship with food are an integral part of Wasimah’s way of being in the kitchen. A few excerpts from one of my interviews with Wasimah perfectly exemplify this relationship:

It’s not a recipe book – it’s not written down. It’s just passed on to you that way…when I’m cooking there is a running dialogue in my head and I’m aware when I’m doing something that is not the way that my mum would want me to do it…there are other things that I simply don’t want to play with because I actually value them for what they are. I actually value the taste that I’ve found there and I value the things that I remember when I learnt to make something…For me the Good Friday ritual, more than any other time, that’s when my mum is with me in the kitchen.

Throughout our meetings Wasimah would constantly refer back to her mother and memories of growing up in Sydney surrounded by her family. This close association of family, food and technique is in stark contrast to Brenda, another woman with whom I also spent a number of hours cooking and eating.

Brenda, unlike Wasimah, is married and moved to Australia as an adult. She was born in Malaysia to an ethnically Chinese family and moved to London at eighteen in order to study nursing. The two of them differ in a number of ways but one particularly interesting point is the relationship they have with cooking and their associations with their countries of origin. Unlike Wasimah, Brenda did not learn to cook from her mother due to the fact that it was her elder sister who was made to help out in the kitchen. It was when she began living in a nursing college in London that Brenda was forced into cooking for herself. It was, therefore, from her fellow students that her foundational techniques and recipes were garnered. As a result, she comes across as far more relaxed and open to alteration in her ways of cooking. An example of this would be the contrasting manner in which I interacted with Wasimah and Brenda when cooking with them.
I spent an afternoon with Wasimah making vegetarian stuffed vine leaves - along with a friend of hers who was also eager to learn the recipe. Interestingly, Wasimah only ever makes vine leaves if she has people with whom to do it. For her it is a ritual that necessarily involves cooperation and social interaction. It is one of those events that carry value, meaning and memories for her. For every stage of the preparation process we were carefully instructed and given a thorough demonstration; from the correct way to choose and gather leaves of parsley before chopping (although we were not yet experienced enough to actually chop), to the perfect technique of rolling the rice mixture in the vine leaves and arranging them properly in the pot. We were supervised, gently chastised when wrong and enthusiastically praised when correct. My vine leaves were deemed so well rolled that I received the highest acclaim of 'my mum would definitely not slap you if she saw these'. The entire enterprise was of course light hearted and joking but when we were incorrect we were indeed made to fix our mistakes. No food was wasted – even the ripped leaves were used to line the pot. Throughout the process we talked about Wasimah’s family, her memories, the importance of well-rolled vine leaves to the pride of a woman, all while drinking sweetened cinnamon tea that, regardless of our proximity to the pot, had to be served in tea glasses on a tray; the proper way to serve tea.

Moisio et al., in ‘Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing Family Identity Through Homemade Food’ (2004), suggest that the cooking of food, and in particular food that is associated with home and family is a highly nostalgic process that ‘represent[s] the collective past as prototypical events that idealize certain regularities of family life’ (ibid.: 366). For Wasimah, cooking – and in particular the preparation of food that carries memories and meaning – connects her to a large family community that no longer exists in the same way due to her family members no longer living near each other. By recreating these nostalgic events, Wasimah is attempting to reconnect to her past. She does this, however, with the people that surround her in her present, thereby reproducing the past in a creative manner. The making of stuffed vine leaves is no longer a ‘Lebanese’ activity but instead becomes an activity of belonging, a means by
which Wasimah creates a connection with not only her past and her family but also with her present. Babacan writes of the ways in which migrants ‘are caught, at any one time, in two spaces – of the now and the past’ (2006: 120). Babacan’s article focuses on the issue of space and place in migrants’ constructions of identities but her discussion has relevance to the role of activity in identity construction. She suggests that part of the process of belonging involves the restoration of the abstract idea of home in the lived space (ibid.) through the construction of a place that reminds a person of ‘back home’ (ibid.). This construction, however, ‘change[s] over time as memory becomes two dimensional’ (ibid.) – new memories are made and the stable construct of home, which is based in memories of the past, changes over time, thereby revealing the dynamic nature of this stable ‘base upon which one can continue to exist’ (ibid.:121). Every time Wasimah makes stuffed vine leaves with her friends, she is recreating that memory and recreating her connection to her past.

For Brenda, the food she makes is not bound up with as overt a set of memories and meanings as it is for Wasimah. Her food is distinctly different from that of her mother - less complex, less heavy and far less salted. Much of this is a health choice – for Brenda much of what she cooks is low in fat and salt. She uses only olive oil and replaces ingredients such as coconut milk in curries with yoghurt. Despite this assertion of difference, what does remain constant is the fact that Brenda cooks mostly Chinese and Malaysian influenced food. The only diversion away from this theme throughout our various meals was a Japanese seaweed soup that she had learnt from a favourite restaurant. In all likelihood the reason for my being in her house would have greatly influenced what she cooked. It is likely that she would not have chosen a roast or a pasta dish in the assumption that it would not be beneficial to my research. According to her family, however, the dishes I encountered were typical of a family dinner, with non-Asian meals being rare and usually only on request or at special occasions.

Brenda’s adaptive and experimental connection to the food cooked by her mother and learnt by her sister is reflected in her relationship with her cultural background. While cooking a prawn curry, the basic ingredient of which was a
mix of shop-bought curry pastes, we talked about how Brenda thinks of her identity. Much as with her style of cooking, Brenda does not feel an entirely intimate connection with the values espoused by her Chinese family. Instead, she claims that her views regarding life, much like her style of cooking food, came from her time spent living away from home and encountering a variety of different people and cultures. For her, Chinese culture is something from which she can choose elements:

(Malaysia is) my family home – two brothers and sister are still there. During visits I still relate to them...you don't give that away – family ties, relationship, you don't give that away. But that doesn't mean we see everything eye to eye...Having the travel I did as a young woman, I met a lot of different people. All nationalities and all walks of life...Very cosmopolitan. And my thinking is not very Chinese...Some Chinese are very dependent upon their family influence, whereas I have not let the family influence me. That doesn't mean I haven't taken the teachings on board. I reflect on those teachings and what do they mean; how is it applicable to me.

Brenda's attitude to cooking and her attitude to her cultural background are representative of a sense of self that is not intimately connected to a particular cultural model. Instead it is something dynamic and created through Brenda's interactions with those around her.

Duruz critiques the idea of the dichotomy of the ‘cosmopolitan’ and the ‘migrant’ (2010). Her discussion looks at a self-described British ‘bloke’ (James) for whom Singaporean hawker food is not just associated with his ‘cosmopolitan’ identity but also associated with his idea of home and comfort (ibid.:47) due to his childhood spent in Hong Kong. This represents, according to Duruz, the ambivalent nature of James’ sense of belonging and ‘identity’s mobility and potential for multiple place attachments’ (ibid.). In the case of Brenda, it is a near reversal of the situation. She is a migrant who also sees herself as ‘cosmopolitan’, having traveled extensively, having learnt to cook not from her mother but from nursing students from around the world and seeing herself as not embedded in her Chinese heritage but instead taking from it what is applicable to her lived
experience. Ingold and Hallam discuss the importance of the improvisational nature of culture, necessary because a system cannot predict the conditions of a world that constantly shifts and changes (2007: 2-3). Brenda is recreating her culture in her own specific, creative, individual way using the ‘general guidelines’ provided by her Chinese upbringing in the lived and dynamic reality of her cosmopolitan present. In this way, culture (in the context of this kitchen) is – as Ingold and Hallam suggest – a process of ‘active regeneration’ (ibid.:6).

Ingold and Hallam’s discussion is relevant in both the cases of Wasimah and of Brenda. They suggest that the present is a creative ‘carrying on’ of the past, ‘a line that grows, issuing forth from its advancing tip rather like a root or creeper probes the earth’ (ibid.:10-11). It is a process that creatively uses the past to navigate the present, preserving yet altering traditions and ideas, reacting to the ‘unscriptable’ nature of life (ibid.:12). This is reflected in Wasimah’s preservation of her mother’s techniques, altered by her lived reality. Ingold, in an earlier work, discussed the creative nature of cooking - following the same recipe can still produces a different dish (2000: 21), arising out of not just the use of potentially different ingredients but also the fact that skills ‘are not transmitted from generation to generation but are regrown in each’ (ibid.:5). In this way, traditions are dynamic and creative, part of the present as much as they are the past.

Carafoli discusses what constitutes authenticity, suggesting that it is not about fidelity of process or ingredients but the ideas behind it: ‘authenticity comes from what the food preparer puts into it’ (2005: 150). People adapt recipes to the ingredients they have, but this does not make them any less meaningful. What is important is whether ‘the impetus behind it is genuine’ (ibid.).

This idea of dynamism and creativity is one that pervades much of my research. Throughout my interactions and observations there has been a running theme of adaptability and change, tempered by an ever-present level of stability and constancy. In the case of Wasimah, the constancy is rather overt when looking at a select number of recipes and techniques. She is reproducing what has come before her. Yet at the same time this reproduction is a creative act, responding to lived realities, altering tradition and creating new memories. I encountered a
further example of this constancy when cooking with Nunzio, a second
generation Italian who is married with two children, to a woman of Anglo-Celtic
descent. When cooking, Nunzio either makes dishes he grew up with or recipes
from Italian cookbooks. He insists on following these recipes to the letter – going
so far as referring to the book repeatedly even if he has cooked the dish countless
times. On one occasion a recipe called for ten cloves of garlic and Nunzio counted
and recounted the cloves to ensure he had the correct number, debating with
himself as to whether the small ones should be half a clove and the large ones two
cloves. He scales his quantities up and down in a precise manner, carefully adding
and removing from the scales and rechecking the recipe at every available
juncture. Nunzio tells me it is because he must do this when cooking for his
catering business as it ensures consistency. He cooks much the same food at
home as he does for his business, so it stands to reason that the process would be
similar. Nunzio takes his fidelity to process seriously. Aside from Italian food, he
will occasionally cook Thai but only because he did a short Thai cooking course
when on holiday and subsequently feels he is able to be accurate. Creativity is not
overt in Nunzio’s kitchen, perhaps because of his professional association with
food or perhaps because he only began to cook for himself after his mother died.
It is possible that cooking, for Nunzio, is a means by which to connect to his
parents – for him it is directly bound up with the past and, as a result, the past’s
perceived constancy and tradition.

But, as I have said, the process of producing a dish is one that is both creative and
dynamic, as well as reproductive and constant. The cook is attempting to reflect
on what they have learnt while at the same time negotiating the present reality.
In the case of Nunzio, he may not be overt in his creativity but he is still
negotiating the present realities of cooking on a large scale for his business, or
using slightly different ingredients – these realities involve change and creativity.
Looking at Brenda, she is continuing to eat and cook Malaysian influenced food
but with a distinctly personal element. She is reproducing the feel of what she
grew up with but creating her own style, one that is dynamic and concentrates on
her current circumstances rather than on history.
Wasimah put it well when she said ‘when I’m cooking there is a running dialogue in my head and I’m aware when I’m doing something that is not the way my mum would want me to do it’. This running dialogue is the negotiation between the past and the present. The past is perceived to be constant and stable – techniques developed and passed down. The present is dynamic and creative – new ways of doing things in reaction to altered circumstances or a desire to experiment. In this way, every dish that is produced is a blending of these two states. Adapon, for example, sees cooking as an art in which the cook, in the preparation of a dish, must make constant decisions according to his or her mood and environment (2008: 16). It is a process that reflects the creative and reactive nature of the process of belonging. It is in this process of belonging that an individual creates their own idea of ‘home’. Much like the process of cooking, the identity a person develops is a negotiation between the dynamic present and the seemingly stable past. In the coming section I shall be focusing on this construction of identity and its relationship to the kitchen.

**INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AND CREATING A HOME**

The previous section addressed the concept that the process of cooking is a negotiation between creativity and reproduction, between stability and dynamism. As touched upon earlier when discussing Brenda and her relationship with her cultural background, identity creation and self-perception follows similar lines. I aim to tackle the question as to what extent the creative-reproductive relationship in the kitchen shapes and influences (or is shaped and influenced by) the ways in which first and second generation migrants perceive themselves. There is no doubt that there are indeed those people and families for whom adherence to a certain level of cultural and culinary authenticity is imperative, but there are a large number of those for whom the story is very different. I have come to the conclusion, as the result of time spent with a variety of people from a variety of different backgrounds, histories and domestic dynamics that there is often a far more complex set of processes, stories, activities and performances of identity than one that is bound solely to the family
and to culture. Even within those homes and kitchens in which there appears to be a distinct effort to preserve a particular, homogenous, mode of action there are still ways in which change, creativity and alteration take place.

Identity, as Brubaker and Cooper suggest, is a fluid construct (2000), and in particular, migrant identity requires a distinct and obvious degree of negotiation, malleability and dynamism. An example of this is Anna, a second-generation Greek migrant whose relationship with her identity has been complex and shifting over the course of her life. Anna's parents migrated to Melbourne as adults, the two of them coming from very different backgrounds. Anna's mother came from a poor family, her parents migrating to Greece from Greek communities in Russia and Turkey, and she did not receive much education. Her husband, conversely, grew up in a relatively wealthy landowning family and received a good education that included learning English. These differences meant that their experiences of moving to Melbourne were rather different; Anna's father became a prominent local politician and the one of the first visible Greeks within the political sphere in Melbourne and her mother became a relatively successful hairdresser for Greek brides. Anna can remember her mother walking around the house practicing the social norms of her husband's associates, getting her mouth around the 'how do you do's' and the 'pleased to meet you's’ while getting her children to help her rehearse shaking hands. According to Anna, she is a good example of the malleable migrant; having to adapt to new situations while still retaining a connection to one's country of origin.

Anna’s parents, while operating within what was then (in the 1960s and 70’s) an overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic political domain were doing so with one eye firmly on the Greek community. Both were active members of, and advocates for, the Greek migrant community in a time when there was very little aid and education for newly arrived settlers. Anna, conversely, rejected entirely that side of her life. She changed her name to sound less Greek, refused to speak Greek and interacted mostly with non-Greeks. She characterised this rejection as listening to rock and blues music, eating sandwiches and wanting to become a
cheerleader. This rejection of her Greek background continued until her early thirties when she came close to death as the result of cancer. On emerging out of her coma, she insisted that she revert to her birth name and began to associate with the Greek community. She improved her language skills, learnt Greek songs (she is a musician by profession) and became more enthusiastic about facets of Greek culture, such as Greek food. Thirty years later, she is now an active member of the Greek musical community, but has no interest in learning how to cook. For her, her expression of her creativity and cultural heritage is through music. According to Anna, this reclaiming of her Greek identity came as the result of a realisation on her part that she doesn’t need to ‘tolerate a desire to be tolerated’. In other words, she no longer felt a desire to fit in, a desire that was in part instigated by the racism directed at her family and her father in his role as a prominent Greek politician. She rapidly and rather easily moved from one identity to another, rather different one.

This short example is an extreme demonstration of the identity shifts that people experience and enact on a daily basis. What should be noted, however, is that Anna’s identity shifts are still very much couched in categorical and essentialised terms of embracing or rejecting ‘Greekness’. One of the questions I posed to my participants was how they would identify themselves. This proved – unsurprisingly – to be a difficult question to both ask and answer. The act of asking it was complicated as I wished to avoid words such as ‘nationality’ or ‘ethnicity’ as they may have proved leading and disrupted the nature of the answer. For the informants it was difficult as a result of the complicated nature of the answer. Indeed, when asked a number of times over different time periods, the answers would change or even present contradiction. Julia – a friend of Anna’s and a second generation Greek – presented a good example of this. On my first asking her this question, near the beginning of our first conversation, she simply said ‘Oh, definitely Greek’. However, through further conversation and interactions I garnered a more subtle self-identification. At times she would be derisory towards certain aspects of Greek culture such as the treatment of women, the superstition, the work ethic in Greece itself. She would talk about
Greece as if it were her home in one sentence and dismiss it as being ‘not as Greek as here’ in another.

This complex, shifting, and very personal perception of self and what it means to be ‘Greek Australian’ is emblematic of the fact that even in the case of a person who, on first impression displays a rather homogenous and community-based identity, there is still an individual element. Julia sits in a position where she is able to both identify with and think outside of the culture in which she has grown up. Anna told me that she sees herself and other Greek Australians as ‘hybrids’; she and many others I have interacted with see ‘Greek Australian’ as an identity in and of itself; one that is very much traditional and yet open to interpretation and personalisation. This idea of hybridity reflects what Wiley and Deaux categorise as ‘blended bicultural identity’ (Wiley and Deaux, 2011: 50). According to them, ‘Blended biculturals construe their two identities as compatible and overlapping. They often make reference to general cultural and historical aspects of ethnic identity, as opposed to personal experience’ (ibid.). In some ways, this definition fits well with those first- and second-generation migrants with whom I interacted. However, the authors’ approach to cultural identity is somewhat oversimplified. They do not concede that many individuals may in fact switch between being ‘blended biculturals’ and ‘alternating biculturals’ for whom ‘there are distinct social settings in which one or the other identity is more prominent’ (ibid.). I suggest that in fact an individual can shift between these two definitions within the same conversation; a product of the individualised nature of cultural identity. Indeed, even the term ‘bicultural’ indicates a particularly monochromatic approach to cultural identity, one in which a person is one or the other, with the only concession to complexity being the possibility of a grey area. In my opinion, hybridity of identity is something far more complicated and made up of a variety of different factors. In many ways it is a polychromatic issue.

One could even go so far as to critique the idea of hybridity. Young Yun Kim places the idea of a hybrid identity under the same umbrella as what she perceives to be binary terms such as ‘bicultural’ and ‘multicultural’ (2008). She
suggests use of the term ‘intercultural’, arguing for ‘less dualistic and more meta-contextual, conceptions of self and others rather than rigid boundedness vis-à-vis conventional social categories such as ethnicity or culture’ (ibid.: 364). For Kim the concept of intercultural identity allows for a far more individualised approach to self-conception (ibid.). This individualised approach allows for the creativity and dynamism that I have observed in my participants.

What must be remembered, however, is that there is another factor at force – that of stability and reproduction. It is not easy, nor common, for a person to have complete fluidity of identity. Grace Harris says it well when she writes that ‘[w]ithout some version of the assumption that the human world is populated by more-or-less persisting selves, mutual accountability would be impossible. In other words, no concept of the person could exist in the absence of a culturally shared concept of self’ (Harris, 1989: 602). Harris’ article, in which she separates the concepts of individual, self and person, has some interesting and relevant points that speak to my discussion of dynamism vs. stability in identity construction. In the case of this piece, I do not intend to pick apart the differences of between individual, self and person; in my analysis I, and my participants, use them interchangeably. Harris, however, argues that they constitute three differing aspects of humanity with the individual being the basic unit, the self being a locus of experience and the person being an ‘agent-in-society’ (ibid.). For Harris, the person is ‘the author of action purposively directed toward a goal...Consequently, it is not sufficient to a discussion of personhood to talk about people as centers of experience, selves. To be a person means to be a “somebody” who authors conduct construed as action’ (ibid.). I take this to mean that identity is split into parts that are passive and active and how a person understands and views themselves is a negotiation between these; between their experience and their own volition. Between the perceived stability and constancy of their cultural norms and the creative, dynamic agency of their own individuality.

This negotiation can be seen in the kitchen when a person adapts a recipe they have learnt. In this way they are making the food their own, they are developing
their own cultural forms that, while often being founded in a stable past, are realised in a dynamic present; a present that shifts and is open to adaptation and interpretation. In this way the people I encountered create their own sense of self in an environment that requires interaction and negotiation between the variety of cultural forms that a person faces in a culturally diverse environment such as Melbourne.

Anna is a useful example of a person who faced those diverse cultural forms and struggled to negotiate them at a young age. She grew up as an extreme example of the ‘alternating bicultural’ suggested by Wiley and Deaux; speaking Greek and eating Greek food at home but refusing to let her mum make her anything but sandwiches for her packed lunch and calling herself Julie from the age of six. It was only as an adult that she began to reflect Kim’s intercultural identity – far more complex and malleable. Anna sees herself first and foremost as Australian, but with a hybrid identity. She told me that she feels as though she would be denying her authentic self to shut out her Greek side. She is, therefore, in acknowledgement of her cultural background, reproducing songs and eating food cooked by her mother, but at the same time she is creating her own individual identity as a performer, as a Greek Australian.

It is through this negotiation that first and second generation migrants are creating a sense of belonging. This individuality can be seen in the ways in which they view what they perceive to be their home. Looking back a Brenda, who I discussed in the previous section, she is a good example of a migrant who has created a distinctly individual identity that draws from her cultural background yet emphasises her diverse present. When I asked her about what she sees as a home, she talked about family, love and activity. She talked about the fact that it is something a person creates. Her sister in law, Caroline, had something similar to say over lunch a few days later. She is from Singapore, and when I asked her about it she replied that the Singapore she knew doesn’t exist anymore, and while she doesn’t see herself as Australian because she wasn’t born here, she does see it as her home. In particular, she sees her house and her family as her home. Caroline, much like Brenda, didn’t learn to cook until she got married; she
learnt from friends and from people in her church. She replicates dishes that, in Singapore, would only be bought from street vendors and not cooked at home. In this way she is creating her own sense of belonging and reproducing elements of her cultural background in a creative way. For her, ‘home is what you make it’. The act of belonging is a creative one. The act of belonging is one bound up in individual creativity and volition.

The idea of home being ‘what you make it’ can be seen in the story of Frederico - a Colombian in his late 30s who moved to Melbourne in his teens with his mother. He lives in the west of Melbourne with his Colombian wife and two young children. Frederico is a passionate cook – he first began to learn as young boy when his sister invited him and his mother to stay for two months at a resort at which she was working. Being young and easily bored he began helping out in the kitchens and enjoyed the hectic atmosphere, as well as the international cuisine he encountered. What cemented his relationship with food, however, was moving to Melbourne:

[In Colombia] Men aren't allowed in the kitchen. When I came to Australia with my mum, it was just mum and I living here so often enough I’d go 'Mum let me cook something. Teach me how to make rice, teach me how to make bistec a caballo. And it was just her and I and every now and then she'll come home and I'll have cooked the rice and done a bit of steak or something like that. And sometimes she wasn't home so I'd have to cook my own bits and pieces for lunch and dinner. It would never happen in Colombia. In Colombia I would have never got into cooking.

Cooking became an important part of Frederico’s life outside of his house as well. He did not have a good enough grasp of English to study performing arts and instead ended up working at a Mexican restaurant that he eventually bought, turning it into a live music venue as well. This led him to open what he claimed was the first Colombian restaurant in Melbourne. It too was a music venue with an emphasis on Latin American musicians. He sold it a number of years ago and now works outside of the hospitality or culinary industry but is anxious to return to running a restaurant.
For Federico music and food combine perfectly together and are a way ‘to educate people here in Melbourne about Latin American culture and in particular Colombian culture and food and music. Because unfortunately we’ve been stereotyped...that we come from a war background, drug lords’. Federico has spent much of his life working hard to spread the pride that he has in his country of origin. He is slightly different from a number of the people mentioned in this section in that he does not see himself as a hybrid or as disconnected from any particular country: he is a Colombian who lives in Melbourne. What stands out as similar, however, is the way that he is making his home in Melbourne – actively engaging with the world around him to create spaces in which he can express his love of Colombian food and Latin American music. This is evident in his home as well – he cooks mostly Colombian food, speaks Spanish with his family and listens to Colombian music while cooking.

