“The Tyranny of the Lamington”: Cultural Influences On Creativity

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that:

(i) Except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is that of the author alone.

(ii) The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award.

(iii) The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

(iv) Any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Les Horvat
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May 2007
Dedication

In memory of my brother Peter, who was always ready for a good story.

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Abstract

Through a qualitative study of professional photographers who were born overseas, or whose parents were born overseas, this research aims to provide an analysis of factors brought about by cultural dislocation, and how these factors may affect the creative process. Although of recent times a variety of approaches with regard to creativity research have been explored, and despite the importance for educators to gain a better understanding of creativity, the effect of cultural disruption upon creative output has not been addressed. This would seem to constitute a significant deficit in the overall research literature, and suggests a gap in the understanding of the conditions and parameters mediating the creative experience. This study examines ontological notions of identity and self-hood, and claims that imaginative and perceptual awareness are heightened as a consequence of cultural dislocation. The mechanism for this creative amplification is proposed as resulting from increased metaphor generation and an adjustment of temporal perceptions. The influences upon selfhood are illustrated using a constructed “Model of Reflexive Selfhood”, which is viewed through analysis of the participant’s oral narratives and visual imagery, using a Narrative and an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methodology. The findings indicate that although the participants perceive a unique version of their individual lived experience, identity is constructed through cultural and social interactions, which together with an aspect of self-hood, termed “Creative Haecceity”, mediate creative expression. As postulated, an increased level of awareness impacts upon the self, through a general increase in cognitive activity, thereby enabling a heightened level of creative expression.
Introduction

The day I invited one of my classmates for an after-school play session, was at first glance like most others I had experienced during my third year of primary school, except in one very important respect. At last, I had summoned the courage to bring a friend into my home, and this was the first time I had been brave enough to do such a thing. In fact, I was ominously uncertain how my aged grandmother, who like me had only been in Australia for five years, would react.

Not that her behaviour was somehow rude or unpleasant - on the contrary she was always extremely friendly to everyone, smiling as she practised her heavily accented, stilted, monosyllabic English. Rather, it was simply the risk of being embarrassed by her convivial offers of assorted European style cakes and delicacies.

I was certain my Australian friend would not want to accept any of these unfamiliar, culinary delights. And I was petrified that out of sheer politeness they would feel pressured and reluctantly force down one of these unwanted morsels. As we walked through the gate I longingly hoped that somehow my grandmother had learned the recipe for “Lamingtons”, that familiar Australian dessert, and had magically whipped them up in my absence. The notion of “trial by cake” loomed heavily on my mind.

To my astonishment, the reality of what transpired was very different.

My friend was indeed presented with the rich, beautifully prepared and lovingly baked cakes I so dreaded; and true to the anticipated script was unsure of what he was being offered. But after the first few hesitant bites, he was smiling broadly, food dribbling through his crumb smeared grin, whilst nodding assent to my grandmother’s proposal of “perrhapz vun moor?”
Chapter One: A Cultural Echo

As with most children, I yearned for nothing more than to be like my friends and school mates. I wanted in every way possible, to be the same as all the other Anglo-Australian children in my class. I wanted the same language, the same foods, the same ideas. I wanted the security that such a blanket of conformity would offer a child of immigrants from the other side of the world, from a Europe that was so foreign and distant compared to my classmates' perceptions of life. A Europe that was mainly known through black and white newsreels occasionally appearing in the cinemas or on television - even though more recently, the Melbourne Olympics had brought a new spotlight to that other side of the world.

In my adult life, from the perspective of a creative practitioner, the question of how I am in the world, how I perceive the world, or indeed how as a result of my cultural heritage I interpret experience, has led me to often ponder the nature of cultural influence. How has my heritage influenced my creative expression? How has my sense of being the “other” affected my perceptions? How indeed does background and culture, in particular the uncertainties associated with cultural change, impact upon my creative expression? Over the years, as I developed my own creative practice, it seemed evident that past experience held a vital place in its evolution. For example, the regular trips I took into the city with my older brother at the age of fourteen, to look at all the new buildings being constructed in Melbourne, may indeed have been a catalyst that led me to a new way of seeing the landscape. Or perhaps my perceptions and ways of seeing were already heightened from some other mechanism, connected with my cultural experiences?

Now that I look back and reflect on my memory of my childhood years, I realize that difference framed and constituted my lived experience, and ultimately uniquely informed who I have become. The cultural uncertainties and dislocation I was experiencing were integral to any definition of self I was in the process of constructing. Indeed, it is this understanding that has led me to explore how these influences affect those who are transplanted to a new community, in the manner that is the foundation of a contemporary, multi-cultural society, such as Australia.

In particular, the study elucidated in the following chapters, examines how these influences may affect our view of ourselves, how this can impact on a sense of crea-
tivity, and as a consequence how it may influence creative output. What follows is a qualitative investigation into the cultural effects upon creativity, through the examination of life histories of practising photographers who were either born overseas or whose parents were born overseas - in other words artists who have been part of, or are a product of, the immigrant experience in Australia.

Significance of the study

Acknowledging that all experience can be said to be cultural experience, this study examines aspects of acculturation and possible feelings of dislocation or cultural stress within a population of creative practitioners. By means of engaging with narrative discourse, through the consideration of the personal journey of a number of photographic practitioners, the study examines how these cultural influences can affect creative processes. The study seeks to explore the cultural background, self perceptions and creative production of the participants, using the narrative form as a vehicle for investigation.

As the self can be said to be constituted through memory, and personal narratives are informed by memory, it can be argued that the self is reflected through personal narratives. Markham Shaw (1997) tells us that “narrative is an important and powerful vehicle for the presentation of self and other” (p. 317), and it is through personal narratives that the study seeks to identify common threads of social, and cultural attitudes, and individual experience. Attitudes developed through the participant’s interaction with family and society along with particular experiences they have lived through, will be considered and referenced against their perceptions, and the publicly viewable outcomes of their own creativity.

The study will address the following research issue:

*How do constructs of identity and the impact of cultural experience, affect both the outcomes and the perceptions of the creative self?*

The participants within the study are photographers with a proven track record of creativity in a clearly defined form of art practice, who by virtue of their movement across dual cultures, are adapting and learning a second culture through the frame of the first. From their stories and creative works, the study seeks to investigate ways in which creativity may be influenced by upbringing, and how cultural experience informs this creativity. The research will investigate the following question:
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How does cultural dislocation and the influence of cultural background, impact upon the creative output of arts practitioners within a photographic domain?

Further, in relation to the above question, the research will address the following hypothesis:

That the experience of cultural stress or a cultural dislocation has an effect on self perception, which in turn can act as a lens, amplifying creative output.

The process embedded in the hypothesis is indicated in Figure 1.1 and forms the basis for the discussion in the following chapters.

The narratives of the participants are contextualized by the study's synthesis of key prevailing ideas of self and identity. Framed by the role memory and acculturation play upon the projections of selfhood, they are considered through current, as well as historical, philosophical and psychological insights. The empirical examination of the stories of the photographers who are the subjects of this study, is contextualised through the ontological considerations of identity and selfhood. The twin strands of narrative enquiry and theoretical investigation, are the complementary processes of this research, and indicate dual aspects of exploration into the one issue. The study draws together ontological discourse mediated through the lived experience of the participants, and examines this experience against a suggested Model of Reflexive Selfhood, as elaborated upon in Chapter Four.

![Figure 1.1](image-url)
In order to use the narrative form within a constructionist methodology, a wider critical, philosophical, reflection is provided, to frame the study and explicate its outcomes. The model in this context, is the point of intersection of the research. Indeed, the model is the visual representation of the underlying processes and connections that lead to selfhood and thereby creative expression.

Underpinning the research is the suggested position that imagination is the fulcrum of cognition (see Chapter 11) and the basis for a coherent grounding of self narrative and identity. This position will be examined in terms of its relationship to the model and the creative expression of the participants. Examination of this hypothesis with reference to its possible underlying causes, triggers and modes of application is investigated, with a view to providing a better understanding of the creative process and its application to educational practice.

To unravel notions of creativity, a clearer picture of the motivating factors behind an individual’s behaviour is necessary. One means of furthering this understanding is to investigate fundamental influences that inform our sense of self and identity. By gaining an insight into those influences, this study provides the means to help build a picture of the essential pre-requisites necessary for fostering creative expression; and successfully galvanizing these pre-requisites in our learning environment.

Intrinsic to this process, narrative is fundamental as a means by which we give our lives meaning. As Polkinghorne (1988) has indicated “Narrative is the form of hermeneutic expression in which human action is understood and made meaningful. Action itself is the living narrative expression of a personal and social life” (p. 145). Even more explicitly, he says, “we use the skill of narrative explanations in our own lives to understand why we and others act in a particular way (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 171). Narrative structure according to Olson (1990), provides a format into which experienced events can be cast in the attempt to make them comprehensible, memorable and shareable. Bruner (2004) takes this view even further when he suggests:

...the mimesis between life so-called and narrative is a two-way affair: that is to say, just as art imitates life in Aristotle’s sense, so, in Oscar Wilde’s, life imitates art. Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative. “Life” in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as “a narrative” is. (p. 692)
From this we can observe that the narrative construction of lived experience is the aperture through which we are able to gain an understanding of people’s lives. The narrative form is therefore an appropriate methodology of investigation for this study, enlisted to further shed light upon the intricacies of identity, culture and creativity.

It is recognised that significant research has already occurred on the topic of creativity. Initially, attempts had been made in the past to investigate the relationship between creativity and the objectification of creative thought (Brittain, 1960); (Brittain and Beittel, 1961), through various forms of empirical testing. The success or otherwise of this approach, often largely viewed with scepticism, mostly stumbled over the validity of the testing criteria and its applicability to real world situations. To complicate matters further, there has been ongoing debate as to what actually constitutes creativity. The general lack of consensus on this issue has hindered the quest for understanding and given rise to debate simply centred upon definitions and interpretations, Parkhurst (1999), Anderson (1964), Eisner (1965) amongst others.

Areas of inquiry have questioned how the changing concepts and definitions of creativity have implications for educational practice, (Freedman, 1997; LaChapelle, 1983). In addition, the relationship between personality and creativity has also received attention, (Burgart, 1961; Hoffa, 1964), and more recently Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Maslow (1998). Through this type of study, creative and non-creative personalities are described by certain attributes and criteria. The general conclusions re-enforce positive aspects of personality such as social independence, self-sufficiency and flexibility of response, as being typical of those who are labelled as creative; although it is still a moot point as to which comes first. Does a creative nature lead to those types of personality attributes, or are people with those attributes more likely to exhibit a measurable creative response?

To gain a clearer picture, there is a necessity for further exploration into notions of self, the constructs of identity, and how identity impacts upon creative expression; and vice versa. Further exploration into the relationship and connection of identity with culture, in particular, the relationship of identity to cultural dislocation or cultural stress is required.

Visibly at the root of behaviour, and often demonstrated in creative expression, is the interplay between identity and culture. An example of this intersection is the notion often referred to as the “gaze of the outsider”. The view or gaze from
outside, known to spawn illuminating and significant insights is prominently established within literature, art, film making, photography and other areas of creative expression. Amongst the more significant photographic examples are the series of images by American photographer Cindy Sherman, called “Untitled Film Stills” which touched a sensitive nerve in the culture at large when first released in 1977. Sherman’s heroines inhabited a world of constructed film stills, and contained a particular reflection of post-war America, that suggested a certain fictional view of femininity. Powerfully depicted by an artist who was barely a child at the time of their setting, these images brought America face to face with the period’s somewhat narrowly defined representations of women. In recognition of their importance, the Museum of Modern Art acquired all black-and-white photographs as a total body of work.

Even more of an outsider to the culture, Swiss photographer Robert Frank set out on a two year road trip in 1955 to observe and photograph the United States (Frank, 1978). The resulting book “The Americans”, a project encompassing over eighty photographs in a journey that touched rich and poor, as well as black and white; offered a startling view of what he saw as the true America. Many similar examples abound, which together demonstrate how a person coming fresh to a new situation, can form observations and understandings resulting in creative expression more profound than those previously gained. Sometimes important creative insights of the time are in hindsight, self-evident; and surprising for the fact that they were not explored and developed earlier.

Further examples of this phenomenon can be seen in a famous and extraordinary era in the United States during the early part of the last century. At that time, a significant influx of central European Jewish immigrants formed the backbone of what was to become, and probably still is, the greatest and most powerful film industry in the world. Together with his impoverished family, Louis B. Mayer, (Carey, 1981; Higham, 1993) left his Ukrainian village in the late 1880s. His family then settled in St. John, New Brunswick; where his father Jacob Mayer worked as a junkman. Mayer, helped his struggling father for a number of years before escaping in his late teens and moving to Boston. Here, he discovered the Nickelodeon and the early days of the motion picture industry. In 1907 he opened his first small Nickelodeon and soon owned the largest chain of motion-picture theatres in New England. To increase the supply of pictures for his theatres, he began “Louis B. Mayer Pictures”, and later the “Metro Pictures Corporation”. Quick to seize his opportunities, he was to become the second “M” in “MGM” after a merger with “Goldwyn Pictures Corporation”, and
eventually one of the greatest and most powerful movie moguls the golden era of Hollywood would ever produce.

Adolph Zukor, later to become head of “Paramount”, was an immigrant from Hungary who started work as a sweeper in a New York fur factory (Gabler, 1989). He built the nucleus of his cinema empire, the penny arcade business, with money made from inventing a unique fur clip, and went on to start the powerful “Famous Players–Paramount” motion picture studio, home to many of the industry’s most notable directors and stars. Zukor was one of the first to pay his screen actors large salaries, after realizing and promoting the potential of the star system. A further significant key to his success was the large number of movie theatres he controlled, allowing him easy exhibition and distribution for the films he produced.