The most interesting way in which he works to make his home for himself, however, is in his garden. He has a large herb garden growing many of the herbs that he cannot find in in Melbourne, the most notable being guasca. Guasca is a herb that is used solely in a potato soup called ajiaco. According to Federico, ajiaco can’t be made without guasca as the flavour can’t be attained in any other way and it is impossible to find it fresh in Melbourne. Petridou discusses ‘[evoking] the experience of home as a sensory totality’ (2001: 89), arguing that food is the means by which this can be achieved – particularly in the case of a migrant. For Federico, Columbia is still, in many ways ‘home’ in the sense that it evokes memories and emotions of connection and belonging. Melbourne is, at the same time, home and by evoking Colombia in Melbourne he is creating a totality and attempting to resolve the fragmentation of living away from Colombia. Petridou references the Homeric Greek word nostos, meaning ‘return to the homeland’ (ibid.). It is the root of the Modern Greek word meaning tasty and of the word nostalgia (ibid.). According to Petridou, ‘[t]asteless, in this context, is an equivalent of meaningless. As stated in the Greek dictionary, anostia (lack of taste, tastelessness) also bears the meaning of anousiotis (lack of substance, lack of meaning)’ (ibid.). This connection would not be lost on Federico; for him food -
the feeling that it evokes and its ability to educate people about himself and his country of origin – is meaningful. Growing guasca, therefore, not only provides ajiaco with the requisite taste, it gives the dish and his experience of it meaning – it is a means by which he can evoke and create home for himself.

This home, however, is not cut off from the outside world. It is open to alteration by outside influences. These influences can affect how the home is used and how its inhabitants behave and think about themselves and the world around them. This influence of the outside world is what I shall be focusing on in the coming section.

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD**

The discussion thus far has looked at the individual and their creativity versus their reproduction of past recipes or ways of being. Additionally, the ways in which people construct their idea of home has emerged as a significant theme. As shown in the last section, Caroline from Singapore believed that home is ‘what you make it’. This is indeed the case in many respects, but what must be remembered is that a house is not an isolated space; it is not cut off from the rest of the world. It is porous and the outside world influences what goes on inside the house, inside the home, inside the family.

I shall begin with an illustrative case study. Varun moved to Melbourne from Nagaland in northwest India in 1996 as a visiting academic at one of the city’s universities. He has since moved in to the not-for-profit sector – working with recently arrived migrants. For Varun, the move to Australia involved not just a change in ways of behaving outside of the home, but also significant changes in behaviour within the home, for a variety of reasons. These reasons effectively lay out the various influences that migrants face when moving to a place such as Melbourne. The first is the issue of time, of what is commonly known as a work-life balance. For Varun, there was a marked difference when he moved to Melbourne – people have far less free time here than in Nagaland and as a result
cooking, eating and social interaction altered. For example, Varun described a
typical day in Nagaland, which would invariably include a friend dropping by to
say hello. They would, without fail, be fed from the pot of rice that is always
ready and often stay for dinner and usually for the night. The kitchen is,
according Varun, the hub of a Naga household. It is the first room encountered
when entering the house and the space in which most interactions take place -
both between the inhabitants and with guests. This is markedly different from
the way in which Varun perceives Australian home life, and the way in which he
lives his life now. His current way of interacting with guests is far more formal;
they eat in the dining room, his wife lights candles, they eat food that is more
complicated to cook than a standard meal. Varun finds these experiences and
activities to be less enjoyable than the way one would interact with guests in
Nagaland. He would much rather operate closer to the Naga model, but can only
do so with close friends and even those occasions have become far less frequent.
This is for a variety of reasons, most notable of which is that he does not have
any close Naga friends and he and his wife are eager to ‘fit in’ with the people
they interact with – many of whom are Anglo-Celtic Australians. This formal
style is what they perceive to be a far more fitting form of hospitality. According
to Varun, it is important to adapt to the environment one finds oneself in. He
misses certain aspects of his old home but he must now make the most of his
new home and part of that is not fighting against what he perceives to be the
norms of those around him: ‘What the middle class Australian would do – we
have adapted very much to that system. The lifestyle is different. So you have to
adjust to the lifestyle of the country...you can’t be Chinese here in Australia [for
every example)...you have to become pragmatic. You have to adjust to where you are
and that’s where you miss so much a part of your culture’.

Much of the adjustment Varun talks about is related to the work-life balance I
mentioned earlier. Most of what Varun or his wife cook is quick and easy because
they often get home late from work. This is a topic brought up by all my
participants - they often do not find time to be in the kitchen. For Varun, this
proved an adjustment, and one that significantly altered his behaviour.
According to him, in Nagaland it would have been unthinkable for a man to cook,
but he made the decision upon arriving in Australia to share domestic duties with his wife, particularly in the kitchen. This was because his wife, too, works outside of home. As a result many of the dishes that he ate when in Nagaland are no longer possible – there is nobody within the household with enough time. Additionally, he is unable to acquire many of the ingredients specific to Naga cuisine. An example of this would be fermented bamboo shoots and fermented soya beans. He has been able to source Chinese fermented bamboo shoots and soya beans but they don’t taste the same. The only solution he has found is to ferment them himself but it is a process that involves hours of preparation and months of waiting as the bamboo shoots or soya beans must be buried for a number of weeks in order for the fermentation process to work. Varun has done this in the past but it doesn’t turn out right – particularly in the case of the soya beans – and it is far too time-consuming a process to be viable. Instead, he tells me:

I started cooking Indian food, Indian curry -which is easy to get and everything. But we eat a lot of Australian food also. [My children] eat pasta, we have roast meat and all those that their friends eat. Mashed potatoes, vegetables, BBQ, meat chops...But we eat quite a lot of Indian food. Nagas have adopted a lot of that. So I cook a lot of daal.

It appears that for Varun, the easiest way for him to get a taste similar to that of home is to cook Indian food because of it’s relative ease – both in sourcing of ingredients and in preparation. Non-Indian and non-Naga food is relatively standard fare in his house but it appears to be largely instigated by his children and influences from the outside world.

A final adjustment mentioned by Varun is the nature of his house. He and his wife bought a house that was already finished and the kitchen is very different from their ideal. It is small – only really big enough for one person to cook in – and, according to Varun, not large enough to be a social space. A small room off the side of the kitchen, which contains the television and an open fire, takes the role of social space. This room is the space where the family spends most of their
time and where close friends are entertained. In a way, it replaces the Naga kitchen but for Varun it is not enough and his ideal house would contain a kitchen that served as a hub for the family, as the centre of the home. Because of the influence of forces outside of his control, the way in which Varun interacts with and constructs his home is rather different from the way in which he would like it to be. In this way, he is in a process of negotiation between his desire to control his experience of his domestic space and the influence of the space itself. Additionally, his experiences and observations outside of the space influence how he uses it, as in the case of entertaining guests in what he perceives to be the formal Australian style.

I have used this extended example because, in many ways, it acts as an illustration of the influence the outside world can have upon the home life of migrants. Much of what Varun describes can be found in the experiences of most of the people I worked with. His nostalgia for his country of origin, his overtly conscious attempts to blend in, his pragmatism with regard to adjusting to his new environment and his inability to obtain much of the food needed to cook his home country’s cuisine are not as prevalent in the lives of most of my other participants, but are certainly present. In all these cases Varun and my other informants are attempting to create a sense of home, and in doing so create a sense of belonging. This cannot be done in isolation from the rest of the world, as the home is not simply just a space but, according to Blunt and Dowling, is ‘a spatial imaginary: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places’ (2006: 2). In this way, home is something that is constructed, is open to alteration, is connected with myriad concepts and is permeable enough to ideas, objects and people to be influenced by factors outside of it.

The most prevalent theme throughout my interactions with informants was the issue of the work-life balance. This is the most obvious way in which the outside world influences the home, and in particular, activities within the kitchen. All my participants work – some part-time, but most full-time – and as a result they are not able to spend much time in the kitchen on weekdays due to time constraints
or exhaustion at the end of the day. This dramatically affects what is cooked, how it is cooked and the attitudes towards the food cooked. Some people get takeaways or eat left overs, others rely on shortcuts such as pastes and jars. All agree that their working life significantly affects their home-life and their cooking/eating habits. The working life of a family member or members has a significant impact on domestic interactions (Bumpus et al, 1999; Repetti et al, 2009) and I suggest that this can be extended to domestic activity. As Varun told me, women in places such as Melbourne do not have time to spend all day crushing spices and making pastes. As a result, what is cooked in the new home nation is often different from what was cooked in the country of origin. If the activity is different, if the food is different, it will be thought about differently. It may be perceived to be less important, less meaningful, less connected to the cultural past. This can be seen in the behaviour around festivals, holidays or even weekends. 'Special’ meals invariably involve more effort and more time, and are often imbued with more meaning. They are often less open to alteration and more connected to a cultural identity. Wasimah cooks vegetarian kibbeh at Easter and for her it is the most important meal of the year, it is when she feels most connected to her parents and most connected to her Lebanese identity. This connection is not apparent when, for example, she collapses home after a long day working and makes beans on toast. In this way, her life outside of home has impacted upon the level to which she connects with her cultural background.

Moving on from the issue of working life and time outside of the home, Varun discussed a certain pragmatism in adapting to the cultural norms of his new country. This builds on the previous sections in the chapter, which discussed the ways in which identity is a fluid concept that balances between stability and dynamism, as well as a discussion with regards to cooking as an activity that balances reproduction and creativity. In this case, a distinction can be drawn between home and outside with spaces such as the kitchen acting as points at which the two meet. Food can seldom be prepared without ingredients from outside of the house, even if the cook has a vegetable garden. Additionally, in the case of my participants, it is apparent that for most of them guests to the house would spend some, if not all, of their time in the kitchen. In this way it is not an
entirely private space, and as such it is easily open to the influence and alteration of outside forces. Food that is prepared with the intention of being taken out of the house may be different due to pragmatic adaptation. Varun’s son, for example, refuses to eat rice when in the presence of his work colleagues because they bully him about it. Instead he has switched to eating sandwiches. Noble and Watkins discuss the generative capacity of Bourdieu’s habitus and argue that the individual is able to think about and alter his or her habituated practices; he or she is capable of ‘agentic reflection’ (Noble and Watkins, 2003: 531). In the case of Varun’s son (and for many of my participants) this reflection, this negotiation with the structure and cultural norms of the host nation is a process that takes place both within and without the home.