Polish born Samuel Goldwyn (originally Samuel Goldfish) started as a glove cutter, but together with Louis B Mayer, formed “Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer”. These immigrants not only pervaded the business and entrepreneurial side of the industry, but most importantly the creative side as well. They were to be found in front of the camera as well as behind the camera; they often played and created the music in the films, and invented the star-based myths of what was to become one of the most highly influential cultural exports of modern times. Hollywood, in fact, not only reflected back to Americans a way they wished to be seen and thought themselves to be, but also exported those notions to the rest of the world. Ironically, most of the people involved in holding up the mirror to the face of the American public (Gabler, 1989) were in fact immigrants. Immigrants with the gaze of the outsider.

Current general issues

The origins, the basis, indeed the foundations of creativity are areas of knowledge that have long occupied the efforts of researchers interested in the workings of the mind. A complete understanding of the underlying issues that result in a heightened creative expression is somewhat of a “Holy Grail” for both arts educators and arts practitioners alike. The key that would unlock the nature, or the triggers for creative expression is no doubt often dreamt of longingly by many a teacher faced with a recalcitrant and mischievous art class of fourteen year olds, in a stuffy, school classroom, on a hot, windy afternoon. A revealed schema for the creative mind or the creative process, is indeed a very fertile area of potential knowledge, as creativity informs the nature of learning, of awareness, and of our functioning not only within an educational structure, but also in our daily lives.
What then is the nature of creativity? Answers to that basic question have challenged researchers for many years, Cicirelli (1967), Parkhurst (1999), Csikszentmihalyi (1996), Lubart (1997), Maslow (1998); but at its very heart are a number of quite distinct possibilities: (a) creativity is a learned process (b) creativity is part of a fundamental cognition of mind (c) creativity is a cultural construct. Each possibility brings forward its own set of questions. For example, if creativity is a learned process, then what is the nature of the learning that must take place for this experience to grow? Further, what are the environmental aspects that are able to facilitate this learning to occur?

Additionally, creative outcomes and creative expression are clearly not universal in all individuals or across all communities. If creativity is a fundamental factor of selfhood, what is the role that creativity plays within identity and how is this innate creativity fostered into a productive experience? In particular, what are the significant factors that develop or inhibit our potential to be creative?

If creativity is a cultural construct, then it is essential we understand how culture affects the nature of creativity. How indeed is this reflected in arts processes and artistic expression? These questions, central to the nature of this study, will be addressed in the coming chapters, as I examine how culture and identity, impact on the creative self.

To undertake this study, the approach of the thesis is to draw together a number of quite distinct factors. Firmly located in a qualitative methodology primarily focused on narrative and the self-narratives of the participants, the study examines philosophical and psychological conceptions of identity, together with a critical discourse on the narrative form itself. The resulting synthesis of ontological issues, considered against current neuroscientific observations related to the mind, and framed through the narratives of the participants; is critically appraised against predicted pathways leading to expressions of creativity, proposed in the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, elaborated in Chapter Four.

Critical, hermeneutic reflection, together with the voice of the participants discerned through case-study narrative, are the key ingredients that inform the underlying methodology of this research. Through reflective interactions of lived experience, framed by current critical theory and its subsequent interrelationship to the proposed model; the hypothesis put forward in this research is explicated.
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Namely:

That the experience of cultural stress or a cultural dislocation has an effect on self perception, which in turn can act as a lens, amplifying creative output.

The question of cultural influence

To properly address how any notion of culture may impact upon creativity, it is essential to first address what is meant by the term itself: in what sense is it used? If one is to look up the word *culture* in the dictionary, the definition given is: “the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.” (Pickett, et al., 2000). The Encyclopædia Britannica tells us culture is the:

Behaviour peculiar to Homo sapiens, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behaviour,.....includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2004).

The classic definition of culture given by Sir Edward B. Tylor in 1871, is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society,” (Tylor, 1976).

While all these definitions vary in emphasis, what they possess in common is that culture is a learned phenomena; that is, people learn culture. Culture is not transmitted genetically, indeed, this learned, patterned behaviour occurs in most instances within a collective or grouping of people. Culture can be regarded then as “the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (Plog & Bates, 1976, p. 7). Even more succinctly, culture can be seen as the way of life of a defined group of people. Or perhaps, taken to its most simplistic yet most profound iteration, culture includes everything people learn to do (Seelye, 1993).

The role that cultural influence and cultural identity plays is many faceted. If culture is “a historically transmitted system of symbols and meanings, and norms” (Collier & Thomas, 1998, p. 102) then this somewhat liberal and broad definition enables us to examine the role that it may play in the formulation of identity or selfhood.

In postmodern western society, the term *multiculturalism* has been widely used to describe the multiple influences that exist within the framework of symbols, meanings and norms that influence our notions of ourselves. This term has become
so allied with political and social movements, its meaning has become confused and scattered. Bhabha (1996) provides the following definition:

Multiculturalism - a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to chicano fiction- has become the most charged sign for describing the scattered social contingencies that characterize contemporary Kulturkritik. The multicultural has itself become a ‘floating signifier’ whose enigma lies less in itself than in the discursive uses of it to mark social processes where differentiation and condensation seem to happen almost synchronously. (p. 55)

Our multicultural world is significantly influenced by the experiences of those who embark on travel, virtually or bodily, through one culture into another. Today’s media and communication, in both developed and developing countries, ensure that a mono-cultural existence is, if not impossible, then clearly extremely difficult. The world is continually becoming more diverse and subtly embracing aspects of multiple cultures, through the proliferation of popular fashion, films and entertainment; the adoption of new information rich technologies, the global nature of business relationships as well as the influence of political and religious movements. “A culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members” states Bruner (1986, p. 123). This leads to an on-going acculturation that, to varying degrees, impacts on us all (Mead, 1934). Indeed, the often used term globalisation has at times come to reflect some of the most contentious aspects of this very process (Chossudovsky, 1997).

This process of contact with cultural change and diversity can challenge ideas of identity and self, resulting in cultural, social and personal stress. If we are to accept the notion of identity as never being fully constituted, but rather always changeable or receptive to the affects of experience (Bruner, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981; Ricoeur 1991; Rosaldo, 1993), we need to consider the self as always incomplete, or as a work in progress. In fact, rather than a single fixed notion of the self, at the heart of selfhood may reside a multitude of identities. Grossberg (1996) suggests that “Identity is always a temporary and unstable effect of relations which define identities by marking differences” (p. 89). He adds further, “Thus the emphasis here is on the multiplicity of identities and differences rather than on a singular identity and on the connections or articulations between the fragments or differences” (p. 89).

The net result of this multiplicity of selves is twofold. Firstly, an ongoing need arises to better understand and make sense of the society and culture the individual finds
themselves within; and secondly, this changing, reflexive self actively strives for a level of coherence. In doing so, the ongoing narrative of the self requires adherence to the accepted norms of story. Consistent characterisations, a beginning, middle and end, as well as conformity to culturally accepted dramatic syntax (Bakhtin, 1981) is crucial. To the extent that the self narrative does not conform to this pattern, the individual will try to reconcile the differences and incorporate aspects into their ongoing story. This process and its affect on creativity is investigated in the coming chapters.

Of further interest for this study is the notion that behaviours, beliefs, values and morals are generally passed on by communication from one generation to the next, and the mode of this communication, language and art, is symbolic in nature. We use symbols as a means of expression; the meanings then attributed via these symbols are learned and passed on within society through individuals as well as institutions (Collins, 1993). Without generally accepted and codified shared meanings, these symbols could not be understood, interpreted or transmitted to others. These systems of shared meanings are understood as the collective property of a defined or recognisable group.

Clifford Geertz (1976), has argued that the task of the anthropologist is to explain the context of symbols and practices that take place within a society, and this must be achieved in such a way that these symbols and practices become meaningful to others from outside that society. In his view, all symbols obtain their meaning from the role which they play in the patterned behaviour of social life; so without studying the social life itself, meaning cannot be properly determined. He applies an extension of this notion to the semiotics of art, which he maintains is but a subset of the broader semiotics of culture, and offers the view that:

The capacity, variable among peoples as it is among individuals, to perceive meaning in pictures (or poems, melodies, buildings, pots, dramas, statues) is, like all other fully human capacities, a product of collective experience which far transcends it, as is the far rarer capacity to put it there in the first place. It is out of participation in the general system of symbolic forms we call culture, that participation in the particular we call art, which is in fact but a sector of it, is possible. (p. 1488)

Suitable analysis of a culture, leads to the development of a “thick description”, a phrase Geertz (1973) made famous, but borrowed from philosopher Gilbert Ryle, to emphasise the importance of context in elaborating meaning. Geertz argues that
human social behaviour, its symbols and its practices can only be understood, or indeed considered, in the context of those who are engaged with it. He further suggests, the context and the symbols of any analysis and explication are situated in the public domain, because meaning is transmissible purely because of its location within this domain.

For example, if we consider the most common form of symbol, that of language, meaning is only attributed if everyone in a society agrees on a particular word representing an object or belief. The word itself has no intrinsic meaning other than through its use as a symbol; it has no relationship to what it represents other than its arbitrary assignation. The word “door” is no more an actual door than is the word "porte" (in French), or "Tür" (in German). But the symbol once assigned, agreed, and shared, can be used in new ways that re-define and alter its representation, thereby creating new meaning.

In opposition to the structuralist viewpoint, which implies that meaning is to be found within the structure of a whole language rather than in the analysis of individual words, a more deconstructuralist viewpoint, is suggested by postmodernists such as Foucault. In this view, words are contaminated by their own histories and these histories can influence and in fact define their usage (Foucault, 1982). Just as Foucault had no confidence in any deep underlying truth or structure from which one could analyse society, the postmodern view of language is that words gain their meaning through usage, in an anthropological and reflexive manner.

For example the word ‘gay’ in the past symbolized a positive mood or happy state of mind. Over more recent times, it has been transformed to symbolize and represent a mode of social or sexual behaviour. This process of adaptation or change, is at the heart of any dynamic system of shared meanings. The contentions explored in this study are that selves are themselves transactional, reflexive, and affected by culture and historically based enculturation. “It can never be the case that there is a ‘self’ independent of one’s cultural-historical existence” as re-enforced by Bruner (1986, p. 67).

Further, the symbolic nature of culture, expressed visually through metaphor as well as language, stimulates change and re-interpretation by the individual. Creative expression is influenced by this change as a result of adaptation mechanisms related to identity and self perception. These adaptation mechanisms are expressed through the narratives of the self, summarised by Bruner (1986) when he suggests that:
Insofar as we account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama, it is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us. The common coin may be provided by the forms of narrative that the culture offers us. (p. 69)

How this occurs, the causes that may precipitate such adaptation, and its possible impact on creativity, are the elements explored through the narratives in this study.

**Links to the following chapters**

In the coming chapters, the main issue relevant to the central tenet of this research can be summed up as: *Do constructs of identity and the impact of cultural experience, affect the outcomes and the perceptions of the creative self, and therefore can creativity be affected by cultural change and uncertainty?*

To further an understanding of this question and locate its context, Chapter Two examines the nature of the study and its relationship to educational practice. Also discussed is how narrative can be used to understand lived experience, and the nature of the personal voice contained within this study. The participants are introduced and their backgrounds described to establish the contextuality of the lives under examination. Following this biographical section is a discussion of the scope and limitations of the study, which concludes *Section A: Background and Setting.*

*Section B: Study Methodology,* contains four chapters which advance the investigation and examine at length the chosen study methodology. Chapter Three, through an examination of Narrative methodology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, indicates the chosen mode of analysis undertaken and explains the underlying reasons for this choice. At the conclusion of the chapter, the rationale behind the choice of participants and the need for a model is also posited.

Chapter Four examines the evolution of a schematic model, and presents as the outcome of this process the resultant Model of Reflexive Selfhood. This model, as shown in simple form in Figure 1.3, is an embodiment of the many forces that impact upon who we are. The significance and innovation in this model lies in its reflexive, dynamic nature; that is, the elements are not only affecting, but are affected by, each other in dynamic harmony. The model references key earlier work by Albert Bandura, who proposed a model of "Reciprocal Determinism", Figure 1.2, which underlies a view of human functioning that accords a central role to cognitive and self-reflective
processes. Bandura (1986) proposed that a person’s behaviour is both influencing and is influenced by personal and environmental factors.

Bandura’s “Social Cognitive Theory” suggests that the mind is an active agent in constructing individual reality. He postulates that this is achieved by selectively encoding information in a reflexive manner; mediated by values, and expectations, informed by the social and physical environment. In putting this position, he moved firmly away from his earlier behaviourist ideals, in accord with his strongly felt view that individuals are able to make choices throughout their life’s journey. “In Social Cognitive Theory, people are agentic operators in their life course, not just onlooking hosts of brain mechanisms, orchestrated by environmental events” states Bandura (1999, p. 22).

The model discussed at length in Chapter Four is an extension of this notion of reciprocal determinism. In this model (Figure 1.3) the self, mediated by cultural and social influences is constituted by Identity, Action, and Creative Haecceity, or creative essence. However, unlike Bandura’s model, it’s focus is not only on behaviour, but on the role of Creative Haecceity as integral to the construction of self. The form this takes and how the model integrates with the study methodology itself, is also discussed in this chapter.
Model of Reflexive Selfhood

Figure 1.3
Chapter One

Chapter Five explicates the interview process and the coding regime to be undertaken. The qualitative interviews performed with the research participants are introduced and the questions used are examined. This is followed by a discussion of how they are referenced to the model, and how the interviews fit into the design of the study.

Chapter Six discusses ontological debates concerning identity and selfhood and proceeds to examine the means by which the artworks produced by the participants are used to further enrich the study, in so doing, adding to the “thick descriptions” offered by the data. It then expands on patterns and issues of interest brought forward through the examination of dual texts; the visual and the oral, concluding Section B: Study Methodology.

Section C: Stories and Perspectives, contains the main body of the research. It involves the stories of the participants and an examination and analysis of issues raised. There are three key areas considered in this section, each of which intrinsically inform the substance and the conceptual basis for the research.