The influence that neighbours, friends, and colleagues have should not be underestimated. The experience of Varun’s son is a clear example, but there are other less dramatic examples. Sarah is a second generation Greek Australian who generally cooks Greek food but has altered her practices in response to outside influences. Sarah’s alteration is as a result of her daughter who has developed an interest in Japanese culture through interaction with friends at school who are from South East Asia. Many of them are fans of anime (Japanese cartoons) and manga (Japanese comics) and this has led Sarah’s daughter to want to eat Japanese food. As a result, they have tried making a variety of dishes; dishes that previously Sarah knew very little about. Helene Brembeck suggests that the influence of children has a powerful effect on what is cooked at home (2009). In her discussion of immigrant children in Sweden she suggests that when encountering new foods outside of the home they are encountering what she calls ‘frontiering foodscapes’ (ibid.: 132) and consequently they bring these foodscapes back home. These children are agents in the alteration of the nature of their home – encouraging their parents to cook new foods, either through entirely new meals or through ‘hybridizing’ cultural standards: ‘The children decide and they [the parents] follow’ (ibid.:138). In this way children act as a powerful conduit for the influence of the outside world, encountering new food and ways of behaving through school, friends and television and encouraging their family to change in the face of these new encounters.
It is not just people that exist within the networks and relations of the migrant that have an influential effect on life within the home. There are other influences such as books, magazines, radio, the internet and television. Many of the houses I entered had a television that was visible from either the cooking or the eating space and a few of the participants would watch television while cooking. Most of them have watched cooking programs and taken inspiration from them for recipes; in other words, television can be a highly influential factor in the alteration of cooking techniques and, indeed, what is cooked. Isabelle de Solier suggests that food and cooking programs on channels such as the ABC and SBS present a ‘foodie lifestyle’, a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, connoisseur way of living; promoting what she calls a ‘middle class lifestyle-based identity’ (de Solier, 2008: 69), thereby showing ‘foodies’ how to behave within their kitchens. Not all my participants are foodies, but most of them greatly enjoy cooking as a hobby as well as a necessity and show some level of appreciation of food other than that with which they grew up. Furthermore, most of them fall into this middle class category, a category that is based less in ethnic or cultural foundations and more in consumption, in material culture, in taste (Bourdieu, 2005b). As suggested by Alan Warde, this consumption-based identity is not entirely unfixed – it is influenced by ‘style groups’, ‘neo-tribes’ (1997: 16) and, I argue, forces such as television.

These forces are, to some degree, associated with commodity consumption. Appadurai suggest that society is highly commoditised (1986) and I agree to the extent that, in order for an individual to express their identity through food they must in some way consume commodities. These commodities are brought from the outside into the home and become a part of it, thereby changing the home in some way. This may be in the form of ingredients but can also be cookbooks and equipment. One of my participants is an avid collector of anything food related. He refers to cookbooks as his porn and every time I see him he has a new gadget or a new cuisine that he has discovered. He very much sees himself as a foodie and, drawing from de Solier, we could say that he expresses that identity through commodity consumption (de Solier, 2008: 70).
I touched briefly upon Varun’s perceptions and experiences of his kitchen. For him, his kitchen is not the space he would like it to be and, as a result, it affects his comfort in his home. A person’s home should be a place where they feel comfortable and safe; it should be a place where they feel a sense of belonging and a sense of control. When in the extreme this lack of comfort, belonging and control can precipitate a feeling of what Blunt and Dowling refer to as ‘unhomeliness’ (2006: 119-120). In the case of Varun the house he bought, and the way it was designed, affects the way in which he lives in it. It was not designed by its inhabitants and, as such, does not reflect their desires. Outside forces have impacted upon the way in which Varun experiences his home and, as such, his level of comfort and belonging within it. A number of my other participants have remodeled their homes – paying particular attention to the kitchen – in order to create that sense of belonging. This illustrates the important role the physical space plays in the construction of a sense of comfort and belonging in a home.

This chapter has focused largely on the home and the individual. I have shown that cooking is a dynamic activity – a form of creativity and reproduction that can often carry value, meaning and memories. It is a way to reconnect to the past but in a creative manner, a blending of the past and present. Just as with cooking, there is always change, creativity and alteration in self-representations and conceptions of home. The process of creating home is active and connected to the complex, shifting and personal sense of self that people enact and experience day-to-day. As this final section has shown, the home is not isolated from the influences of the outside world. People must adjust their ways of being and dwelling in response to the world around them – to physical structures, time pressures, perceptions of others and availability of resources. Home, however, should be a place of comfort and ‘homeliness’ and there are a variety of ways in which a person constructs a feeling of being at home in the world. In the coming chapter I shall be looking at the ways in which the wider world influences a person’s construction of belonging and, in doing so, I intend to investigate the ways in which migrants interact with the idea of an Australian identity and place themselves within or in relation to it.
CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING BEYOND THE HOUSE

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Throughout this thesis I have largely been focusing on individuals and the ways in which they construct their sense of belonging within the home, with particular focus on the kitchen. The home is, of course, just one facet by which to explore a person’s self-representations. In my introduction I referenced Pierre Mayol’s suggestion that the home ‘reveals the personality of its occupants’ (Mayol, 1998a: 145) and is a ‘protected place...where the pressure of the social body on the individual can develop ways of operating’ (ibid.:146, emphasis author’s). As I mentioned in my introduction, however, Mayol’s analysis of the home as the main site of a person’s self-representation is somewhat limited. Throughout this thesis I have been following the idea of identities being multi-faceted, complex and shifting. Indeed, a person does not possess one identity but a number of identities that they enact and perform depending upon the situation - identities that alter, overlap and converge. Additionally multiple people, environments, events, ideas and objects can influence a person’s identity or identities. In this section I wish to move away from focusing on the home and the largely solitary activity of cooking and turn instead to communities as realms of identity development and performance.

There are a variety of ways to interpret the term ‘community’. In the context of this section I shall be viewing communities not as those based in ethnicity or country of origin, but instead I shall be looking at communities of practice. Throughout my research it became apparent that a number of my participants do not view themselves as being part of an ethnic community but instead see their identities as being based in alternative communities founded in common interests, beliefs or professions. Furthermore, those participants who do see themselves as being involved in an ethnic community do so as a result of interaction and practice. Belonging is not simply a case of being born into a culture but is instead a process that must be acted out and maintained.
In my introduction I presented key moments in the life of Nina, a half-Iranian, half-Mauritian performing artist. For Nina, her identity is not focused on heritage but instead on her role as a ‘multicultural’ performer. If we refer back to the opening words of the thesis, spoken by Nina in one of our interviews, it is clear that much of her identity arises out of the community of performers that she interacts with as part of both her professional and personal life. What should be noted in this case, however, is her emphasis on the ‘multicultural’ side of her identity. She is classified as a ‘world music’ artist at the venues, festivals and events at which she performs and many of the people she works with and socialises with are much the same. In my conversations with Nina she came across as very comfortable with her self-representation, but aware that her professional life would be framed by her heritage and by her appearance.

Tahmina Rashid writes about her experience as a female Muslim academic, suggesting that she exists within a narrow framework, expected to be either a ‘proper Muslim woman’ or entirely secular and dismissive of Islam (Rashid, 2010: 111). She suggests that ‘If I cannot define myself through existing discourses, my authenticity will continue to be questioned’ (ibid.). In our conversations Nina implied that she sometimes feels that her community of practice and her membership to it is somewhat defined by her status as a migrant. This categorisation, however, does not appear to have an immediate or overt influence on Nina’s self perception and self-representation. She sees herself, first and foremost, as an artist and not as Iranian or Mauritian.

In her critique of the use of the term ‘community’, Vered Amit discusses the distinction between identities that arises out of categories and those that arise out of relationships (2002: 59-60). Ideologically, she suggests, categorical identities ‘trump’ relationships but, in practice, ‘these kinds of ascribed identities often piggy-back on and draw their affective charge from actual relationships of intimacy’ (ibid.:60). In the case of Nina, however, her relationships of intimacy are not primarily with her family or indeed anyone from Mauritius or Iran, but instead are with fellow performers and artists, therefore providing no foundational basis from which a categorical identity could draw an ‘affective charge’.
Amit suggests that many transnational connections and identities are dependent upon ‘very particular relationships, activities and physical locations...Remove those connections and it is doubtful that the identification will continue to be meaningful or claimed’ (ibid.:62). This may not be the case for all migrants and all transnational connections, but it certainly highlights the importance of reassertion of connection for some. Let me reintroduce Brenda, for whom a self-representation arises out of her work as a nurse, her time studying at nursing college in London and her travels around the world. By her own admission, she does not feel a strong connection with her Chinese-Malaysian heritage, due in part to her lack of transnational interaction. Her everyday interaction - with her colleagues, her friends and her (Trinidadian) husband and daughter - form a far greater influence on her sense of belonging and identity. This is reflected in her cooking. Whilst she largely produces food influenced by her Chinese-Malaysian upbringing, she learnt how to cook from her fellow nursing students and colleagues and continues to collect recipes and inspiration from restaurants and the television. As mentioned in the second chapter, her cooking style is very different from that of her mother with far less oil, salt and heavy ingredients such as coconut milk – a distinct influence of her role as a healthcare worker.

The importance of this transnational interaction is apparent in the lives of the Greek-Australians with whom I interacted. All three of the Greek-Australian women I interviewed and cooked with have close relatives living in Greece and two of them have lived in Greece for varying amounts of time. They all travel to and from Greece and interact with Greeks on a daily basis. Julia, introduced in the previous chapter, married a Greek man and her son attends a Greek school in Melbourne. They have maintained the connections that, according to Amit, ensure the maintenance of meaningful and claimed identifications. The practiced nature of this identity is evidenced in Julia’s discussion of the only non-Greek person who is part of her close circle – her husband’s business partner. He is of Anglo-Celtic descent, but over the course of a number of years interacting with mostly Greeks he has, according to Julia, become ‘pretty much Greek’, through learning the language and culturally meaningful ways of interacting. This
example can be compared to her friend Anna who spent much of her life refusing to engage with her Greek identity by rejecting the language and the activities carried out by the rest of her family and Greek friends. McKibben highlights the importance of continued connection and interaction in her discussion of a Sicilian fishing community in Monterey, California (2011), discussing the ‘sense of genuine, lived attachment to Sicily and to Monterey’ (ibid.:153) that is maintained through marriage, travel, property and business interests. This need to maintain this connection in order for it to remain salient highlights the participatory nature of identity making. Tamara Kohn uses the phrase ‘activity-generated communities’ to describe those communities based in ‘shared activity and practice rather than idealised shared markers of blood, land, ethnicity, nationality, etc.’ (2010: 177). I suggest that in order for ‘idealised markers’ (such as the Greek Australian identity) to hold any significance they must, in fact, be bolstered by ‘activity-generated communities’.

An ideal extended case study at this juncture would be that of Blanche, a Mauritian woman in her fifties who has been living in Melbourne since her early teens. Blanche leads a hectic life with an interest and an involvement in her church, catering, singing, teaching, social work, and running a charity. All these activities, in one way or another, have a connection to her Mauritian heritage. She runs a charity for sick Mauritian children to get treatment in Australia, she caters for events, providing mostly Mauritian food, she performs mostly French songs (a reflection of her childhood in Mauritius and the French influence in music), and she is involved in a church with a significant number of Mauritian people. I must point out at this point, however, that Blanche’s life does not solely revolve around the Mauritian community – she has a number of friends, in-laws and projects from a variety of backgrounds and she sees herself as being Australian but with a Mauritian background. Her children, for example, think of themselves as Australian, but, according to Blanche, they are still connected to their Mauritian heritage:
My children consider themselves Aussies but they have strong Mauritian traits they’re unaware of. When there are special occasions or ceremonies they tend to revert back to their Mauritian origin.

This exemplifies the importance of connection and practice in creating an identity. According to Blanche her children have a Mauritian side to them but it only comes out when they are in ‘activity-generated communities’ (ibid.).

Blanche has a deep involvement with the Mauritian community, which became apparent to me when I first visited her house. Blanche lives in an impeccably neat and welcoming house in the Eastern Suburbs that is full of pictures of her family and friends, many of whom are scattered all over the world. The most used part of the house is the kitchen/dining area, which comprises a large room split in two by a counter-top with the dining area also serving as an informal living room. Blanche informed me that she also has another living room but converted the kitchen in order that it might become a more social area. We spent the majority of our time at the counter-top while Blanche ran around completing a number of tasks. She was finishing a meal for the evening, preparing a large number of napolitanes (jam sandwiched between two round pieces of shortbread and covered in pink icing) for a Mauritian friend she was preparing to visit in hospital, and fielding calls from various people she’s professionally involved with. Additionally, during my visit, two of her Mauritian friends came round for tea. It was clear that informal and impromptu visits such as this are common for Blanche and it wasn’t long before they began chatting about a New Year’s event that Blanche was helping to organise that would feature a number of artists from Mauritius.