Firstly, in Chapter Seven, the stories of the participants are examined utilizing a narrative methodology to richly endow the study with their voices; whilst in Chapter Eight, narrative is explored as a mode of consciousness informed through memory. In Chapter Nine, the use of narrative as a means by which we give meaning to the human condition is examined. This chapter explores the narrative mode itself and its position at the fulcrum of human experience, by examining the proposition that narrative is fundamental to meaning-making, due to its importance as a vehicle for communication.

Secondly, in Chapter Ten, the themes of the research are further brought forward through the phenomenology of lived experience, allied to the precepts of the constructed model. In this chapter, lived experience is examined through the voice of the participants and contextualised in terms of the dynamic linkages apparent in the model.

Thirdly, Chapter Eleven examines perceptions of identity and the importance of the imagination in our understanding of the world. It progresses through an examination of how imagination, the imagined self and the use of symbols through language and visual keys, help to construct meaning. Emotion and ontological questions of being are also discussed, particularly in light of the postulated position that imagination is a fundamental aspect of cognition. Metaphor and the role of symbolic imagery
is also examined, as is the means through which emotion frames our worldly interactions.

Major elements discussed in this section are referenced within the model, together forming the rich data of the study, whilst also enabling a conceptual framework through which the research is situated. Meaningful examination of the life stories of the participants requires investigation into the conceptual characteristics informing identity, memory and culture. To empower the narratives of the participants requires a deep examination of the narrative form itself. The theoretical understanding of how the proposed model may be examined in light of the self-narratives of participants, and how this could be utilised to test the stated hypothesis thereby producing new knowledge; requires the reflexive, heuristic analysis that is contained throughout the chapters of Section C. It is in these chapters, that the theoretical foundation of the argument, summarised by the research questions proposed in Chapter One, is laid bare. In Chapter Eleven, following this discussion, a summary of the emerging issues raised thus far are considered, concluding Section C: Stories and Perspectives.

Section D: Outcomes, examines the findings brought forward through the study and adds further relevant contextual theory through which the argument of the thesis is taken forward. Chapter Twelve discusses the outcomes revealed through the analysis, and contextualises the results in terms of the model. In addition, this chapter examines the role of metaphor in the construction of meaning and considers its role in creative expression.

Chapter Thirteen explores the themes and relationships explicated in the findings, and brings forward some of the key outcomes suggested by the study. The concepts of time and coherence of identity are explored to more firmly position the theoretical basis for the study outcomes.

Chapter Fourteen draws together the conclusions of the study and positions them together with their implications for further research and educational practice.

Rather than the more traditional single chapter focused exclusively on the review of the literature, I hold the view that in this instance an examination of the historical and current critical theory is best integrated into the thesis content itself. The review of the prevailing literature can therefore be found embedded within the chapters of Sections A, B and C; with particular focus in Chapters Two, Six, Eight, Nine,
Eleven and to a lessor extent in Section D within Chapters Twelve and Thirteen. This framework is not traditional for such dissertations, but was chosen because the literature review necessary for the study spanned a number of quite distinct areas of scholarship. Rather than isolate their content, a more holistic approach appropriate to the directions of the research, was deemed preferable. This structure enabled an examination of current theory in light of the methodologies, context and hypotheses of the study, thereby leading to a more meaningful examination of the underlying propositions.

The hypothesis central to this study is that cultural stress gives rise to a magnification of acuity and awareness, thereby heightening creative outcomes. In the following chapters, ontological issues regarding the self are examined in view of this hypothesis, as are the roles that narrative plays in the formulation of self identity. An understanding of consciousness through narrative is also explored, taking form and revealing its phenomenology through the stories of the participants in the study. In so doing, the outcomes of the research are integrated into a position illuminated through the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood.

In the following chapters, the journey undertaking this process begins.
Chapter Two: The Nature of the Study

In this chapter, I will offer a description of the overall context of the study and elaborate on any arising implications and issues. Specific attention is given to the creative process and how memory, culture and the language of narrative may impact upon this process. The participants of the project are introduced and the position of the researcher in relation to the voice of the research is discussed. The relevance of this project to educational practice is also examined, as are the limitations and the scope of the study.

Context and relevance to educational practice

Throughout the last century, the role art education has played within a general pedagogy of education has been radically re-assessed. It has moved from an activity relegated to the fringes of learning, into the midst of discussions about the centrality of art as a mode of engagement with the world (Dewey, 1934) and thereby with learning itself. Herbert Read (1958) was one who argued for an integrated need for art in education. In his philosophical outlook, Read identified that reality was a product of the human mind and not a result of any external or objective actuality. This philosophical underpinning gave his art and educational theories their power, since in his view the purpose of art was to create our sense of reality. Lowenfeld & Brittain (1987) were also instrumental in arguing the case for renewed purposing of art in children’s educational experience. In this debate, both Read and Lowenfeld took the idealistic post-war position that art was universal and profound in its symbolic forms, and could serve as an instrument of peace if allowed to develop freely. The child as artist was the means of salvation for a world seriously questioning the very fabric of its existence.

The examination of creativity in particular, has also received considerable attention over the past fifty years. Notwithstanding the range of investigations undertaken, views on creativity differ widely and cannot be easily separated from views of intelligence and learning theory. Some studies have revolved around how best to facilitate creativity in students (Heist, 1967). Others (Cicirelli, 1967) have examined a possible relationship between family size and creativity. Examination of different
procedures within classrooms have also been undertaken, but the results have not, on the whole, been extremely meaningful or definitive. Much of the more recent research in creativity is focused on cognitive systems, with the intention of replicating creative functioning, and ultimately an artificial intelligence system (Moormann & Ram, 1994). Spin-offs from this research direction have a more immediate resonance with human activity. Gabora (2002), for example, explores a possible architecture underlying conceptual fluidity and its relationship to the concept of novelty, as a precursor to a full theory of creativity. Mouchiroud & Lubart (2001) have looked at creativity potential testing, as well as ways in which creativity and childhood experience are connected. And in a paper studying how early child play activity is related to creative thinking Fielding (1997) addresses aspects of Chinese child-rearing and culture, exploring its likely impact on the development of creative capacities.

The primary contention examined in this thesis is that an experience of cultural dislocation or cultural stress has an effect on self-perception, which under certain circumstances can act as a lens; amplifying creative output. Culture is used through this research to apply to a collective social group, in most instances related to ethnicity. In terms of educational theory however, it may be considered in much broader terms. The proposed hypothesis is shown in Figure 1.1: that cultural displacement, leads to cultural stress, which leads to a magnification of awareness and perception, which in turn can lead to a heightened level of creative output. If the proposition can be substantiated, then the understanding of this mechanism can be readily adapted and utilised to improve the general environment of art education.

Any mechanism that transfers an individual from one cultural frame to another, and immerses them into that cultural milieu, could become a positive influence upon their level of perceptual awareness. Aspects of degree clearly are an issue, and notwithstanding the practicalities of a typical educational environment, it may well be that “taking people out of their comfort zone” is an important mechanism for creative expression. Of course it is quite possible that such stresses may also cause adverse psychological outcomes, such as depression; therefore it is essential for educationalist to better understand this mechanism. The intended outcome of this phenomenological enquiry is to specifically further the understanding of this issue through the stories of the participants and the lived experience they reveal.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) in his discussion of the factors that potentially enhance creativity, examines the physical environment as a possible stimulus. He suggests that an inspiring beautifully environment may be important as a means of enhancing the “flow” of creative expression. He suggests that “the belief that the physical envi-
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

The environment deeply affects our thoughts and feeling is held in many cultures”, and goes on to lament “Unfortunately, there is no evidence – and probably there never will be – to prove that a delightful setting induces creativity” (p. 135). Perhaps the key to this issue then is not so much the physical environment, but the mental disposition. A displacement from the norm, a disconnect from the everyday, whether through physical change or through emotionally mediated circumstances, perhaps is more significant in the amplification of creative output. Educational practice, if attuned to this possibility, can harness the potentialities that this may offer. Art education, indeed education within any field of creative expression, needs to further understand the triggers that may be used to enhance creative output.

By drawing together common threads of experience within a clearly defined population, qualitatively examining and contextualising these life occurrences through narrative perceptions of self-identity; this study will inform educational practice and its relationship to the development and nurturing of creative output. Through the hypothesis that cultural displacement heightens awareness and thereby creative expression, the study situates the educational possibilities offered by gaining a greater understanding of the mechanisms behind such a proposition.

The meanings we create as an ongoing narrative of our life are influenced by the life that we live. The impact of social and cultural change on lived experience is therefore a significant factor affecting aspects of self and perceptions of identity. It is a truism to say we exist in the world, as clearly we do not live anywhere else; nor is our world fundamentally different to anyone else’s world. There is a clear commonality, no matter how minor, between our known and lived experience and that of others. But all meaning is only meaning in relation to the particular, concrete existence. Through a hermeneutic cycle of interpretation and re-interpretation, as proposed by Gadamer (1989), we effectively bring meaning to this world of ours. It is this self-reflexive notion that distinguishes us as persons; as people who are conscious of themselves, people who can “know” themselves. Gadamer’s notions are an extension of Heidegger’s (1962) argument that a person’s understanding of any situation is directly mediated by that person’s life experience. Heidegger suggests that things are perceived according to how they are encountered in everyday life, thereby deriving an existential, automatic, understanding, which triggers a particular response.

It is here that Gadamer differs from Heidegger, offering in his view, the notion of prejudice as an overarching, inescapable aspect of the understandings we derive from our world. Significantly, Gademer suggests our prejudice is based on our
knowledge of the world, and as our understanding changes, so also in an ontological sense does our prejudice. Gadamer (1985) in an essay written in 1967 to counter some of the arguments put forward by followers of the Frankfurt School, put it this way:

Only by virtue of such reflection can I escape being a slave to myself, am I able to judge freely of the validity or invalidity of my preconception - even if “freely” means only that from my encounter with a prejudiced view of things am I able to come away with nothing more than yet another conception of them. (p. 288)

It could be argued that this hermeneutic circle is a limiting, self-deluding process, in which one only knows what one is prepared to know; or indeed already knows. But according to the precepts of phenomenological hermeneutic theory, the circle actually does not close. Rather, it is more akin to an ongoing spiral, responding to the nature of our self reflexive, symbolic being. We reference ourselves through our stories, through a narrative schema. It is the means by which we inform our existence and define our own subjective sense of self. Barclay (1994) suggests that our sense of self is created via our autobiographical rememberings, informed through our activities and relationships within our cultural domain. He tells us that:

Autobiographical remembering and its relationship to self-knowledge is conceptualized within two complementary formulations. First, autobiographical memories are memories of self referenced information and second, such recollections are knowledge acquired through varied experiences that become personally significant because they are embedded in affective, interpersonal, sociocultural, and historical contexts. (p. 337)

In fact, Barclay seems to suggest that our sense of who we are is a construct of remembered past and present experience, when he states that “Autobiographical remembering creates provisional selves that over time become the essential features of an existential sense of self, or self-knowledge” (p. 344). This is further supported by Bruner’s (2004) contention that “There is no such thing psychologically as ‘life itself’. At the very least, it is a selective achievement of memory recall; beyond that, recounting one’s life is an interpretive feat” (p. 693).

The key issue of relevance to this study, then, is how cultural dislocation can become transformed into a heightened, creative, construct. How the resultant creative expression or creative objectification, can become influenced by cultural dishar-
mony or ambiguity impacting upon the individual. To progress this argument further, the mechanism that cultural displacement may at times enhance or magnify, is examined. Suggesting that removal from a familiar cultural environment may have an influence on an individual’s quality of awareness, quality of understanding and quality of creative expression, will be explored. Indeed, of great relevance, also, is the role that life stories play in revealing those insights or knowledge, and it is through the qualitative examination of life stories that this research is posited.

Scope, aims and limitations

The issue of how qualitative research is valued, within the framework of research genres which often privilege quantitative principles, is one that requires discussion, particularly with regard to the anticipated outcomes of this research. It is accepted that to be able to generalize from one situation to another requires considerable, well conceived, statistical processes in order to demonstrate validity (Eisner, 1998). So then, what value has a relatively small sample that is far from random, one that has indeed been selectively chosen and one that is far from statistically significant? The justification lies in the character and very essence of life story narratives, and the way in which they give meaning to existence. According to Eisner (1998):

> Direct contact with the qualitative world is one of our most important sources of generalization. But another extremely important source is secured vicariously through parables, pictures, and precepts. One of the most useful of human abilities is the ability to learn from the experience of others. All of these narratives are potentially rich sources of generalization; all contribute significantly to our lesson learning. (p. 202)

Life experience is by its very nature, qualitative. Therefore a detailed examination of that life experience, or at least a particular section of it, needs also to be qualitative if any meaningful understanding of that experience is expected. The knowledge offered by qualitative research is descriptive in nature, and it is precisely this descriptive information, this knowledge of the particular; that allows us to learn from the experience of the social actors who construct these narratives. As Eisner (1998) suggests, learning is not situated in experience, alone: “We do not need to learn everything first hand. We listen to story-tellers and learn about how things were, and we use what we have been told to make decisions about what will be” (p. 202). As we investigate the experiences of a particular group, the knowledge gained can be generalized, and through the nature of that experience we are able to compare and contrast that experience with our own; even though such generaliza-
tions do not necessarily transfer directly to that of an entire community or population. This and other studies of creativity aim to provide a better understanding of the influences upon the creative process and the resultant outcome of arts practice.

This study will have implications for furthering our understanding of the role art education can play in enhancing development of that process. It will contribute to existing knowledge, through the relationship and interplay of memory, culture and identity. The analysis of texts, the telling of our stories and the need to define the self and explicate meaning for our existence, contribute to the richness and complexity of the culture within which we are situated. In turn, this cultural history informs the self (Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1989). The result is a Hermeneutic Circle of lived experience. As Gadamer (1967) expresses it, "hermeneutical reflection teaches us that social community, with all its tensions and disruptions, leads us back time and again to a social understanding, by virtue of which it continues to exist." (p. 291)

The contribution this research seeks to make is within the nature of that Hermeneutic Circle, or indeed as it may be alternatively interpreted, a Hermeneutic Spiral, for there is a sense that lived experience has a temporal inertia. The various strands that are brought together in this research, which although individually may have already been analysed and discussed by others in various contexts, have not been connected and interpreted previously. The ingredients may be familiar, but it is anticipated, that the particular blending and focus, will contribute to our understanding of culture and its effect on us as creative beings.