Blanche’s life is a great example of the ways in which relationships and activities are necessary for an identity to be maintained. Nonetheless, despite her deep involvement with Mauritius and the Mauritian community in Australia, Blanche still sees herself as Australian. This is evidence of the complex way in which identities are represented and maintained; Blanche does not see herself as Mauritian and yet maintains close connections with Mauritius and Mauritian
culture. She is not defined by the culture but instead by her relationships, which allows for a far more fluid expression of identity and belonging.

I wish now to look at those communities of practice that migrants may use to create a sense of belonging in Australia. During one of my visits to Brenda’s house I was included in a family dinner with her brother and his wife Caroline, who also became one of my informants. On arrival, Brenda’s brother immediately turned on the television and kept it on throughout dinner. Brenda’s daughter explained to me that her uncle works in an environment of typically Aussie ‘blokes’ and, in order to be able to have a conversation with them he needs to be aware of the major news stories and, in particular, the football scores and highlights of the various games. He has no inherent interest in the game, but without an intimate knowledge of that day’s game his sense of belonging at work would be diminished; he needs to, on some level, be part of the sport-related community in order to feel part of the community at work. This has echoes of Noel Dyck’s discussion of the emphasis on sport as a means by which immigrants integrate into Canadian society (2010). For Dyck, however, this is a ‘simplistic and sterile’ means by which to approach the importance of sport in the lives of migrants. What he does suggest, however, is that sport is one of a number of ‘complex and diverse social and cultural undertakings...that are...inextricably implicated in much broader social, economic and political contexts’ (124). In this vein, then, Caroline’s husband is not using sport as the primary means by which to integrate into his workplace and into Australia, but instead it is indicative of his pragmatic undertakings to feel a part of his work-based community of practice.

Chapman and Pyvis emphasise the pragmatic nature of engaging in a community of practice, suggesting that international students engaging in overseas courses do so in order to become ‘international [people]’ (2005: 41). They see the course as being a practical way to become part of an idealised global community. Chapman and Pyvis reference Dunn, including an excerpt that reflects the pragmatic nature of Caroline’s husband’s efforts to belong:
Understanding how identity is constructed is...no longer solely a matter of
the influences of history, culture, geography, and power but depends also
on choices and constraints immediately available to individuals who as
actors negotiate their lives within a broad field of social meanings and
actions and within a range of institutional settings.

According to Dunn, cultural identity is distinct from social and personal identity
with the former being shared and historical, based in forms of representation
and the latter being the ‘institutional contexts of the individual’ (ibid.). What
Dunn suggests is that there is not enough emphasis on ‘the underlying social and
material processes shaping cultural production and consumption’ (ibid.). This
reflects Amit’s reference to ‘categories of identification’ gathering ‘affective
charge’ from relationships (Amit, 2002: 59-60), discussed earlier in this section.

A further form of relationships and connections are those based in the
neighbourhood. Pierre Mayol defines the neighbourhood as the space a person
can walk in relation to their house (1998b: 10). What is significant for Mayol is
the fact that, in the process of walking around it and engaging with it, a
neighbourhood moves from being a public space to being a private one. The
dweller’s engagement ‘exercises a sort of appropriation of this space’ (ibid.:11).
This idea of the neighbourhood as a space that is neither private nor public, a
place in which a person feels comfortable, a place in which a person is
recognised and recognises those people and places he or she encounters, is
evident in the lives of my participants. The neighbourhood provides a space for
communities in which the first and second generation migrants I worked with
might develop a sense of belonging. This can happen on a number of levels and I
shall put forward two brief cases that exemplify these.

The first involves Daniel. On our first night cooking together at his house, he ran
out of ice and, instead of going to the local supermarket to buy some he walked
to the Greek restaurant on the corner of his street with two jugs. The waiters
there all clearly know him and happily filled one jug with ice and the other with
soda water. An additional point to make is that Daniel was wearing typical ‘inside’ clothes – an old t-shirt, worn-in tracksuit bottoms and flip-flops. For someone who is always well dressed this is clearly not an outfit that he would be content to walk around town in. But to Daniel, he was barely leaving his house; he was in his neighbourhood, he was in a place of belonging.

The second example involves Julia. Her neighbours are a Lebanese family and Julia has become friends with the wife, who is in her early thirties. Whenever the wife has extra food after cooking a meal she gives some to Julia and, in return, Julia looks after the neighbours’ small children every so often and teaches them how to bake. Julia and her neighbours (in particular the wife) seem to talk on a regular basis and swap recipes and cooking techniques. On my last visit to her, Julia was planning to host a barbeque over Christmas and wanted to be sure to cook some Halal meat so that the neighbours could be part of it. These Lebanese neighbours are the only non-Greek people Julia seems to interact with regularly and, it seems, this has been an influence in her life. She now eats more ‘adventurous’ food, trying what she calls her neighbour’s ‘curries’ and occasionally cooking non-Greek or Mediterranean for herself. Her husband and son refuse to eat almost anything that isn’t Greek but Julia, driven in part by her interaction with her neighbours, is willing to experiment.

This interaction with neighbours and sharing of food and recipes is common amongst a number of my participants. Additionally, in the suburbs in which I carried out my research, the inhabitants tend to originate from a variety of countries or have a variety of heritages. As a result, the communities that have formed in the neighbourhood are, for many of my participants, the loci of much of their culinary experimentation and exploration of different ways of living. In this way, the neighbourhood is a dynamic space in which inhabitants exchange, adapt, develop and communicate, creating new relationships and contributing to their process of belonging.

As I have discussed in this section, the creation of a sense of belonging is an active process and one that involves the maintenance of relationships and
connections. These often occur within ‘activity-generated communities’ or communities of practice in which an individual, through practices and interactions contributes to their sense of belonging and their identity. In the case of the migrants I worked with, these could be either associated with their country of origin or with other groups clustered by profession, interests or religion. In some cases the practice is enacted as part of a conscious process of belonging and in others it is seen by the participant as a natural part of their lives. What is common to all of them, however, is the need to maintain and reaffirm connections and relationships in order to give legitimacy to the identity associated with that community. These people are all part of a variety of communities based in families, work, hobbies and location. In the coming section I shall be exploring the ways in which communities, as well as markers of identity, are negotiated by individuals throughout their daily lives in order to create and maintain a sense of belonging.

(DIS)COMFORT AND (DIS)CONNECTION

In The Interpretation of Cultures Clifford Geertz writes that ‘Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun’ (1973:5). This quote is an ideal way by which to introduce this next section. In the coming pages I wish to discuss the ways in which the migrants I worked with create a sense of comfort and connection in the world through the construction of particular sets of webs that pertain to a range of relationships and identifiers. Furthermore, I wish to discuss the ways in which discomfort and disconnection can arise when those relationships and identifiers become fragmented.

The basis of my discussion is a concept that I term comfort in tension. Much like Geertz’s webs of significance, the individual hangs on a series of strings in the centre of a structure built up of relationships and identifiers that make up their sense of self. These consist of a number of variables including (but not limited to) ethnic background, class, age, gender, language, family, friends, career and location. In order for this structure to remain balanced these strings must all be
equally taut, with the individual moving to various points on the circle, manipulating the strings and navigating their identity. It is this tension (which the individual perceives to be in their control) that creates a level of comfort in negotiating the complexity of identity. But when it becomes apparent that the control is not entirely in their hands, that often one is not viewed exactly as one wishes to be seen, the strings slacken, stretch, or even break. This resulting discomfort is part of what creates the confusion and feelings of disconnect that occur when an individual is not entirely at home in their environment; they are not in control of the tension between their identities.

When discussing this topic I am reminded of Frantz Fanon's description of his feeling of discomfort and disconnection when objectified as a black man, when he felt that he no longer had any control over his self-representation:

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object...All I wanted was to be a man among other men...[But] My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored...I felt an easily identifiable flood mounting out of the countless facets of my being.

(Fanon, 1991: 112-114)

Fanon demonstrates an extreme of this experience, but it is one that many migrants go through. What is of particular interest in this case is his reference to making himself an object, his inability to be the man he wanted to be, the idea of his body being distorted and, in particular, the idea of his ‘being’ as something constituted of countless facets. In this section I shall be referring to a number of migrants for whom this comfort in tension and subsequent discomfort became apparent; they experienced feelings of distortion and the inability to control their self-representation. I shall that argue this is based in the fact that a person’s identity is made of ‘countless facets’ that are often contradictory and require negotiation.
Benhabib suggests that, when looking at culture, it is never constituted of a single set of beliefs, symbols and practices but instead ‘at any point in time there are competing collective narratives and significations that range across institutions and form the dialogue of cultures’ (Benhabib, 2002: 60). I would argue that this extends to the individual, in which he or she forms a kind of dialogue of self as a result of competing collective narratives and significations and hangs between them in his or her ‘web of significance’. Ewing argues that people construct a series of what she calls ‘self-representations’ that emerge in specific cultural contexts and then are pushed to the side when not relevant, allowing for another to emerge (Ewing, 1990: 253). It is this, she posits, that allows for people to contradict themselves when talking about their sense of self, their goals and their priorities (ibid.). I agree with Ewing’s suggestion of a multiplicity of self-representations and it fits with my theory regarding comfort in tension. A person constructs this web and moves between its strands, believing him/herself to be in control and believing to be a stable whole. This is not say that people are not aware of the changes they make in themselves when moving between situations, but instead that they do so naturally. It is when it becomes unnatural and overtly conscious that problems may arise.

Takeyuki Tsuda references a similar experience in his discussion of carrying out fieldwork in Japan amongst return migrants from Brazil (Tsuda, 2003). He expected, while carrying out his fieldwork in a factory, to easily shift between being a migrant amongst the Japanese-Brazilian workers and being a local amongst the native-born Japanese due to his previous ease with fitting into Japanese culture. This was not, however, the case. He found himself being grouped with the migrants and, furthermore, found navigating between the roles of ethnographer, factory worker, migrant and Japanese to be disconcerting and rather upsetting (ibid.: 30). I would suggest that part of this discomfort arose from the loss of control he experienced in the navigation of his various markers of identity and culture, resulting of a slackening of the strings that were holding him in tension. For him, the disruption occurred as a result of constantly shifting his identities (ibid.: 31) but this disruption, this disconnection and feeling of
discomfort can come about for a variety of reasons. The basis of it however, is a realisation of the lack of control one has over these identities.

The idea of this comfort in tension arose out of a conversation with an informant who, unsurprisingly, is a psychologist. Daniel lives in a converted industrial building in the heart of a typical inner-Melbourne suburb characterised by its single-fronted Victorian terraces, cultural diversity and slight air of unsavoury shabbiness, counterbalanced by a steady increase in the number of young professionals, new families and fashionable cafes.

Daniel was among the musicians and performers I got to know through the food-sharing workshop I have discussed previously and he proved to be one of my most eager and academically inclined informants. He professes to have an anthropological bent in his psychological work and, as a result, our conversations would inevitably turn to in-depth discussions about identity and culture. Daniel mentioned to me one night that he does not see culture as being a single entity that one exists in, but instead is a series of influences (such as those mentioned at the start of this section) that one moves among and shifts between. This way of perceiving identity and culture is one that makes sense when one begins to learn about Daniel’s life.

He was born in Sydney, the child of travelling Chinese acrobats who, not long after his birth, migrated to Brazil. It was here that he spent the majority of his adult life. It was common in Brazil at that time for the Chinese immigrants to run the Arabic savoury shops that are as ubiquitous in Brazil as chip shops in Australia. His parents, deciding to retire from the circus, took over one of these shops. As a result Daniel grew up as an Australian-born Brazilian, the child of Chinese immigrants and surrounded by Middle Eastern cuisine. At the age of 25 he moved to Australia to continue his career as a psychologist (despite being unable to speak English at the time) and in the past few decades has built up a successful practice. Additionally he is the lead in a Bossanova band and sees it as just as much of a career as psychology (much to the confusion and judgment of many of his colleagues).
Daniel insists that he has always been an outsider in everything he has done. Never fully Brazilian, Chinese or Australian, never a mainstream psychologist due to certain clinical approaches, non-conforming in his sexuality and in defiance of heteronormative ideologies, most obvious in the fact that he and his husband do not live together. It becomes apparent almost immediately that, unlike many of my other participants, Daniel takes relish in his role at the margins. He sees a joy in the confusion he can engender when meeting new people, in the ease he can create in his clients through either enhancing or playing down certain aspects of himself. Unlike most of my participants, Daniel is aware of his shifting and myriad identities and finds comfort within that. He recognises that he does not have full control over his self-representation and works within that framework by refusing to fully comply with any of the identities associated with him. He has found control within the confusion by maintaining a tension between his various relationships and identities, shifting between them but never fully conforming to any.

Our long discussions about the way he sees himself, about his family and his love of cooking and performing all took place at his home. It is a sizeable apartment built above a covered parking space on a side street. The majority of the floor space is taken up by a large open plan kitchen/living/dining area; the kitchen takes up nearly half of this open plan layout with a large stove, imposing island and large number of drawers and cupboards. It is clear upon entering that Daniel spends a significant amount of time in the kitchen. The cupboards are full, and the counters groaning under the weight of ingredients, spices, pickling experiments and specialist equipment. Every time I met up with Daniel or went to his house he would inevitably be in the thrall of a new food obsession. He would always be introducing me to my new ‘food addiction’ or plying me with interesting new snacks or ingredients that he finds on his many explorations of Melbourne’s myriad international food shops. On one such occasion he presented me with a plastic bag filled with what looked incredibly like small spinning tops made of white chalk. They turned out to be lumps of dried yoghurt that he had come across in an Afghani shop in Dandenong. He was happily
popping these into his mouth while I was struggling simply to break off even a small chunk; when I did I was rewarded with a flavour that can most easily be described as salty sheep. This exploration of cuisine and cooking seems to be Daniel's main hobby, and one in which he is most able to express his love for the people around him and the comfort he experiences in the tension between his various self-professed 'cultures'. Daniel uses the word culture when describing the relationships and identifiers that make up his life. He told me that he sees age, race, profession, class, sexuality and interests to all be cultures that influence a person's sense of self.

For Daniel cooking is less about connecting with one particular culinary genre but instead about experimenting with flavours. His main aim in learning a particular cooking style or trying out a particular ingredient is to get acquainted enough with it to experiment, to incorporate it into the medley that constitutes his life. He generally refuses to categorise what he is cooking as he insists that he has altered the technique or the flavours to the point where the dish no longer adheres to a particular cuisine.

This approach to cooking reflects the way in which Daniel prefers to exist between his various identifiers; his response to the realisation that identity is shifting, fluid and not under one's own control is to accept the fact and rebel against it at the same time. Ewing writes, in reference to the fact that the self is fragmented and any feeling of wholeness is temporary and illusory, that 'although such wholes are actually fleeting, they are experienced as timeless' (Ewing, 1990: 263). In the case of Daniel, however, this sense of wholeness in fact emerges out of recognition of impermanence and fragmentation, reflected in his refusal to conform to one cuisine, to one culinary passion, to one identity.

Daniel is an unusual case in that he does not demonstrate a sense of unease with regards to his potential objectification as a migrant, as a gay man, as a somewhat unconventional psychologist. Instead, he chooses to manipulate those objectivities, consciously playing with them, emphasising or hiding them to his own benefit and he does so with pleasure and with ease. This manipulation of
identities, in particular the highlighting or downplaying of certain aspects, is a familiar experience for a number of those migrants with whom I worked, but for most it is not a comfortable experience.

Two particular case studies highlight this. Wasimah, who has lived in Australia for most of her life, originally comes from Beirut. For her the kitchen is a space that most evokes her Lebanese background. Her ‘comfort in tension’ arises not as a result of existing in the spaces between identities, as with Daniel, but instead is based on fitting into the identifiers, groups, relationships she identifies with: Australian AND Lebanese, a cook AND a performer, a writer AND an actor. She sees herself as inhabiting all these identities and is comfortable within them, but on her own terms. When asked about her identity she replied that she feels ‘very much both’ Australian and Lebanese. She sees herself as a blend of the two at any one time, unlike Daniel who sees himself as picking and choosing depending on context. There is a similarity between them, however, in that Wasimah preferences particular elements of her identities at particular times. This became clear when she recounted to me a story about her relationship with cooking.

When she was younger she saw cooking as a way of making friends, a way of ingratiating herself with those around her. However, this love of cooking led to her comfort in the tension between her dual identities being thrown into confusion. Over time, cooking became her primary identifier. When being introduced to new people her friends would often describe her as ‘Wasimah, the girl that cooks great Lebanese food’. She began to find this somewhat distressing; her desire to be seen as a writer, a performer, and an Australian was being undermined by her own desire to form close relationships with others through food. She no longer had control over her self-representation and as a result she stopped cooking for others for almost two years until her identifying characteristic was no longer related to her Lebanese background or her abilities in the kitchen. She has now reached a point in her life where she feels comfortable enough to cook for others but still comes across as occasionally uncomfortable about the possibility of people viewing her in a way counter to the image she wishes to project. Throughout her life Wasimah would manipulate
her identities much like Daniel but the realisation that she was not entirely in control of those identities led to her disconnecting from aspects of her Lebanese identity when in public. The objectification of her identity led to a sense of discomfort and a desire to regain control and regain her comfort by not allowing her objectification as a Lebanese cook.

Anna presents a rather different example, as I mentioned in the last chapter - she is a second-generation migrant from Greece who, from a young age, refused to engage with many aspects of Greek culture. She now speaks Greek, involves herself with the Greek community and has reverted to her given (Greek) name. In Anna’s case, she exercised her control over her various identities by rejecting at least one of them. In the my first chapter I referred to Berry, who suggests that migrants (and in particular migrant youths) who integrate both the culture of the old home and the culture of the new home are more likely to be content and adapt most easily than those who reject one or either of the two cultures (Berry, 2010: 291). Berry’s idea that contentment arises most easily from an awareness and recognition of various identities is useful for some of my material. Once Anna became successful at developing a comfortable tension between her Greekness and her Australianness she felt more connected with the world around her. For her, the realisation that she cannot fully control who she is, that instead she must navigate her various identities and find a comfort within them allowed her to accept her Greek heritage without having to give up her Australian identity.

Lacan speaks of the tension between the idealised ego and the ego idealised (Easthope, 1999: 62) with the idealised ego being the desired self-representation and ego idealised being ‘the point...from which the subject will see himself, as one says, as others see him’ (Easthope, 1999: 62, quoting Lacan, 1977: 257). Whilst I do not wish to entirely subscribe to Lacan’s structuralist approach to identity creation and development, the idea that there is a tension between the belief on the part of an individual that they can control the world around them (Easthope, 1999: 63) and the reality that much of their identity is based in the influence of the world around them is relevant to my argument. Much of the
discomfort and disconnection that I have discussed in this section arises when the identity a person wishes to project (their idealised ego) is undermined by and does not fit with the identity placed upon them (their ego idealised).

In the case of Anna, for example, her discomfort was with the identity placed upon her by her family and home life. Cohen and Sirkeci, in their definition of migration, emphasise the importance of the household: ‘Although sometimes they [the migrants] ignore the household, and sometimes the household overwhelms...the household is always present, regardless of the situation therein’ (2011: 2). Although the authors may be primarily referring to migrants’ decisions to move and the influence of the household in that decision-making process, the point is nonetheless relevant in this case, in that the household’s influence is always present, regardless of an individual’s desire to reject it. Small events such as Anna being embarrassed when her mother provided her with Greek food for her school lunch when she would have preferred sandwiches show that her desire to have control over her self-representation was undermined by the influence of the household – she had a lack of control over the tension between her identity markers, leading to a lack of comfort with regards to her Greek heritage. It was only when she recognised and embraced the influence of her family, of her household and of her heritage that she found her comfort in tension.

Anthony Cohen discusses ideas surrounding culture and belonging and suggests that persons develop their sense of belonging in ‘those tiny spans of social relationships’ (1982: 9) that they encounter on an everyday basis. He goes on to emphasise the importance of knowledge about the constituent parts of a national whole if one is to come close to gaining an understanding of that nation. Indeed, he suggested that national and racial myths are ‘like empty receptacles which are filled with local and particular experience’ (ibid.: 13). My emphasis is not on local communities and cultures, as was the case with Cohen but instead is focused on the individual migrant and how he or she creates and maintains a sense of belonging in Australia as a whole and Melbourne in particular. In this section I have outlined how, through the negotiation of a multiplicity of
relationships, identifiers and characteristics, a person attempts to construct a sense of comfort and connection in and with the world around them, thereby creating a feeling of belonging. Much like Cohen’s ‘tiny spans of social realationships’, it is through daily interactions and small, mundane events that a person mediates and negotiates their belonging. In the coming section I wish to expand this everyday negotiation into a wider context. I have been skirting the issue of ‘Australianness’: mentioning it in Wasimah’s unease regarding her cooking or Anna’s relationship with her home life. In order to develop a sense of comfort, connection, belonging and home in a new nation, a migrant must first develop an understanding of what it means to be part of that nation and, in doing so, develop a sense of where they fit within that construct; how they can create a home and belong within Australia. In the next section I shall be addressing what it means to be Australian in the eyes of those first and second-generation migrants with whom I worked.

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AUSTRALIAN**

In her book *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship Among Japanese Americans*, Sylvia Yanigasako discusses the importance of cultural models in the development and negotiation of Japanese American identity and kinship (1992). She emphasises the importance not of the cultural symbols and orders themselves but of the ways in which people think about them and use them; the ways in which they have fashioned models of the culture for themselves. To quote:

> Japanese American kinship norms, therefore, are metaphorically constructed from Japanese American folk models of Japanese and American culture. What is defined as Japanese American in any context is not so much a compromise between what people have observed of kinship relations in Japan and America as compromise between these two models

(Yanigasako, 1992: 249).
Yanigasako emphasises the contextual and fluid nature of these models and of the Japanese American identity, despite their often appearing to be static in the eyes of the actors themselves (ibid.: 250). This fluidity and perception of stasis is a theme that occurs within my data. What is of most interest at this juncture, however, is the reference to cultural models regarding the host and home nation as being integral to migrants’ ideas surrounding their identity.

The use of the term ‘model’, however, implies a far more rigid and concrete construction than the changeable, personal and everyday one I am suggesting. For a more fitting terminology I turn to Kapferer and his discussion of the ontological grounding of national ideology (1989: 167). He writes that

\[ \text{[i]t is through such ontology that ideology, a consciously reflected organization of meaning and interpretation about the nature of experience and the world, is or becomes deeply part of the life and practices of human beings acting in a variety of contexts} \]

(ibid.).