This study uses narrative methodology to collect, interpret and analyse events that have been significant in the construct of the artistic self of eight photographers, and examines how these events have influenced creative output. In addition, the influence of culture on the creative process is considered through the examination and analysis of the stories of the artists. By examining life histories through this qualitative approach, the study enables an analysis of key aspects of the lives and experiences of the artists in the study. As Polkinghorne (1998) states, “The narrative scheme serves as a lens through which the apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence are seen as related parts of a whole” (p. 36). It is the precisely the influence and effect of lived experience, viewed through the lens of the individual, mediated by social and cultural situations, I contend, that offers us answers to questions of how creative expression is influenced.

The notion of identity, as affected by social, cultural and environmental influences and its role in the construction of the creative self, delineates the scope of this study.
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

The effect that culture has on this process is considered through the twin constructs of enculturation and acculturation. Through the narrative journeys offered by the participants, this study will examine the influences that enculturation; the adoption of behaviour patterns of the surrounding culture, has when ameliorated and transformed by acculturation; the assimilation of new ideas into an existing cognitive structure.

As Rorty (1991) suggests:

Our acculturation is what makes certain options live, or momentous, or forced, while leaving others dead, or trivial, or optional. We can only hope to transcend our acculturation if our culture contains (or, thanks to disruptions from outside or internal revolt, comes to contain) splits which supply toeholds for new initiatives. (p. 13)

It is precisely those “splits which supply toeholds” that are in my contention, the catalytic sites for the emphasis of creative expression.

The relationship of these twin processes to personality development will also be considered. There have been many views on how individuals develop their sense of who they are, and numerous models and theories of personality development, Jung & De Lezio (1959), Maslow (1998) amongst others. Of particular interest are the ideas of Dabrowski & Piechowski (1970). Kazimierz Dabrowski’s theory of emotional development, often known as Positive Disintegration, in a series of collaborative articles and papers written in the early seventies; suggested that an individual’s development of self moves from a prior low level stage to a higher level, autonomous ideal self.

This idealized self is consciously constructed through both cognitive and emotional foundations, influenced by a series of deep and often painful conflicts precipitated by environment, socialization, heredity and a general questioning of the existing psychological structure of the individual. Often this may result in much turmoil, depression and even disintegration of the psyche, however only through that process can the individual emerge in a higher self-actualized psychological form. Dabrowski himself explains this conceptual growth in the following way:

Thus the person finds a ‘cure’ for himself, not in the sense of a rehabilitation but rather in the sense of reaching a higher level than the one at which he was prior to disintegration. This occurs through a process of an education of
oneself and of an inner psychic transformation. One of the main mechanisms of this process is a continual sense of looking into oneself as if from outside, followed by a conscious affirmation or negation of conditions and values in both internal and external environments. Through the constant creation of himself, through the development of the inner and outer milieus - an individual goes through ever higher levels of ‘neuroses’ and at the same time through ever higher levels of universal development of his personality. (Dabrowski, 1972, p. 4)

Notwithstanding the nurture-nature debate, the scope of this study sits within cultural, social and environmental elements that inform the Positive Disintegration process the individual undergoes within Dabrowski’s model. There is also strong relevance to the contribution this change in identity or personality, and the resulting self-actualisation, has in the formulation of the creative process and the creative expressions of the individual.

The research participants are photographers, and the study focuses upon images they have constructed, or captured, through their chosen medium; as well as how they tell the stories of their own experience. The purpose of this investigation is twofold. Firstly, it is to explore how the use of visual expression is integral to the make-up of the participants within the research, and indeed, how visual expression is fundamental to the way the participants define themselves. As far as my own self-definition as a photographer and scholar is concerned, my place in this research is not only unavoidable and acknowledged, but also celebrated. Like the (other) participants in the research, I am a photographer who works with the visual on a daily basis; a photographer and a teacher who uses visual expression as a means of reflecting the world in an attempt to add meaning to the everyday complexities of life.

Similarly to many of the other participants, I was born overseas and have journeyed from one culture to another. I have dealt with issues of acceptance, familiarity and belonging that are all common to the experience of immigrant communities. And similarly to the other participants, I am well established within my professional life and no longer floundering with the self doubt and angst of the struggling artist.

Secondly, this thesis addresses the influence that culture or cultural change may have upon visual expression; how culture may play a role in the development of visual awareness and indeed how culture and cultural stress, may affect the voice of that vision. It is precisely because of my own interaction with the visual that I have
long held a fascination as to where such voices begin their journey. What influences play upon the instrument of our being and affect that expression? What voices resonate within the nature of who we are, and significantly, how those influences inform our experience?

The language of narrative

The telling of stories is a time-honoured activity and the interpretation of narratives is central to any understandings configured through their telling and re-telling. These understandings construct the notions of self that are integral to our modes of behaviour and cognition, in addition to creating the public, external representations of self through which we inform others of our desired self.

As Polkinghorne (1988) says “narrative is the form of hermeneutic expression in which human action is understood and made meaningful. Action itself is the living narrative expression of a personal and social life” (p. 145). Even more fundamentally, narrative is the means by which we give our lives meaning, the narrative structure “provides a format into which experienced events can be cast in the attempt to make them comprehensible, memorable and shareable” (Olson 1990, p. 100). This use of narrative, by which we order and re-construct lived experience into a form that is accessible to others, is integral to the nature of this study.

By examining people’s stories, by understanding their voices and being able to relate in some way to what has been expressed, we gain insight and meaning for our own experience. As a consequence, the implication that “narratives, then, can be seen not only as devices for storing information for re-use but also as forms of thought - devices for interpreting experience and informing action” (Olson, 1990, p. 101), re-enforces the importance of narrative as a process for making meaning.

Within biographical research the use of stories has become an accepted avenue of making sense of actions and life histories. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) tell us that “the main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are story telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). Olson (1990) suggests that “narratives, oral or written, represent events in comprehensible form and thereby make those events into objects of consciousness, reflection, and analysis.” (p. 101) Further, he claims that we can interpret experience through stories and that the:

Narrative form, when applied to experienced or imagined events, creates a story. These stories are constructed and interpretive in nature, memorable,
Debate centred on how we gain this knowledge of our world, relies on the notion of social context or “mind-created world” as integral to our understanding. This position, as expanded by Blaike (1995), was that the social, historical reality of the human world provides us with concepts necessary to inform our understanding and give meaning to our existence as individuals. He tells us that:

Life, or lived experience, is a series of acts in which willing, feeling, thinking, imaginative and creative human beings interact with the physical environment and with other human beings and, in the process, create their world. This lived experience can only be understood through its expressions - gestures, facial expressions, informal rules of behaviour, works of art, buildings, tools, literature, poetry, drama, laws, social, institutions; which come to possess an independent existence of their own. (p. 32)

Blaike further argues that only if we have sufficient shared meaning within a framework of lived existence can we understand or indeed communicate with others. Of course, the means of communication relies on many forms of expression, but one of the earliest means of sensory information is the visual. A baby will attempt to explore the world as best it can, using its mouth to define and compare textural and taste based experiences, and eyes to contextualise those experiences. Language of course comes much later. Without doubt the two are inextricably linked, and in many ways it is the power of words together with the impact of images that fully express our emotional and cognitive responses, enabling us to reflect, order and make meaning from our experience.

Language is an empowerment of the inner self. It is the means by which the hidden can become the public; a means by which action can be explained, discussed, postulated, recorded and queried; a means by which, through narrative, the individual and private; can become the general and public. However, a clear distinction can be made between the written and the spoken word. Oral language is defined by parameters of time and place in addition to the content and meaning of the words
spoken. Written language on the other hand, may be similarly defined, but may also be immune from such descriptions.

As an example, the location and the mood of Albert Einstein (1920), when he wrote his treatise on the properties of light and energy, is not of any great relevance. Certainly not compared to the content of his work. Perhaps of greater relevance is our mood when we read the text, which indeed may have significant impact on the meaning we can extract from the written words; in a manner similar to the notion of the “situated knower” affecting the view of an object. Similarly Einstein’s manner and delivery presenting his ideas to an audience may influence the impact his words will have for those listening. But a less structured hypothetical conversation between Einstein and a colleague over a coffee, one fine spring afternoon, may have a totally different meaning - certainly it may have a totally different impact on the colleague.

This suggests that the structure of the written word, acknowledged to be more formal and constructed than the spoken word, has by implication often a clearly different discourse than the spoken word. Conversation, even with oneself, has a quite different dynamic to that of the polished, structured language used in written text. For example consider the following extract from interviews undertaken for this study. When asked whether there were any core values shared by Heather and her parents, the response was:

Yeah, look I... think a lot of the core beliefs are there .... the parts of our parents that we don’t like, we all turn around and say you know, ”I’ll never be like that” and then we turn around and do it a minute later, you know? So I’ve kind of... I’m house proud, I would love to own my own house you know so those sort of values have come through um... my brother I think is starting to become a property barren so he’s definitely got the bug you know? I love children but I don’t know that I will have children so some of the family values are there. I am interested in doing that.... so I struggle with it, I’m not at peace with it... I do have some of those values and they conflict with the way I actually am, you know I’m not living that kind of lifestyle, you know? (Heather)

The ordering, categorizing and selecting that is an integral part of the writing process is not necessarily present in conversation, or indeed in the act of oral story telling. What then of the visual aspects of narrative? Are they affected in a similar way? If an analogy does exists between these two forms of expression, then a number of questions arise which require further examination and discussion.
Do we need to create tangible images that are viewable within the public domain to fully enable the ordering, the meaning making, the ability to understand and make sense of our world? Or is it merely enough to create these images solely within our mind’s eye? If parallels can be drawn from the use of language and self talk as a way of defining our consciousness (Descartes: “I think therefore I am”) then perhaps the notion of visual imagery flowing through our mind is also an extension of the way in which we define ourselves. As Richardson (1994) puts it: ‘Writing is also a way of knowing - a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 516). Olson (1990) goes further, by introducing the notion of commentary - a public analysis by all who may potentially engage with the text:

Writing serves to fix text; the text then becomes the content for commentary. Texts fixed by writing, at least in an appropriate cultural context, become the subject of interpretation, analysis, reflection, and criticism. Writing is usually judged important because of its mnemonic and archival uses: I suggest that it is important for the commentary it generates. (p. 102)

Clearly, as far as language is a medium of social practice and inner dialogue (Giddens, 1991), the cultural context is fundamental to its meaning. In a manner similar to written text and its characteristic of being constructed around a sense of precision, order and consolidation of thought; perhaps the creation of viewable images also concentrates meaning through the use of a form that adheres to a predefined and shared value system. Values that are themselves often deeply rooted within a prevailing social milieu.

Over the last two or three decades, narrative and narrative-based qualitative enquiry have become more prevalent in the research of humanistic and social-scientific disciplines. The power of story telling, long accepted within many non-western cultures, is now recognised as a means of creating and ultimately, sharing meaning. Fisher (1987), expressed the notion that meaning derived from narrative is shareable only if it is accepted as a function of its social and cultural context. If the shared meaning of narrative is not mutually known or is not familiar through social structures available to the audience, it lacks comprehension. McGuire (1990) puts it the following way:

From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge, the rhetoric of narrative is functionally significant indeed, for it is part of what informs people about the world and persuades them what to do in it, and how to evaluate behaviour. Those who do not know our narratives do not participate in the same world
as we do..... Communication with them is impaired, because knowledge is not shared. (p. 222)

The cultural framing that is necessary for any shared, lived experience to be meaningful, seems to have an outcome that is of an even more fundamental nature. Humans live in a social world and do not have a purely individual relationship to the culture in which they are immersed. The stability of social and cultural life can be thought of as a temporary stabilisation, influenced by cultural norms, where self-identity is influenced by the ebbs and flows of cultural realities. Barker (2003) suggests that “it is possible to regard both individual identity and social formations as the unique historically specific articulations of discursive elements” (p. 83). Identity thereby is seen as a social accomplishment, but individuality is best viewed and understood as the specifics of how this social and cultural interaction is articulated.

Current cultural theory is more or less agreed on the notion that identity is constructed through the influence of social relations. Mead (1913) said that self-identity is a construct based on the social interactions of the individual; and Foucault (1982), tells us that self-identity is a product of power, both individually and ascribed through society. For Giddens (1991) self-identity is the ability to build a sustained narrative through the traverse of lived experience within society, and for Gauntlett (2002), self-identity is knowingly manufactured by the individual, aided by a “tool kit” supplied by the individual’s interactions in a media propelled popular culture.

It can be said that lived experience is framed by the social realities that contextualise our lives, the choices we make in the re-interpretation of our stories; and the creation of our narratives, are themselves products of that culture. Our choices are individual, but their context is culturally based and therefore our choices are essentially cultural in origin. From the Hermeneutic perspective as discussed by Cherry (1998), the acts of noticing and selecting data can be seen to be essentially individual ones. These choices, selections or filters are themselves components of the processes that go towards making ourselves who we are and defining how we function. Our capacity to learn and indeed create is thus totally influenced by our social and cultural framework.

Further, another important question needs to be considered. That is: what is the discourse or rhetoric encapsulated within the words spoken, or the images produced? What role does rhetoric play here? From the days of Socrates, his disciple Plato and Plato’s most famous student, Aristotle, the debate about the relevance and importance of rhetoric has been on-going. The Platonic/Socratic, foundationalist view lay
in the belief that “genuine knowledge corresponds to a fixed truth” (Petraglia-Bahri 1996), and that the persuasive use of language can lead people away from that truth. It was for this reason Plato went as far as saying that rhetoric, or the use of oration, was not only basically a cheap form of entertainment for the masses, but an immoral act that had dangerous implications for the soul. In Plato’s view, truth is not based on sensory experience since that sensory experience itself is always changing and thus unreliable. As Cushman (1958) put it: “The central theme of Platonism regarding knowledge is that truth is not brought to man, but man to truth” (p. 213).