According to Kapferer, national ideology and what it means to be part of a nation is grounded in a changeable ontology that is specific to a person or context. I shall, therefore, be using the phrase ‘ideological template’ which I see as being more in line with Kapferer’s argument. It suggests less stability than the use of the term ‘model’, thereby allowing for a greater personal and contextual element in the construct.

When looking at the migrants with whom I worked with over the course of my fieldwork, it became clear to me that the development of an ideological template of what it means to be Australian is something carried out by them all. These templates allow for the migrants to posit themselves in relation to their idea of Australianness; either as part of that template from time to time or as outside of it. Ideas regarding what constitutes being Australian are a useful and important insight into the ways in which migrants view the host nation and their position within it.
This section of the thesis concentrates a little more heavily than other sections on the concept of the nation. This is because a discussion of what it means to be Australian cannot take place without reference to the Australian nation and national identity more broadly. The fervent discussion in the media regarding immigration, asylum seekers and ‘boat people’ show that part of the public discourse surrounding Australianness is territorially and nationally based. Billig’s concept of ‘banal nationalism’ can be seen to be at play in much of this discourse (1995). Billig suggests that an idea of a national identity can only exist as a powerful concept if it is reproduced in daily life and in the most mundane of situations (ibid.: 8). As he writes: ‘[s]mall words, rather than grand memorable phrases, offer constant, but barely conscious, reminders of the homeland, making ‘our’ national identity unforgettable’ (ibid.: 91). Australia and ‘Australianess’ is reproduced daily in the media, in everyday conversations, in casual comments, in the way in which people behave towards and talk about new members of the nation. In some cases this is overt – as with political rhetoric regarding immigration – but in most cases it takes place in the mundane interactions, thoughts and encounters of everyday life.

Rhetoric referring to protecting borders is clearly based in an identity that has associations with nationality and locality. This is reflected in discussions with some of my participants, a particular example being Caroline, who moved to Melbourne from Singapore with her husband twenty years ago. When discussing whether or not she feels Australian she was very clear in stating that she does not, and cannot, feel Australian for two reasons: she was not born in Australia and she does not hold Australian citizenship. In her mind, however, her daughter is Australian because she was born in the country. For Caroline, therefore, identification with an Australian ideological template is bound up in belonging to the nation through citizenship or through birth, and most importantly through being brought up in the country. What is of interest, however, is whether Caroline and her husband feel a greater sense of belonging through the legitimate Australianness that their daughter possesses. This is one of the largest differences between first and second-generation migrants – the second
generation often has a greater sense of belonging due to growing up in Australia and being part of the nation from birth.

Throughout interactions with my participants the issue of what it means to be Australian was a common topic. Many of them showed differing beliefs with regard to whether one can be Australian without conforming to an Australian ideological template. In this coming section I intend to explore what constitutes the typical Australian template and discuss the varying ways in which those migrants with whom I interacted work with and within it. For some, the importance of conforming to it is vital in the process of belonging, whereas for others it is possible to belong outside of the ideological template and to build a different sense of what it means to be Australian.

These differing ideas of what it means to be Australian and what constitutes the typical Australian template are partly a result of the unstable nature of national identity. It is well established that the nation is an imaginary construct (Anderson, 1983). This means that it is therefore open to interpretation, adaptation and transformation (ibid.: 129). Anderson goes on to state that the nation is not fundamentally based in blood and, therefore, ‘one could be ‘invited into’ the imagined community’ (ibid.: 133). A nation is not bound up with a set of immovable prerequisites and is therefore potentially open to everyone, if they are able to fulfill the requirements laid down by the state. Ultimately, this means that the concept of what it means to be Australian is not a set and stable one. This fluidity in meaning allows for new members of the nation to negotiate with and reinterpret national identity. But note Anderson’s use of ‘invited’ – a person needs to feel welcomed in order to feel like they belong. What happens when this is not the case is a point of interest and one that I shall explore in this section.

What must be remembered is that ideological templates are contextual and shifting, they are different for different people and in different situations. However, through my discussions it became apparent that there are some overarching similarities between the varying views of my participants. I wish to point out that these templates are not seen by the migrants in question as
precluding them from engaging with the Australian identity and being part of the Australian nation but are instead symbols by which migrants come to understand their new home and place themselves within it. Even in the case of Caroline, she does not see herself as Australian but she considers Australia her home (perhaps due to the connection through her daughter) and does not feel excluded from it. This is the case for all those I interacted with but it is not the case for all migrants. This is a point I shall be touching upon further on in my discussion.

The typical Australian template presented to me was, for the most part based within Anglo-Celtic reference points. This is because Australia, historically, is an Anglo-Celtic nation. This is indeed changing but the history of a nation and its ideology should not be forgotten when looking at its present. Kapferer argued that one needs to look at historical situatedness in order to understand present ideas and ideologies (1989: 167). For most people Australian food was referred to as roasts, pies and 'meat and two veg'. There was an occasional reference to pasta and specifically spaghetti bolognese by Varun. This reference to an Italian dish still seems to be rooted in a largely white and predominately Anglo-Celtic identity as I would argue that there are certain dishes, such as spaghetti bolognese, that have moved so far away from their association with their country and culture of origin that they have become appropriated by the Anglo-Celtic template. Spaghetti bolognese has become a standard, staple dish on the tables of Anglo-Celtic families and, in many ways no longer resembles its origins. Furthermore it exemplifies the historically Euro-centric, predominately white nature of Australian immigration throughout the 20th century until the revoking of the White Australia policy in 1973. It illustrates how some immigrant groups from Europe were able to connect with and be embraced by a dominant ideology of whiteness. Whiteness was, for a long time, an integral part of negotiating, understanding and fitting into notions of belonging within Australia. The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and the Commonwealth Naturalisation Act of 1903 ensured that only those who were able to speak a European language were entitled to enter Australia and those people who were from Asian or other non-European countries were not entitled to become naturalised, get a pension or vote (Batrouney, 2002: 42). This understanding of Australia as largely white,
preferably Anglo-Celtic and no more diverse than European, is reflected in the ways in which, historically, various migrants presented themselves. In my first chapter I discussed Batrouney, who shows that the Lebanese community, for a significant portion of 20th century, presented itself as European in order to gain the rights and privileges that came with that identity (2002). This exemplifies that the Australian ideological template at the time was based largely in whiteness. Batrouney is unequivocal in this fact when discussing the Australian Citizenship Act of 1948 in saying that ‘Australian citizenship at this time was expressed in terms of British culture and ethnicity, not in terms of the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the state...The image of Australians...was therefore of an Anglo-Celtic people’ (ibid.: 48).

Despite the fact that Australian immigration policies have moved on significantly in the past 40 years, I would still suggest that a certain element of the Australian ideological template is seen as being grounded in a predominately Anglo-Celtic ontology. In much of my conversations with informants, there was often a conflation between Australian and white when discussing Australian culture in an abstract sense. A good example of this occurred in a chat while having lunch with Caroline. During my second time at her house in which we made Japanese pancake and a prawn curry, we were joined by her 30 year-old niece (who is half Malaysian, half Trinidadian), her teenage daughter and a church friend of hers who was originally from China. Our conversation turned to behaviours in the kitchen and the fact that the kitchen is very much a space that is reflective of the desires of those who use it. Caroline’s niece entertained us with an anecdote about an aunt of hers whose stay at a friends house resulted in a silent war over the placement of a plastic bag for food scraps. This led on to a discussion of the various ways people think about cleaning up in the kitchen. I mentioned my Kenyan-Indian family and their criticism of the practices of what they call mzungus (white people) and this immediately prompted Caroline to talk about her discomfort with the fact that Australians wash their dishes in standing water. The context of the conversation (and the explicit reference to white people) made it clear that her reference to an Australian practice was, in fact, a reference to what she perceived to be a distinctly white, Anglo-Celtic practice. Additionally,
this represents an example of Billig’s banal nationalism (1995) – a casual conversation in which ideas surrounding Australian identity are reproduced in a mundane situation.

As mentioned previously, this ideological template is not reflective of an objective reality but is instead a set of assumptions, symbols and activities that are attributed to Australian culture on the part of the migrant. These assumptions are varied between each person (thereby being representative of the changeable nature of the template) but there are some basic similarities. This template is a means by which the migrant can establish an understanding of what it means to be typically Australian. In this way they are then able to establish their own position in relation to this. Referring back to the Yanigasako quote at the beginning of this section, much like the compromise between the Japanese and American models, there is a negotiation and a compromise between the Australian and the migrant ideological templates. The form this template takes and the degree to which a compromise occurs is dependent upon the migrant and upon situational context. Cohen’s idea of ‘personal nationalism’ is particularly relevant in this context. According to him, individuals perceive the symbols and rites that are part of the national representation and interpret them in order to ‘remake them in the sense that [individuals] are able to make of them’ (1996: 807). For Cohen, ‘the nation is one of the resources on which individuals draw to formulate their sense of selfhood’ (ibid.: 803). In this way, the nation is not a structure that determines a person’s identity but is instead influential upon it while at the same time being interpreted and recreated personally and uniquely by the individual.

An example of this is the way in which certain people change their behaviour, even within the home, in order to better conform with what they perceive to be the host nation’s ideological template. Varun, for whom spaghetti bolognese falls within the Australian culinary model, has been living in Melbourne for a number of decades. We had a conversation about his experiences moving to a new country and the differences and adjustments he faced. One of these was the shift in modes of hospitality. Varun sees the Australian template as being far more
formal and, superficially, less generous than the style of hospitality he experienced in Nagaland. He cites an example involving people leaving a party with the half empty bottles of wine and containers of food that they arrived with. He told me that it was a shock to him when he first encountered this, seeing it as ungenerous and somewhat rude. However, after some time thinking about it and observing the people around him he came to conclusion that people did that to save money and time when it came to eating their next meal. He developed an ideological template in response to the behaviour he came into contact with in order to feel as though he better understood his new home. As a result, he changed the way he behaved when welcoming people into his home; he adjusted his mode of practice in response to the Australian template he had developed in order to feel more comfortable and accepted. The template he constructed, however, is likely to be different from the templates constructed by others – this is representative of the personal nationalism posited by Cohen (1996). In particular, the act of taking home food and wine brought to another person's home did not sound familiar to a great number of Australians I talked to. This does not mean, however, that Varun's ideological template of Australianness is any less authentic – it is instead specific to his experiences.

Varun and his response to different modes of practice show that migrants act very much like ethnographers; noting activity, analysing it and by doing so attempting to get a better understanding of those around them. In doing this a migrant is better positioned to negotiate with the ideological template they have perceived and develop a space for themselves within it. It is only once a migrant is able to place themselves within this template that they are able to develop a sense of belonging within Australia. If, however, a migrant is unable to place themselves within this template – if they do not have the same sense of power over their environment – this sense of belonging may not develop.

This concept is better understood through looking at two comparative examples. Nina, the Iranian-Mauritian performer discussed previously in this thesis, mentioned her view that by finding a place for herself as a multicultural performer she was able to make an Australia for herself. She feels a sense of
freedom and a place within the Australian ideological template. Cubitt reflects this in his discussion of the imagined nature of nation, writing that nations are ‘perpetually open to…imaginative reconstruction’ (1998: 3). Nina, and many of the other migrants I spoke to reconstruct what it means to be Australian and, in doing so create their sense of belonging. Indeed, as Cubitt writes: ‘A nation is a device for identification, for self-invention; to imagine one is to formulate a sense of belonging’ (ibid.:4). This can only happen, however, if the person formulating a sense of belonging has the ability to contest, elaborate or imaginatively reconstruct the nation (ibid.: 3). This is in contrast with, for example, the numerous migrant taxi drivers I converse with whenever I am in a cab. Through these 10 minute conversations with predominately Pakistani and Afghani men, I get a window into a way of living in Australia that is vastly different from that painted by my participants. These men often feel like they are living on the margins of society, and frequently tell me that they are unhappy with their lives in Australia. More than one told me that he was just saving up enough money to return to his country of origin. When I asked them about their reasons for disliking Australia it was often due to their feelings of being excluded and not fully getting to grips with what they saw to be the Australian way of life. This was by no means the case for all the drivers I spoke to, but there were a significant number who felt ostracised and alienated. This could be because they are not fully able to place themselves within, or even comfortably in relation to, the Australian template.

Anderson wrote of the ability to be ‘invited’ into a nation (Anderson, 1983: 133) in order to become a part of it. This invitation is not, however, open to all. There are a number of migrants who do not feel invited – they do not have access to the means by which to ‘contest, elaborate or imaginatively construct the nation’ (Cubitt, 1998:3). In the case of the taxi drivers, for example, many of them are highly educated and qualified yet they do not have access to the cosmopolitan, middle-class and inner city migrant identity expressed by my participants. In many ways, they do not have access to the means by which to construct and develop an identity that they feel is in their control. Brubaker and Cooper suggest that the term ‘identification’ may be useful in certain contexts (2000: 15) – they
differentiate between self-identification and external identification, which is imposed by others (ibid.). According to them, a ‘dialectical interplay’ takes place between these two but ‘there is another key type of external identification that has no counterpart in the domain of self-identification: the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions’ (ibid.). It would be interesting to conduct research investigating whether the feelings of belonging that immigrant taxi drivers (as well as other immigrants who are unable to be fully involved with the Australian template) are able to construct are held back in part by the external identifications placed upon them. These external identifications, placed upon them by stereotypes developed in the media and other banal situations and institutions, may limit much of their ability to self-identify and, in doing so, create a comfortable sense of belonging in Australia; they do not have the same access as my participants to a feeling of power over their environment.

Mendieta suggests that ‘[as] citizens we imagine ourselves part of a nation if it possesses the kind of identity that can command our loyalty’ (2009: 156). This loyalty arises not out of whether or not the state provides a person with a set of rights but whether or not there is respect amongst its citizens (ibid.: 172), it depends on whether or not a person feels a sense of equality with those around them. Mendieta calls this ‘the solicitude and deference of mutually respecting citizens’ (ibid.). If this sense of loyalty, equality, friendship and respect does not exist for some people then it is difficult for them to feel a sense of being at home in Australia. Nina is surrounded by people who respect her and validate her status as a part of Australia, whereas many of the taxi drivers I encountered did not experience that same respect and validation, leading them to feel rejected and excluded by their new home. As a result of this exclusion they are unable to negotiate the Australian ideological template and are therefore unable to fully develop a sense of belonging.

This sense of loyalty and respect can be seen in a final case – that of Anna’s mother. She lives in an inner suburb of Melbourne and feels a great sense of loyalty to Australia, telling me that she thinks of Australia and of Melbourne as
'good mothers'. She is proud of 'how there are all these different people in one place' and told me that she realised that Australia is her home when, after coming back after a trip to Greece (her country of birth), she declared 'thank God – I'm back in my country'. She feels at home, respected, and included in her everyday life. She knows all the shopkeepers in her area and is friendly with her neighbours. She sees Australia as a nurturing nation – a 'good mother' that allows its citizens and inhabitants to develop their own sense of belonging in their own ways.

For those migrants who are placed in a position in which they are able to negotiate with and place themselves within the Australian ideological template, the creation of an 'Aussie' identity for themselves is one of fluctuating compromise between the template of Australianness and the template based in a migrant's background. It is through this compromise that a migrant is able to create a space for himself or herself within Australian society. The nature of this space fluctuates according to context and the individual. This is as a result of the fluctuating nature of the nation, which allows for constant negotiation, reinterpretation and reconstruction of its meaning at the personal and the national level.

This final chapter has shown that belonging is a process that must be acted out and maintained. This can take place in communities of practice that allow for the reassertion of connection with others. This connection can be associated with the migrant's country of origin or can be based in any number of communities and locations. What is of importance is the need to maintain these connections in order to give legitimacy to the identity associated with that community. A person's identity is shifting and based in a multiplicity of relationships and identifiers. A person must retain a feeling of being in control of their various self-representation. If they do not, a feeling of disconnection and fragmentation can occur. It is through daily interactions and mundane events that a person mediates and negotiates their belonging and they must feel a sense of comfort when doing so in order to preserve a sense of totality of self. This idea of mundane events and daily interactions follows through to my final analysis and what it means to
be Australian. I have shown that a person develops a personal sense of national identity and, in the case of a migrant, uses that to negotiate their new country and create a space for himself or herself within it. It is this construction and reconstruction of what it means to be Australian that provides a migrant with the perceptual means by which to create a home in Australia.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have been focusing on ways in which cooking in the domestic kitchen contributes to the construction of a sense of self, home and belonging in a migrant’s new nation. I began by focusing on the activity of cooking and its importance and relevant aspects. Cooking, as I have argued, involves a negotiation between creativity and reproduction. The production of a dish recreates past techniques or recipes but in a creative manner, responsive to the situation and the available resources. In this way, cooking involves improvisation. This improvisation can be overt or subtle. An overt example would be that of a person who wishes to recreate a dish from their country of origin but is unable to find the time, ingredients or space to do so. Varun from Nagaland, for example, cannot accurately recreate a Naga dish that he describes as a mixture of everything – a soupy rice with a meat flavour. It involves the creation and repeated clarification of a stock made from pig bones. Then the addition of rice and a mix of tomato, herbs and vegetables. Varun says that, because it is an inherently varied dish, he is able to improvise on ingredients, but the time it takes to make it is not viable in relation to his work-life balance. He often instead improvises further by cooking Indian dishes, which are similar to Naga food but require less time and have more readily available ingredients. A more subtle example would be a person adapting a recipe slightly because of time constraints, such as through the use of curry pastes or stock cubes.

Cooking is a means by which to recreate the past creatively – the example of Wasimah and her vine leaves highlights this. This example also shows the way in which food can be used to reaffirm connections and relationships. It is these connections and relationships that make up a feeling of belonging or attachment to an identity, not the fact that one is born into it. This can be seen in the way Blanche reaffirms her connection to Mauritius through her charities, catering and singing. It is demonstrated in the way Federico promoted Colombian music and food in his restaurants as a means by which to raise the profile of Colombians in Melbourne. When this connection is broken, so is the attachment to the identity. Nina, for example does not feel an attachment to her Iranian
heritage, but is attempting to remedy that not through cooking but through performance. Once again, in these situations, improvisation and creativity is coming into play – the migrants I worked with creatively use food (and performance) to construct a place for themselves in Australia. They way they do this changes in response to the situation they find themselves in.

Food plays a role as mediator in the construction of these connections and the development of an understanding of identities because some food carries with it meanings. These meanings can change, as can the food, but the important point is that food has significance and can be a means by which to evoke memories and feelings of home. Part of the process of belonging that a migrant goes through is the restoration of the abstract idea of home in the lived space (Babacan, 2006: 120). This idea of home changes as new memories are made and the abstract idea of home that may be based in the country of origin becomes the lived experience of home in the new country. This is an active process involving negotiation between the past and the present, between the inside world of the home and the world outside the home. In this way home is, as Caroline said, ‘what you make it’. The kitchen is a point at which the inside and the outside meet and where the creativity and improvisation of home building can be seen on an everyday basis. It is because of this that my study of the kitchen has been carried out.

The physical space of the kitchen – and of the house – is important in the making of home. As Blunt and Dowling showed, the home should be a place of comfort and, without comfort, a sense of ‘unhomeness’ is created (2006: 119-120). If the physical space does not produce a feeling of comfort then the inhabitant often attempts to alter that space – they improvise with the structure in order to make their home. This can be done through using the space in a different way or even through renovation of the space. Many of the houses I entered had been extensively renovated – particularly the kitchens.

This idea of construction of home isn’t simply limited to the house. Home can be constructed in the interaction with the outside world and the people who inhabit
it. For example, returning to Federico, he made himself a space in Melbourne (his restaurant) in which he could evoke feelings of home. Brenda feels at home when with her daughter and her husband, regardless of the locality. In this way, home can be evoked in connections and networks and this involves not just an evoking of the past but an active process of interaction with the present that involves improvisation. As Ingold and Hallam write, a person must respond to the ‘unscriptable nature of life’ (2007: 12).

This home-building is part of a process of belonging that a migrant must go through in their new country. This process involves a number of different methods, but they all require a feeling of freedom and power over one’s environment and sense of self in order to work. As I argued in chapter three, it is when a person realises that they are not in full control of the way they are perceived by others that discomfort and disconnection can occur, as evidenced by Wasimah refusing to cook for other people in order in regain that sense of control over her identities. People shift between and among identities, but they do so in what feels to be a natural way. When this shifting no longer feels natural, the fragmentation of self can become apparent.

In the case of a migrant, this feeling of fragmentation can be heightened by the migratory experience. Therefore, there is a need to regain a sense of totality of self and of home. This totality can be regained through home-building and the creation and maintenance of networks of connections. As Cohen wrote, belonging comes from ‘those tiny spans of social relationships’ (1982: 9) that are encountered in everyday interactions.

It is these tiny spans that make up the way in which a person constructs their idea of what is means to be Australian, and in doing so enable them to construct a space in which to belong in relation to this template. This space may well involve the alteration of one’s behaviour in response to the situation. As with Varun, migrants may change their behaviour to conform with their perceptions of the Australian ideological template. The templates that are constructed are unique – each person constructs their own and they differ dependent upon the
relationships and interactions that person is involved in on an everyday basis. In this way, national identity is not homogenous and emergent from the nation but instead is heterogeneous and emergent from the people that make up the nation. By reconstructing a sense of what it means to be Australian the migrants I worked with are, to paraphrase Nina, making Australia for themselves and thereby creating a sense of belonging. It is this ability to contest, elaborate or imaginatively construct the nation (Cubitt, 1998: 3) that feeds into the feeling of freedom and control over one’s identity that is so important in a person’s sense of belonging within a nation.

Some people, however, are unable to create a space for themselves in which to belong to nation. This was not the case for my participants; they are middle-class, inner-city cosmopolitans who have the tools by which to enact their process of belonging. There are other migrants, however, who do not. This is largely because they have not, to draw from Anderson, been ‘invited’ into the nation (Anderson, 1983: 133). This sense of exclusion can come from an inability to control the way in which one is perceived – instead external identities placed upon these migrants by forces such as the media control the way in which they are presented. As Mendieta argued, in order to feel part of a nation a person must feel a sense of loyalty towards the nation and mutual respect with it’s members (2009: 156, 172). For some migrants Australia is not a ‘good mother’.

We need, therefore, to look at those for whom Australia is not a place of comfort and belonging; those migrants who are unable to make an Australia for themselves. What is their concept of the Australian ideological template and why are they not able to access it? How do they interact with this template in their homes and how do they enact a process of home-building in a nation that engenders feelings of discomfort and disconnection? In particular, how important is the kitchen in this process of home building? We have already encountered examples of people for whom the inability to produce the dishes from their country of origin engenders a feeling of loss and nostalgia. Furthermore, there are those who are unable to interact with their kitchens in a way reminiscent of their country of origin. This feeling of disconnection is
apparent even for those for whom access to the Australian ideological template is possible. The question arises, therefore, as to how an inability to gain access to the Australian template would influence culinary-related disconnection and fragmentation. If it is apparent in those with access, it is surely apparent in those without, but in a potentially different way. The experience I had in working with the migrants that I encountered would be vastly different from an experience with these more excluded migrants. The broader question is whether they are able to construct a sense of belonging despite this exclusion and, if so, how this is enacted.

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