The alternative proposition, as put by Aristotle, is far more able to accept the notion of rhetoric as a valid form of expression and discourse. Aristotle, often referred to as the father of rhetorical thinking, suggested that reality can be known and communicated, with language as the enabling medium. In his famous tome “The Rhetoric”, Aristotle addressed such issues as style, metaphor, and arrangement when describing the art of public speaking. These notions can be readily extended to include the visual equivalent of public speaking; that is, publishing or displaying an image, where issues of style, metaphor and arrangement are all equally important.

Aristotle’s views were analytically based and founded on notions of deduction, logic and rational truth; nevertheless his views on the use of language as a legitimate vehicle for the elaboration of ideas are fundamental to the development and acceptance of the narrative form. It is fair to say though, that in the centuries following Plato and Aristotle, much of the debate around what constitutes wisdom has centred epistemologically on the rationality and provability of knowledge. People have turned to experts in science, or at the very least to experts who use the quasi-scientific principles of logic and analytical method, to define the worth of what we examine in our quest for understanding. The reliance on data, systematic observation and the development of theories endeavouring to explain those facts and observations, have dominated until relatively recently, the methodologies of both the natural sciences and the social sciences.

This is exemplified by the positivist approach developed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Comte’s philosophical system maintained that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe experienced phenomena, not to question whether or not it existed. He sought to apply the same methods of observation and experimentation, as were utilized in the natural sciences, to a field that we now know as Sociology. As noted in Maynard (1989), the basic principles Comte found that were applicable to those of the natural sciences were: facts could be observed and classified; establishable, universal laws existed; social development was evolutionary; and a method-
ology applicable to natural phenomena was also applicable to the study of social phenomena. Thus he felt the goal of the social scientist was to discover and elaborate universal laws of human behaviour.

The application of western philosophical traditions exemplified post Kant by British Empiricism, European Positivism, Linguistic Analysis and the more recent Existentialist and Deconstructionist schools of thought, have all contributed to the understanding of our social world. In addition, they have resulted in the emergence of disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology, which together through modalities constructed within their own practices, have contributed to the development of narrative as a means of making sense of our world.

The personal voice
Photographers are the subject of the research not only because they work with images, but because of my intimate understanding of the particular arts practice being examined. For over twenty years, I have practised as both a commercial photographer and educator of photography. My particular understanding will enable me to bring to the study a familiarity and an empathy, a connoisseurship as described by Eisner (1998), that will engage a more significant and informed level of discourse. This of course brings into focus the nature of the voice of the researcher. In other words, what type of person is undertaking the research and how could my own lived experience, impact upon the research itself?

The key question at issue is: what do I as a photographer bring to the research? From the outset, this needs to be examined in light of how my association and relationship with the research subjects may bring into question its validity. It simply cannot be denied that the very nature of connoisseurship, even though having the advantage of a higher level of engagement, also brings a personal element to the research. As has been argued by Usher & Scott (1996), there is a commonly held scepticism about the possibility of ever being totally neutral or distant from any research issue. Or indeed, if this is even in itself a desirable goal.

Usher suggests “As researchers we all have an individual trajectory which shapes the research we do, the questions we ask and the way we do it. But as researchers we are also socio-culturally located, we have an autobiography, and this has an equally if not more important part to play in shaping our research.....” (Usher & Scott, 1996, p. 32). Within this research, texts, through the stories of the participants; and photographic images, produced by the participants; are used as the base material for analysis. The location of my photographic expertise and cultural
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experience firmly within the data of the research, is not only a means whereby my connoisseurship is made tangible, but it also underlies the empathic base for the analysis.

How is one then, if so thoroughly entrenched within the research, able to be objective and dispassionate to any degree? Richardson (1994) indicates the futility of attempting to follow this path and seeking to remain outside and separate from the research: “Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational, and that our Self is always present, no matter how hard we try to suppress it” (p. 520). Notwithstanding current attitudes towards qualitative writing in general, and the way that a writer is positioned within their research in particular; the issue of subjectivity must still be considered. If as a researcher and writer I am to be positioned squarely within the text, then how can there even be a pretext of subjectivity or lack of bias? If I am not to be a totally dispassionate observer, taking a purely analytical and remote stance, will the outcome have any value or significance above that of mere interest?

In answer to these questions I offer the following position. As a practitioner, my perceptions will be grounded in a strong knowledge of photographic practice, at the same time informing the reader through the collection of life stories of participants within a similar domain. It could be suggested that my familiarity with the art practice under consideration, may very well colour my perceptions. But by declaring my background, and therefore my position within the research, the reader will have a better understanding of context and thus be able to draw their own conclusions as to what effect this may have on validity. For that reason it has been important to declare that not only am I an academic, but have also been a practising, commercial photographer, for over twenty years. In addition, I was born overseas, in Budapest, Hungary, of Hungarian parents, and came to Australia when I was three years of age.

Autobiographical rememberings, expressed through stories, as narrative reflections of our selves, are inherent in the construction of this research. The fact that the stories of the participants - the narratives - are resonating and interacting with the voice of the researcher - the other - is very important to state from the outset. The collaborative and empathetic interaction, which takes place throughout the interview process, is a basic structure acknowledged and clearly identified as a shaping, forming and facilitating mechanism of the lives being told. Mishler (1991) states it even more forcefully by asserting that in a research interview situation a story told is a story created jointly by the teller and the interviewer: “The interview-
er’s presence and form of involvement - how he or she listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, digresses, initiates topics, and terminates responses - is integral to a respondent’s account. It is in this sense that a ‘story’ is a joint production.” (p. 82)

My own story, created and transposed through my own rememberings, framed within the culture or group to which I belong, will therefore itself form a frame for the stories elicited by the questioning and subsequent dialogues with the participants of the research. The fact that I belong, through my arts practice, to the same professional group from which my participants are chosen, gives a more readily accepted focus with which the participants can identify. In other words, the commonality of art experience enables a base level or datum line of experience to be established. Empathic, elicitation of narratives and autobiographical memories, is more meaningfully engaged, rather than being sidetracked by any particular facet peculiar to the particular arts practice.

In addition, it is undeniable that the nature of the interview process itself will have an effect on the narratives offered by the participants. The dialogue undertaken or the style employed, can never in fact be totally neutral. Mishler (1991) in discussing the unnatural relationship between interviewer and interviewee makes the point:

> For example, interviewers initiate topics, direct the flow of talk, decide when a response is adequate, and only interviewees disclose their views. To establish and maintain rapport in this special and non ordinary situation, interviewers must rely on what may be called “mock” representations of the features of ordinary relationships. (p. 30)

“Mock representations” or not, although the questions are decided beforehand and semi-structured, the interview process undertaken is more accurately described as a discourse between people who not only share a similar photographic domain, a similar career path, and a similar engagement with their arts practice; but also importantly share aspects of a dual cultural heritage. The position that Mishler (1991) raises regarding “...the interviewer’s presence and form of involvement” cannot be denied.

Mishler’s view that “It is in this specific sense that a ‘story’ is a joint production” (p. 82) is merely re-stating a common position quite openly declared. In fact, within this qualitative exploration, my contention is that it is perceived to be a benefit rather than a problem. The subjects of this study all have a common position; that is, their culture is represented outside their chosen community, and this position is shared
with my own situation. But through the trajectory of their experiences, interactions, and narratives, the dialogues form elaborate and rich descriptions that underpin their definitions of themselves as artists. The role I play in this process is to facilitate this outcome, through my familiarity and empathic connection with the subjects.

The broad fields to be covered in the interviews are based around the following areas:

- Family influences
- Environmental influences
- How the participants view their ethnic culture in comparison to the society in which they function
- How they view themselves
- How they define their own creativity

The dialogues, narratives and reflections facilitated through the interviews will not by themselves readily create defined, explicit, linear pathways towards an understanding of these issues. The nature of memory, autobiography and self-stories, is one of fragmentation and selective re-interpretation. A narrative arises where the teller re-forms and re-interprets memories into a cohesive structure influenced not only by their own sense of self, but also by their response to the audience. The audience and the teller form an association where experience is shared and meaning is created. In a dialogue, where this role of story teller and audience is periodically reversed, the cycle becomes part of a reciprocating, synergistic process, whereby the known and the unknown form a spiral, built upon a foundation of reflection and understanding.

The dialogue between the researcher and the participant must therefore be sensitive to the issues upon which the research is predicated. The interviewer must be sympathetic to the understandings and reflections of the participants. Without that empathy or familiarity, it would be difficult to establish any meaningful dialogue. Having also been born overseas, my own background places me firmly within the gamut of experience shared by the participants. That is not to say that we all share the same history or the same life stories. On the contrary, each person within the research has a unique story to tell. What it does mean is that the frames upon which the narratives are formed are familiar enough to facilitate a decoding and re-framing of the social, cultural and educational discourse that underpins choice and action.
A shared social and cultural experience, at least in a broad sense, is therefore essential for understanding to be meaningful and paradigmatic. As Mead (1913) suggests:

...we play the roles of all our group; indeed, it is only in so far as we do this that they become part of our social environment - to be aware of another self as a self implies that we have played his role or that of another with whose type we identify him for purposes of intercourse. (p. 377)

Re-inforcing the point even further, Natanson (1973) writes in support of Mead that “meaning arises from and can only be grasped in the dynamic process in which organism and environment are integral polarities.” (p. 7) and “significant conversation is established when, through use of the significant symbol or gesture, an individual is able to react to his own words from the standpoint of the other.” (p. 13) Connelly & Clandinin (1990) give further added weight to the importance of a shared experience, by pointing out that:

Narrative inquiry is, however, a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds. In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard. (p. 4)

The intent of this study is to contribute towards a greater understanding of influences that may affect the developing artist. It engages with the possible ramifications arising from confusion, fracturing or compartmentalisation of identity, as a result of cultural dislocation and upheaval, and it is through the semi-structured interview process that these narratives are fashioned.

The participants
At the core of this study are the eight chosen participants. It is through their stories, captured via interviews and creative works, that we are able to share their life experiences and potentially enrich our understanding of the hidden mechanisms behind creativity. The participants were selected for this study, not by formulating categories and establishing a sample to ensure equal representation in such groupings as: male, female, Asian, European, early career, mid-career or the like. Instead, the sample was chosen through direct contact with photographic associates and photographers who fitted the parameters of the investigation. Namely, the partici-
pants are practising professional photographers, either born overseas or they are children of immigrants. Consistent with purposive sampling, as defined by Patton (1990) where there is a clear rationale used for selecting participants for a study, the particular means of selection used was “criterion” sampling where the subjects were chosen because they fall within defined parameters. This is further discussed in the later section dealing with the study methodology.

A brief introduction of each participant follows.

James is a 46 year old male of Greek heritage, born in Australia three years after his parent’s arrival in Melbourne. He has worked as a commercial photographer from his own studio for nearly twenty years, and lives in a renovated apartment above his studio in the inner west of Melbourne.
His photographic work revolves mostly around food packaging, although he also ventures into still life and photography for annual reports. James describes his parent’s decision about coming to Australia, as part of the wave of Greek immigration of the time, in the following way:

*Well from what I believe there was a big sort of migration program in Greece in the late fifties where the Greek government was obviously enticing people to come to Australia. There was something established between the Australian and the Greek government I think, and they were basically offering Greek citizens free passages to Australia if they wanted to start a new life. And my parents, my father and mother took... you know they already had three children and my mother was pregnant to a fourth when they came to Australia. So they obviously looked at it as a... as a good opportunity to come to Australia and they flew out here on a plane which took five days. (James)*

Bronek is a 36 year old male of Polish heritage, also born in Australia. His parents arrived two years previously, after many years of travelling first from Poland to Britain, and then to New Zealand.
As he describes it:

_They moved here in 1968 and I was born in 1970, however they came from New Zealand. They were in New Zealand for I think five years; prior to that they were in UK, well my dad was there from about 1941....he was basically moving in the textile trade. Moving from the UK to New Zealand so it was taking off and moving from New Zealand to Australia because it was taking off here. I was almost born in Argentina. It was either Australia or Argentina, that they were going to move to, so it was Australia._ (Bronek)

Bronek works from a studio he shares with other photographers in inner Melbourne, and his photographic involvement mainly revolves around people, either for advertising or editorial.

Heather is a 35 year old female of Greek heritage who was born in Australia six years after her parent’s arrival. They weren’t married when they came to Australia and made their own separate way to this country. Heather describes the region her parents came from as:

_A place called Venia, it’s close to the border of Yugoslavia and Greece, it’s considered to be Macedonia. It’s probably one of the largest towns in that region so it’s a large town. Dad was born in that town and my mum was actually from somewhere a lot more remote about three hours away. But with the war their village was burnt down and you know a lot of things like that went on, so a lot of remote villagers in the war actually went to this town because it was the largest one around... yeah and that’s how her family ended up staying there._ (Heather)

She goes on to explain why so many people from that region ended up in Australia:

_Mum’s from quite a poor family, there were five children and she was the second youngest and her. One of her sisters wanted to come, really for work prospects. So it was really a financial decision and during that era there were a lot of immigrants from Greece, there was a lot of um... I guess talk in their town of it being a better place to go. There were more prospects, but I think they really did it more from the point of view of coming here to make money and going back._ (Heather)
Heather works from a studio in an inner suburb of Melbourne and is mainly involved in editorial food photography and people images for advertising. She has recently completed a Master of Arts degree by Project entitled “The Virgin, the Goddess and the Temptress” where she examined issues surrounding the notion of love. “In my personal photography I have often been inspired when my images express a sensuous quality with a suggestion of a spiritual under tone. I find this duality of sensuous and spiritual quite fascinating.” Dinas (2005).

Louis is a 48 year old male of Italian heritage, born in Australia five years after his parent’s arrival. He operates a successful photographic practice, specialising in advertising imagery, from a studio in inner south east Melbourne.
When discussing why his parents came to this country he makes the following observation:

_Basically I think why somebody would move from one country to another, which I always feel is an incredibly courageous effort, was because their country ... their country unfortunately was very, very poor and there wasn’t that many... there wasn’t that much going for them. They were young kids who really wanted to work and there was very little work if you didn’t want to work in the land. Even that was quite poor, so they sort of saw Australia or America as the place to go and have a future._ (Louis)

Dominic is a 36 year old male of Chinese/Malaysian background born in Malaysia. He arrived in Australia with his family when he was six years old. When describing the reasons behind his family choosing to come to Australia, he remarked in particular about the political imperatives that led to the move:
It was at the tail end of Malaysia gaining independence from the British Government and my father was with the British Government so he lost his position. He was penalised for being... basically anybody in a Department which was Government run was probably replaced by a Malay. He was in the Education Department hired by the British Government. So ah... there was a lot of stuff going on there in the late sixties, early seventies. I was born in Malaysia on the Borneo Island. There were Indonesian incursions not many years before that along the borders. There were Communist sort of sub-factions, so there was a real... Vietnam was just a stones throw away so it was all sort of a bit much and um we decided to come out here. Which funny enough I'd been told, I don't know if I believe it or verify it, but we were one of the first Asian families that came out after the... unofficial end of the White Australia Policy. Yeah, when we came out, the Primary School that I was in, I was the only one, the only Chinese kid, well Asian kid in the Primary School. (Dominic)
After spending many years working in advertising photography in Melbourne, Dominic now spends his time contracting out his services as a photographer throughout Asia and the Middle East.

Joe is a 46 year old male of Italian background, who operates his photography practice from home, in an inner northern Melbourne suburb. His work takes him mainly on location, shooting for annual reports and design briefs. His parents were here for seven years before he was born, and as he puts it:

*They had my brother and sister, they were both born in Italy and when the family came here I was the first born, the first born here; they always called me the first Kangaroo.* (Joe)
Joe explains the basis of the decision to come here as almost a natural progression that was part of a difficult economic cycle:

*I mean much of the village; our village basically like a lot of villages came to Australia. What you’d find in Europe is there’d be certain pockets, certain villages which tend to come out more than other villages. If there were enough people in that village coming out here other people just jumped on the boat and came out, ..... I mean there was hundreds, probably thousands of people in the village that came here, ..... so I think it just gets swept up ..... but there’s no work, there’s no food, I think the decision’s made for you. Immigrating is always an economic thing I think. I mean if you’re going to leave your family, your mother, your father, your brothers, I think it would only be to improve your life. (Joe)*

Yenny is a 25 year old female of Austrian background who came out to Australia independently, without her family. She came originally on holiday, then to study photography and has now stayed here to develop her fine-art based photographic career.

Figure 2.7 Image representative of Yenny’s fine-art work
As she indicates, her move to Australia revolved around her study options:

I had been on holidays previously so four years ago, the first time when I was sixteen and then came back when I was eighteen. But when I was eighteen I was going to Sydney to look at Universities there, to go to for six months and I was actually advised to go to Melbourne for anything that had to do with creative photography. So um that made me look into Universities here and I applied for Visual Communications at RMIT, which then I found out was only an honours course for graphic designers. So they put me down for my second choice, of course photography,.... and um,... I got in. (Yenny)

Carolyn is a 52 year old female born in Wales. Her career as a photographic artist exhibiting her work regularly, sits alongside her teaching and active commitment to photographic education. She is currently completing a Master of Fine Arts through a project examining issues of representation and metaphors of sight. Her journey to Australia began when she was 20 years of age, with her then husband:

I actually left South Wales and went to Coventry to study, and then we moved to Chester ... near Norfolk and... well Liverpool and Manchester. I suppose with an impending notion of settling down because one weekend in the bar he said, “Let’s go!” (laughs).....I think it kind of hit him (laughs). Um so yeah we made the decision to travel and some of our friends ... who we had studied with, they had done language courses, they were travelling across Europe and so... we travelled with um a number of friends and we made some plans to kind of go across Europe and particularly to Eastern Europe where one of our friends had studied in Russia. And we always thought that we would actually come to Australia and earn some money (because we would have run out of money by then) and get a job. Get some money together and then go to South America and travel up South America. That was the idea. (Carolyn)

Each participant has a unique story and a unique history underlying the reason they are now living in Australia. Throughout the remainder of this study, their personal experiences and attitudes towards their career path, cultural background, and perceptions of identity and creativity, are examined through their narratives. In the following chapter, I will address the methodology undertaken to achieve those goals, elaborate on the role narrative plays in the life stories of the participants and postulate the need for a model to further illustrate the underlying mechanisms.
Figure 2.8  An example of Carolyn's fine art work
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Chapter Three: Design and Significance

This chapter provides detail about the design and implementation of the data collection aspect of the study. The data consists of taped interviews which were later transcribed and photographic images produced by the participants. The theoretical background to the chosen research methodology is also discussed.

Methodology of the study

This thesis seeks to address the manner in which creativity is influenced through the superimposition of family bonds and cultural rituals, associated with feelings of dislocation or cultural disturbance that may be evident as a result of migration. The nature of the study is via examination of the individual stories of those photographers who are the participants in the research. The narratives are elicited through a series of semi-structured interviews, together with a series of photographic images prepared by the participants, in response to a specific, reflective brief.

Narrative inquiry was chosen as the basis of this study, since it is best suited to effectively offer insights into the unique experiences of the chosen photographers. As suggested by Erben (1998) in his discussion of biographical research methodologies, “The general purpose is to provide greater insight than hitherto into the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives”. Even more significantly, Erben stakes a claim for narrative inquiry as a means of generating meaning beyond the individual’s experience: “Given that individual lives are part of a cultural network, information gained through biographical research will relate to an understanding of the wider community” (p. 1).

Together with the narrative analysis that will be undertaken, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology will also be applied to the data. IPA is a recent phenomenological method applied most frequently in psychology (Smith, 2004), which emphasises the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the experience of the participants (Shaw, 2001), consistent with my own empathetic connectedness to the photographers who are the participants in this research.

IPA, like other phenomenological methods, is interested in subjective experience, and is concerned with the individual’s perception of events. It is, therefore, in complete harmony with the approach of narrative analysis. Although narrative analysis and
IPA are complementary, where narrative analysis is primarily concerned with the person through attention to temporality, plot and context; IPA is more able to allow for the participation of the researcher in the interpretation of emergent themes that potentially derive from the data. Although IPA and narrative analysis are both about lived experience, narrative analysis is most concerned about the contextually experienced lives of its actors, whilst IPA is more suited to revealing understandings of the culturally constructed aspects of a person’s meaning-making.

As Van Manen (1990) suggests:

Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (p. 36)

The fact that the participants of this research are photographers has additional significance for the study, as their images can also be brought into the research to further elucidate meaning. As Van Manen (1990) indicates: “Because artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense, lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations” (p. 74). In this way, both the stories of the photographers as well as their art works, become the phenomenological data that informs the examination of their lived experience.

Further, the epistemological position taken in this research can be considered as constructivist. Contrary to the view that knowledge of the world is composed of a series of facts ready for us to discover through rational study, as suggested by objectivists; the constructivist position is that knowledge of the outer world is actively created and fashioned by the mind. “The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it” states Schwandt (1994, p. 118).

Unfortunately, the terminology is not always used consistently so a distinction needs to be drawn between constructivism and constructionism. Constructivist thought centres around the individual’s unique experience of the world and the resultant meaning-making that emanates from that experience, constructionist thought, most commonly contained within social constructionism, is the inter-relationship of the individual to the cultural frame in which the person finds themselves.
As suggested by Crotty (1998) "It would appear useful, then, to reserve the term *constructivism* for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’ and to use *constructionism* where the focus includes ‘the collective generation (and transmission) of meaning’” (p. 58). In that sense therefore, it can be said that this study is *constructivist* in its methodology, but that it is the *constructionist* meaning-making of its participants that offers the material under study.

In particular, the research position follows a number of scholars who have proposed this mode of epistemological understanding, over the past thirty or so years. For example, Goodman (1984), whose view is that we use symbols in our understanding, perception and construction of experience; Von Glasersfeld (1984) whose “radical constructivism” views knowledge as being actively received either through the senses or by way of communication, facilitating the organisation of the experiential world; Gergen (1995) whose “social constructionism” reflects the notion that the world created by the individual is mediated by social exchange; and Eisner (1998) who believes that perception is a frame through which knowledge is constructed.

Firstly, our sensory system is the instrument through which we experience the qualities that constitute the environment in which we live. For experience to be secured, qualities must be present, either in the environment or through an active imagination. Secondly, the ability to experience qualities requires more than their presence. Experience is a form of human achievement, and as such it depends upon an act of mind; qualitative experience depends on qualitative forms of inquiry. (Eisner, 1998, p. 21)

Significant differences exist in particular aspects of the above forms of constructivism, but the common aspect relevant to this study is the broad agreement that meaning is constructed. In the specific case of this research, the construction of meaning is through the fashioning and interpretation of the narratives of the lives of eight photographers in the study. Narrative theory posits the view that the means through which stories are composed actually directs our thought processes, and rather than viewing logic as the guiding force behind meaning creation, it is the organization of life events into unique plots, that enables the construction of meaning (Ricoeur, 1981).

This pursuit of meaning is especially apparent in attempts to develop a self-narrative providing a sense of identity and coherence, as well as offering the individual the
ability to share their experiences with others. Such “storying” of life histories draws extensively on language, perceptions, cultural symbols, and the life events of the individuals themselves.

Narrative methodologies are further characterised by the recognition of the significant and somewhat complex role played by language and memory in the construction of meaning. Individual reality is dependent on the memory of past events and experiences, which alter over time. As a result, the constructed reality of the participants is situated in the present of the interview process and mediated by the engagement, the emotional state and the overall demeanour the participant has towards the project. Memory is not fixed and is not simply a regurgitation of past events in a chronological reiteration, but is a reconstruction influenced by past, present and future, social, cultural and political objectives. The individual reality of the moment is as much constituted by what is not told, as what is actually told.

The constructivist position taken in this research is that the mind is seen as an inner representation of the outer world. Thereby, our knowledge of this world is constructed internally utilising references to existing knowledge through a personal interpretation of sense perceptions. It would seem logical therefore that memory must be central to this process. Further, the constructivist position contends that meaning is internally constituted and developed via experience, and that learning is essentially a search for meaning.

The chosen epistemology underpinning this qualitative study is that of a constructivist position enabling a participatory process of meaning construction through the interaction and interpretation of the researcher and subject. The methodology encompassed within this framework involves narrative and phenomenological approaches in combination with a constructed model (described in the following chapter). The actual method used in the research, based on this epistemology, is the collection of a series of conversations and images, which have as their focus an explication of the lived experience of the participants.

The purpose of these conversations and images is to recognise how belief systems relevant to the issue under consideration have been created, what notions of identity are in place that may influence action, and how creativity may be thus affected. To support the methodology and indeed add further capability to the study, a model is constructed with heuristic power to further enable understanding and deliver insights. The methodology undertaken is a combination of narrative inquiry, in concert with Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, complemented and informed by the heuristic
aspects of the model. The rationale for such a cascading methodology is that it is felt all three frameworks applied in tandem, will facilitate the research outcome, and that all three sit comfortably in place within the constructivist paradigm underpinning the research. This approach is represented within the diagram (Figure 3.1) that indicates the constructivist frame within the broader notion of qualitative inquiry, itself found within the frame of epistemology. Within the constructivist boundaries lie the three triangles representing narrative inquiry, phenomenological analysis and the model. Central to the project lies the data gathering of interviews and images.
Chapter Three

Influences upon the methodology

In order to adequately underpin the theoretical foundations of the study, it is necessary at this point, to move to a short discussion related to neuro-psychological aspects of the mind; and examine its relationship to the chosen methodology.

Ideas proposed through biological studies of the brain (Coward, 1990), show that neural transmission patterns give context to new information, which are identified against existing patterns. The brain is a highly complex and adaptive system which is able to chemically register perceptions through large numbers of "neural nets", or groups of neurons from which our daily experience is constructed. Whilst not intending to direct this study towards an understanding of the mechanisms of exactly how this is achieved, of relevance is that many findings indicate new neural pathways are created every time we use our brains. Research suggests (Coward, 1990) that the making of familiar connections and the location of similarly conforming neural networks through patterns created in the brain, are critical to the formulation of meaning.

However, brains do not in themselves have internal representations. The brain deploys patterns to implement meaning, which exist because individual experience is represented through such activity patterns within the brain. Studies of blood flow show that brain activity during intellectual pursuits is scattered broadly over the four lobes in both hemispheres. The emergence of powerful neuro-scientific experimental techniques, such as Positron Emission Tomography (PET imaging) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), have allowed investigators to address questions such as how human emotion and cognition are mapped to specific areas of the brain. Many mental processes previously thought to be beyond scientific understanding have been shown to have clear neural mappings, and there is increasing evidence that when learning occurs, neuro-chemical communication between neurons is facilitated.

Significantly, it seems that less input is required to activate established connections and patterns over time. Such patterns can be shown to be “hard-wired” as a consequence of our unique experience, thus facilitating various types of memory and recall. Or as Freeman (2000) suggests, the brain innately seeks meaning through the seeking out of patterns. “Meanings can only exist in brains, because each meaning expresses the entire history and experience of an individual. It is an activity pattern that occupies the entire available brain, constituting a location in the intentional structure of the brain” (p. 93).
This type of neuro-biological research is still in its infancy, but memory as a form of neurological mechanism lying at the heart of meaning making, supports the constructionist hypothesis that we create meaning from our experience. If, as seems to be indicated in current neuro-scientific research, the brain is physically involved in the creation of meaning through the formation of internal connections and pathways, fashioned as a direct result of experience; then the notion that meaning is individually constructed is further re-enforced. Meaning construction is integral to the study, therefore the relevance of examining neuro-scientific debates within its context is important, to further advance and contextualise the discussion.

Similarly, memory is also key to the study; however this centrality revolves around not only examination of the nature of memory and how it influences notions of self and the making of meaning, but also the role this plays within the gestation of the creative process and resulting creative expression. Conway (1999) makes the point that “Until we lose it, we take memory for granted. Along with language it is the force that makes us human. It gives the cultural context for the miraculous power of communication.” (p. 176)

At one level, creative expression through language and image-based texts, the metaphors within those texts with their overt and implied discourse; are informed by the norms, attitudes, history and collective consciousness of the framing nature of culture. At another level, the nature of the self, the position of the self as a construct, and the relationship of the self to the body within which it functions, are fundamentally informed by memory in its many manifestations. Further, the self has a role to play in the storage and retrieval processes of remembered events. As Conway (1996) suggests: “Memories are patterns of activation in the knowledge base temporally created and briefly maintained by central control processes and, especially, the self” (p. 90).

Of interest to this research is a study by Brewer (1995), where it was demonstrated that the visual basis of memory was an important factor in its accuracy: “The data showed that every memory response that received the highest memory confidence score…..also received a visual image rating in one of the highest two categories” (p. 39). Memory as a record of past experiences, memory as self-conversation, memory as epiphany, memory as analysis, memory as reflection, and memory as a re-interpretation of experience; all are important aspects that contribute to the definition of self.
Chapter Three

As Brewer (1995) explains, remembered life episodes are “personally experienced by the individual”. He adds:

Recollective memory is memory for a specific episode from an individual’s past. It typically appears to be a ‘reliving’ of the individual’s phenomenological experience during that earlier moment. Thus, these memories typically contain information about place, actions, persons, objects, thoughts, and affect. (p. 60)

The connections made by the individual informed by personal experience, together with the role culture plays as a mode of group memory informing the individual through collective experience are all significant. As Bruner (1994) states: "certainly cultural pressures can selectively alter the experience of Self as readily as biological ones." (p. 48)

The manner by which memory informs the creation of self-identity was recently re-enforced for me personally by a profound event from my early adulthood. I was twenty six years of age and had not long returned from two years of overseas travel. I received the unwelcome news that my father had an inoperable brain tumour. I returned to the family home to help with his care - the symptoms of his tumour being rather similar to the mentally debilitating effects of Alzheimer’s disease. Every so often my father would emerge from a period of childlike, simplistic emotional contentment, to suddenly fly into a rage as a result of frustrations building inside him, as he gained a brief insight into his unspoken tragedy. The tragedy that his mental deterioration was as rapid as it was relentless.

That particular afternoon, as I investigated why he had been so quiet and seemingly content spending time alone in his study, I witnessed an occurrence that stays with me with frightening clarity to this day, nearly thirty years later. Spread out before my father were piles of paper scraps punctuating the spaces between the family photo albums laid out beside him. Each pile contained the torn remnants of family snapshots; image fragments, depicting him in a life that although he had lived, no longer held any connection for him. Fragments of a past, reminding him of a self to which he could no longer relate. Or of one that had simply lost its meaning, one that he could no longer remember. It was quite clear to me that my father’s self perception was shattered by the dislocation of memory resulting from his brain tumour, and this was a burden he could no longer bear.
This event had immense significance, not only for him, but for me as well. As an encapsulated key memory of mine, it has resonance relating to my own self concept, reflected through the emotional connections and life experiences of my father. Barclay (1994) considers the self as being “composed and recomposed as emergents of remembering activities used to justify feelings and objectify past experiences” (p 338). In so doing, Barclay elaborates the basis upon which memory and self are intertwined. He suggests that whatever self-concept we may have will by necessity change over time, as an adaptation of experience and context in an ongoing process of composition and re-composition.

This reflexive act results in memories becoming significant as part of the process of self definition, both as a consequence as well as a cause, of human activity.

As Barclay explains:

Selves are composed and recomposed as emergents of remembering activities used to justify feelings and objectify past experiences. The reconstructive cognitive processes used to justify, affect, infuse, memories with personal significance and meaning which makes memories autobiographical. (p. 338)

He goes on to suggest a metaphor for this view of the self is that of steam or vapour, emanating from a boiling kettle or teapot. The shape and intensity of the vapour stream will depend on the heat applied, the shape of the container as well as the environment into which the steam progresses. In a similar way, the self - a changing entity just like a vapour trail - depends on the social and cultural context within which we reconstruct rememberings through memory, as a way of satisfying our desire for self-knowledge. “Autobiographical memories are memories that acquire meaning through the embodiment of affect that emerges in interpersonal, sociocultural and historical contexts”, and “Autobiographical rememberings create provisional selves that over time become the essential features of an existential sense of self, or self-knowledge” (p. 344), he concludes.

Barclay (1996) suggests further that our sense of self is created through these autobiographical memories, informed through our culture, via accumulated stories of the past that conceptualise and frame our notions of identity. That is, the self is a composite of rememberings and memory beyond merely our own experience, but also incorporates the experiences and stories of our ancestors. In this way, culture has a direct link into our sense of self and is further framed by our relationships with
family and significant others: for instance, parents rewarding and reinforcing stories of experience of their children.

Bruner (1994) also discusses the changing nature of the self, but relates it more to the effect of culture as a framing device which specifies ways of knowing, feeling and behaving.

Cultures are powerful systems for specifying possible ways of knowing, striving, feeling, and acting with respect to ourselves and others. Culture through its store of narratives and its formulas for devising them, defines, as I remarked earlier, different ways not only of conceiving of our present states of being, but also our past and future states. It is the premier source of plans for constructing our lives and our Selves. (p. 53)

Johnston (1987) maintains that our body informs our mind through experience. That is, our subjective self through imagination and creativity gives meaning to our existence as part of the process of rational thought. Therefore, a commonly held and arguable view is that culture gives meaning to our existence through our subjective self. As Polkinghorne (1988) put it: “People use self-stories to interpret and account for their lives. The basic dimension of human existence is temporality, and narrative transforms the mere passing away of time into a meaningful unity, the self.” (p. 119)

And: “We use the skill of narrative explanations in our own lives to understand why we and others act in a particular way” (p. 171).

Clearly, memory, lived experience, and culture, are not only representative of the frame but also the canvas by which the self is defined. They are the undeveloped film, upon which the latent image is ready to become visible through further development. The effect and interaction of one upon the other is the rich vein of raw material about which this thesis is concerned. The narrative methodology utilized in this study, by providing access to the perceptions of the participants through their language and images, was chosen to best elucidate and bring forward this rich vein.

Within the frame of this study, narrative inquiry is defined as a form of qualitative research, examining as its data the oral and image based narratives of the participants. The data was collected through two means. In the first instance, the participants were interviewed using the semi-structured interview process, focusing on a series of organised questions, but allowing the interview to follow the notion of a “guided conversation” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Mishler, 1991). Accepting the fact that
the “goal of understanding how the person you are interviewing thinks is at the
centre of the interview” (Bogdan, 1998, p. 97), a semi-structured interview method
was chosen to facilitate this outcome, yet at the same time, to cover common ground
across the participant group.

Using a conversational listening stance through the interview process allowed and
couraged the interviewees to control the locus of narrative in such a way as to
enhance the constructionist viewpoint taken. In this way, it was more likely that the
discussion would move towards a view of reality as perceived by the interviewee at
the time.

The interviews were mostly conducted at the studios or homes of the participants,
to extend the informal and relaxed approach taken, even though a small tape
recorder was used to record the conversations. All the participants were known to
me through various aspects of engagement with the photographic industry, and this
clearly helped place the participants at ease during the interview sessions. Many
in fact, commented at the conclusion that they had enjoyed the process, as it had
encouraged them to reflect on aspects of their background they had not considered
for many years; if at all.

The fact that this sample was clearly not in any way representative, together with
my own empathic presence, raises the issue of research objectivity, touched on
earlier. Unlike quantitative research paradigms where the notion of a random and
representative sample is integral to validity, qualitative research depends more
on the type of sample chosen, as well as the processes of the research itself. As
Erben (1998) explains “The authenticity of any piece of biographical research will
therefore have its interpretations judged in relation to its degree of internal analyti-
cal coherence, referential adequacy and instrumental pertinence” (p. 8). Or as
suggested by Eisner (1998) in his superb discussion of objectivity and subjectivity
in qualitative research:

Scientific truth tests are as relevant to testing fictional truth as knowledge of
chemistry is relevant to making soufflés. To dismiss the ways in which litera-
ture or poetry inform because they cannot be scientifically tested is to make
a category mistake. We can live with many versions of rightness, truth being
one. (p. 50)...........To seek more than what ultimately is referenced to our own
beliefs after using criteria appropriate for holding them is to appeal to a higher
authority or to seek a main line that bypasses minds’ mediation of nature.
Both as far as I can tell, are unlikely. (p. 51)
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The constructivist nature of the narrative methodology incorporated in this study therefore has equal validity to an otherwise more objectively framed research methodology, even though notions of narrative truth are jointly constructed by the participant and the researcher. This remains the case even though a relatively small and specifically chosen sample has been used.

The emergent theory of narrative inquiry is dependent on specific contexts, thereby of necessity reducing the possibility and indeed desirability of any external mode of validity. Instead, this type of qualitative research depends on the presentation of a “thick description” as instanced by Geertz (1973) insofar as the data obtained and subsequently analysed. Further, the relatively low volume of data is itself not an issue either, as Erben (1998) explains:

Biographical research, therefore, regards accounts of lives as allegories of temporality – allegories grounded in empirical fact and employing imaginative reconstruction. It is a palimpsestic process in which the researcher reconfigures the texts of others in terms of a research goal, the authenticity for which is judged by the protocols (scientific or imaginative) sanctioned by the research community. The biographical researcher is adding to the study of groups a sociology of the individual. The formulation, ‘a sociology of the individual’ may seem tautologous but as Wilhelm Dilthey early observed, socio-historical reality can be captured and interpreted through an account of that highly singular and complex repository of the cultural – the single person. (p. 14)

In terms of my own connectedness with the participants, the nature of this research takes the form of a Heuristic inquiry, which by its disposition privileges this intertwined standpoint. “Heuristics is a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher” as stated by Patton (1990, p. 71). A key feature of such research is that the researcher must “have personal experience with and intense interest in the phenomenon under study” and the participants must “share an intensity of experiences with the phenomenon” (Patton, 1990, p. 71). As I am also born overseas and share the same parameters of life experience as my participants, this is clearly the case.

Following the initial interview, the participants were assigned a photographic brief. This task involved the production of three images: the first image was to represent themselves, the second to represent their family or cultural background, and the third to represent their creative work. The intention of this request was twofold:
firstly to elicit image based representations of the participant’s perceptions of self within the context of family and culture; and secondly to acquire an example they see as representative of their creative expression. The images thereby received are considered as part of the research data and analysed accordingly. As a contributor to the “thick descriptions” of the lives of the participants, the images assist in the explorations of complex human experience, and further enable the research to be guided towards new understandings.

Two further interviews were carried out, with the second interview enabling a subsequent exploration of issues unearthed in the initial session. The purpose of the third interview was to ensure there was an opportunity to address any unresolved issues or details that may have required examination, and to collaboratively examine the photographic works produced.

**Rationale behind choice of participants**

The participants in this inquiry are professional photographers who were either born overseas, or whose parents were born overseas. The photographers are all practising in the commercial or fine-art domains, although not exclusively, as most pursue personal projects or are involved with other related activities, such as the teaching of photography. They were each invited to participate in a naturalistic research study, utilizing a semi-structured interview technique to examine details of their life stories. Each participant was interviewed on three occasions.

Photographers were selected not only as a means of constraining the research field to a more defined genre, but also to limit the type of arts practice under consideration. In so doing, it was felt the greater degree of commonality in both creative experience and creative output, would offer increased scope for potentially meaningful comparisons. In a similar vein, restricting the nature of the practitioners under study gives rise to a more contained and defined experience of arts practice, which although not related to dependent and independent variables in the same way as if this was a quantitative investigation, does have implications for the ability to extract generalizations. At least by restricting selected aspects of the study there is less danger of any meaningful information being clouded or masked by the limitless nature of each participant’s experience.

The creative domain of all participants has a strong commonality, as photographic practice is a well defined and competitive field. Each participant has been in successful photographic practice for a number of years and is known within their industry
Table 3.1 Details of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnic Background</th>
<th>Photographic Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. James</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bronek</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Editorial/Corporate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Heather</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>People/Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Louis</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dominic</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yenny</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>Fine-Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Joe</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Corporate/Landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Carolyn</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>Fine-Art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

area. Their identities are openly disclosed within the study and their permission and full ethics clearance had been granted for this approach.

All participants come from within a commonly defined arts practice, and their personal circumstances, background, country of origin, or parent’s country of origin, as well as age and sex, are quite mixed. Within the group are three females and five males. Two have Greek background, one Polish, two Italian, one Canadian, one Austrian and one Welsh. The particular sample of participants was chosen through my knowledge and familiarity of the sample space, namely that of practising photographers, and their suitability through their defined cultural background, as described earlier. All
participants approached to be part of the research, agreed to participate. Table 3.1 indicates the details of the photographers participating in the research.

The need for a model

Creative expression as an outcome of an individual life is often observable and measurable through the products of that creativity. However, circumstances that promote creativity can be hypothesised and tested, as can the types of individual characteristics that tend towards greater creative expression. Similarly, the means by which creativity can be encouraged can also be hypothesised and examined.

To assist in furthering these and other modes of creativity research, the relationship between identity, culture, society and memory needs to become more transparent. Indeed, how these and other elements interrelate and effect the overall process of creative expression is of crucial concern to this study. How the stories of the participants integrate their experiences with external influences impacting upon their lives, is also fundamental to furthering our understandings of creativity and its origins.

A need exists for a model to assist in this process. Such a model would expose elements effecting identity and show how identity and selfhood is transformed into individual action; and through that action into creative expression. Bandura’s (1986) “Reciprocal Determinism” model (Figure 1.2) is a step in this direction, but it is more useful in demonstrating human interactions at a general level, than for creativity in particular. Indicating the reflexive nature of behaviour, it is however inadequate when applied to creative determinations, since it doesn’t analyse the factors, both personal and environmental, that may influence creative expression. A model that makes explicit the elements that inform creativity is needed. Such a model, when combined with the phenomenological experiences of a group of photographers, analysed via their stories, would indeed be a powerful tool in furthering our understandings of creativity.

In any phenomenological research the emphasis must be on lived experience itself. The use of a model to further examine those aspects of a particular life, which impact upon the unique construction of meaning informing individual understandings, is of considerable value. The role of phenomenological research as Van Manen (1990) suggests, “is to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience” (p. 62). We can then interpret those experiences in an attempt to become “more experienced ourselves”
(Van Manen, 1990, p. 62) and observe how such lived experience may effect identity construction. Viewed through the workings of a suitable model, the stories offered by the participants offer potential insights and new understandings into the mechanisms behind creative expression.

Throughout this chapter the proposed research method and theoretical perspectives behind the methodology have been examined. The benefit of using qualitative, narrative based research for this study has been argued, and an examination of the theoretical literature justifying this position has been undertaken. Finally, the need to establish a model to better represent the processes under investigation is established.

The following chapter discusses the creation of such a model.
Chapter Four: The Model

This chapter describes the processes used to construct a model to visually represent the conceptual linkages underpinning the study. A suitable model can assist in connecting the various strands relevant to the research, help to identify and confirm areas of significance, and clarify their inter-relationship. That such a model is necessary can be seen in the multiple aspects of significance to this research. Not only is this narrative based enquiry, dealing with issues of identity and creativity; but the influences that effect both, lie at the heart of the study.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the relationship between identity, culture, society, memory and action need to be clearly elucidated. If the linkages can be shown simply, represented in an informative, visual manner; then the connections themselves become a platform to support further examination. In this way, a model is able to complement, and indeed transcend, the words and images of the study. Indeed, the constructed model became an integral and fundamental component of the research, as it became apparent that such a model could help identify and direct future aspects of the research. The following is a description of the process involved in constructing a map of creative connectivity. Such discussion and explanation of the means by which the model was created, makes explicit the logic and assumptions that lie behind the study.

Evolution of a schematic model

**Stage One: significant concepts**

The initial method selected was essentially intuitive and anecdotal, with a goal of establishing a structure for creative expression that could later be interrogated and compared to observable behaviour. As a means of attempting to make explicit some of the ideas and thoughts integral to the foundations of the research, relevant aspects were listed. These consisted of the notions of: family, significant people, social environment, physical, environment, and culture. A second list of important elements comprised: description, opinion and influence. Further consideration of the implications of this group led this to be altered simply to: attitudes and relationships. A third list contained the following: view of self, sense of self, view of society,
and view of the world; and although clearly recognised as simplistic, this beginning was in fact just that - a beginning.

**Stage Two: the gaze**

Creating linkages between notions that at first glance, may have seemed rather disparate and unconnected, was made possible through the use of two conceptual renderings: *context for the gaze*, and *self within the world*. The expression “context for the gaze” extends the notion of the knowing look or “le regard” as outlined by Foucault (1994), in his discussion of methods used by doctors in their contact with patients. Defining the “gaze” as a penetrating observation, Foucault (1994) suggested that the “clinical gaze”, which enables a doctor to see to the core of a problem for diagnostic purposes; was a myth propagated by the medical profession to assert their authority. Such notions as the “clinical gaze”, and the allied “inspecting gaze”, which Foucault related to the invasive political appropriation of power by society; were both essentially authority related, linked via the common currency of knowledge.

In contrast, Lacan (1997) in his critical reinterpretation of Freud’s work, postulates the gaze as an ingredient of the “mirror stage” development of the human psyche. Lacan suggests that this mirror stage establishes the ego as fundamentally derivative and dependent upon an external “other”. He notes that children between the age of 6-18 months, become capable of recognising their image in a mirror. This arguably pleasurable experience for the child, where it recognises its own image (Lacan, 1977), is the first anticipation of itself as a unified and separate individual. As the child then develops and enters into social relations through language, this “other” is further developed socially and linguistically, thereby bestowing each individual a particular character.

Both Foucault and Lacan have been extremely influential upon social theory, but this has not been without criticism. Lacan in particular has been pilloried with regard to the perceived “intellectualism” of his arguments, particularly in his later years. Both thinkers played key roles in the rise of postmodern philosophies and in the subsequent intellectual positions taken by feminism and film theory. The gaze as extended into the framework of feminist theory deals with the way men look at women, how women look at other women, how woman look at themselves and the implications that surround this gendered experience. The suggestion that power, through the gendered gaze, has deep social influence; forms the basis of much of feminist thought and analysis.
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

The term ‘gaze’ is also broadly used by media theorists to refer both to the ways in which viewers look at images of people in any visual medium and to the gaze of those actually depicted. Film theorist Christian Metz suggested an analogy between the mirror and the cinema screen, (Metz, 1982) arguing that by identifying with the gaze of the camera, the cinema viewer re-enacts Lacan’s mirror stage. He further suggested that the reason film is so popular as an art form, lies in its ability to be both an imperfect reflection of reality and yet at the same time allow the viewer to gaze into a conscious dream state.

Anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins argue that mirror and camera are both tools of self-reflection and surveillance. They suggest (Lutz & Collins, 1993) that the photographic gaze is a cultural artefact that creates a double of the self, a second figure which can be politically and socially selected to re-enforce cultural stereotypes and distortions: “The photograph can be seen as a cultural artefact because its makers and readers look at the world with an eye that is not universal or natural but tutored” (p. 13).

The photographic gaze can also be considered in the context of Foucault’s analysis of the rise of surveillance in modern society. He claims photography promotes a visible gaze, concerned with viewing and inspecting individuals through a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, classify and to make judgements.

Such notions of the gaze can be considered relevant to the formation of the model. Each viewpoint can be seen to add to the totality of the creative gaze, the gaze which, returning to Foucault, is seen as a penetrating observation. It is the notion of the penetrating observation, supporting creative expression as the product of creativity, that lies at the heart of the model being constructed.

**Stage Three: connections**

The next stage of the model’s gestation involved the creation of two boxes. The first contained the elements: family, environment, culture, view of society and view of self. This box, labelled with the heading, creativity, reflected perceived drivers behind the creative process. The box was then linked with an arrow to a second box containing the element: society, attitudes, politics and opinions; which was considered to be the set of descriptors of cultural influence. At this point the connections and transitions between the various constructs were tenuous and a more succinct connection was clearly needed between who we are, and the creative outputs we produce.
To progress further it is necessary to more closely examine the elements that define the self. The key question could be framed in the following terms: How do we define the essence of who we are, or what is the essence of selfhood? Without adequately addressing this question, the model would prove unable to successfully shed light on the influences upon creative expression. Firmer linkages therefore needed to be established between the various developing strands of thought to this point, and how they might be expressed in the model itself. A circle was thereby selected to denote experience, and set within it were proposed four major influences upon that experience: relationships, culture, parents and environment. Each was directed to an inner circle, which represented the essential self, or the I upon which these four influences interacted. From this outer circle were connected two boxes labelled: view of society

Figure 4.1
or place within it, and: view of self or self-actualisation. These two boxes in turn pointed to another circle which was entitled creative expression. (See Figure 4.1)

**Stage Four: yin and yang (the one begets the two)**

The next stage involved reaching towards ancient Chinese Taoist philosophy, and the concept of *Yin-Yang* with its well known associated symbol. The notion of yin and yang originated in Chinese philosophy and metaphysics, through the description of opposing, but complementary, forces found in all things within the universe. The balance and duality indicated by Yin-Yang, exemplifies ideas of identity associated with the dynamics of the changing self, so the use of this symbol contained appropriate associations.

Chinese scholars during the Han dynasty, well before the birth of Christ, attempted to arrive at a holistic principle for the workings of the universe, or Tao; culminating in a metaphysical philosophy known today as the Yin-Yang school of Chinese thought. In its broadest sense, the Yin-Yang is concerned with the differentiation of opposite factors in any given system and the relationships which exist between these opposite factors. These dichotomies can be seen as descriptions of complementary opposites rather than absolutes, as any Yin-Yang pair can be seen as its opposite when viewed from an alternate perspective.

The philosophy proposes that all forces in nature can be broken down into their respective yin and yang states, and these are usually in dynamic interchange rather than held in absolute rigidity. The Yin-Yang symbol itself represents this interrelationship and although its exact origins are unknown, its significance is that it can be created through the mapping of the sun’s shadow (Tsai, 1999). To achieve this, if the length and direction of the shadow cast by a pole, is mapped onto a circular grid initially from the centre of the circle, rotating incrementally for the period from the Winter Solstice to the Summer Solstice, and then from the outside of the circle for the period from the Summer Solstice to the Winter Solstice; the familiar conjugating fish shapes of the Yin-Yang symbol become apparent. This particular mapping process does not necessarily explain its origins, but it does go some way to support the notion of holistic duality, represented conceptually by the Yin-Yang symbol.

The recognition and acceptance of the relative, dynamic duality of experience sits comfortably with the commonly accorded view that the nature of existence is indeed immeasurably complex. It is therefore necessary that such complexity and richness be incorporated into the model. Visually, this is achieved through the use of both traditional and abstracted forms of the Yin-Yang symbol. Thus, the *Relationships*
node is indicated by influences from *significant others* or from *family*; or a degree of both. Similarly, *Environment* can be influenced through either the *physical* or the *social*; or indeed both. In this way, a dynamic, causal relationship can be implied to represent the influences upon the inner self.
According to the representations factored into the model, echoes of "self and other", or dynamic dualities combining in an infinite series of variations, both of degree and scope, make us who we are at any given moment in time. This changing and evolving sense of self, sits comfortably with the constructionist view of selfhood (Bruner, 1994; Mead, 1934; Neisser, 1994) and indicates a dynamic, reflexive self embedded within the model.
So far, a sense of self that acted upon and constructed a separate view of that self, a form of self actualization, was isolated. In addition, a view of the society that the self was contained within was also identified. The objectification of creativity was influenced by those two views. Through the model I argue that creative expression is informed by notions of who we think we are and how we view the society in which we are situated. This schema, simplistic in nature, was the beginning of a process to formulate a workable model; a model which represented, and attempted to unravel, some of the intricacies of creativity, which could then later be tested. The basic structure of the model was then elaborated into a clearer set of shapes, the outcome of which can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Stage Five: the visual link
Further consideration of the implications of this model led to a number of alterations, which refined the representation further. Firstly, the heading experiences seemed no longer applicable nor indeed necessary, as the entire shape could be seen as a depiction of the self and those aspects which together construct and nurture the self in its actualization. Experiences could then simply be seen as a subset of those influences and not be the overriding descriptor of the process. Rather, if a descriptor was needed or relevant, it would more accurately be labelled as self, located within the centre of the shape itself. Further, I felt the view of society and the view of self needed to impact upon each other as part of a dynamic, two-way process. Indeed, both required dynamic linkages, not only within themselves, but also upon creative expression.

The model seemed to be heading in a direction where the construct of the self and the creative expression of the self were two separate, albeit linked, systems. This notion did not sit entirely comfortably, as it was a demonstrably inadequate attempt to succinctly define the connections between who we are and what we creatively produce. Nevertheless, the model had made some further, if not hesitant, progress towards this goal - see Figure 4.3.

Refining meaning within the model
The model had now evolved significantly from the early lists and their free association of ideas; and had become a more systemised structure. However, there were two aspects that still seemed to sit rather uncomfortably and required further consideration. The issues of concern centred upon the Rationalist implication that somehow
a substantive self existed, separate and in tandem with a view of the self; and that a sense of society, fostered through either a supportive or dislocated culture, was in fact separate to the view of that society. Put another way, could a self exist in objective form yet at the same time existing in subjective form as a construct of that self?

Mead (1934), suggested that self thought is the ability to view oneself as a socially mediated object in totality rather than in part. Barclay (1994), considers the self in two possible ways as forming the whole: the first a “transcendental self” that exists as an entity, and has a prior existence to acquired experience, and the second a “provisional self” which is “composed and re-composed as emergents of remembering activities used to justifying feelings and objectifying past experiences” (p. 338). This of course is one of the main ontological issues that has occupied the minds of philosophers, psychologists and social scientists alike for many years.

**Stage Six: haecceity - the particular essence of a thing**

In a similarly unresolved vein, the second issue raised by the nature of the model was whether a culture could be an influence upon the self independently of the self’s view of that culture? The model was inadequate in this regard and required further development. In order to address the situation, I began by concentrating on the section of the model representing creative expression. Rather than continue to have it outside and acted upon by “self” and “society”, I felt that it needed a greater integration. Following the notion of “becoming” put forward by Deleuze & Guattari (1987), it was conceivable that creative expression could incorporate an element of flux as a component of its “essence”. Deleuze & Guattari see all “things” as events in a dynamic state of motion, where everything is unique and new at any given point in time. Within their framework of positive ontology, they define this dynamic aggregate as a “haecceity”, which is a notion that sits well with the relative duality of Yin-Yang.

Once again, I retreated to the ease of pen and paper and drew a closed shape. The notion of a closed, interactive system was appealing, in that within its containment could exist all the elements of influence. The representation was not to be impenetrable to outside influences; but as for the model of the self, it was self-contained and self-supporting; similar to the scientific model for atomic particles, discovered by Enrico Fermi in 1942, when he observed the energy release from a controlled nuclear chain reaction (The Nobel Foundation, 2002). Such a system is based on opposing forces within dynamic balance, until outside forces engage or vigorously interact with it. The direction the model was beginning to take alerted me to the engaging
parallels between scientific models of physics and the potential models useful to describe human behaviour. In a manner that borrows from Quantum Physics, this dynamic, interactive system has at its core, creative expression, in a similar way to the model of experience having at its heart, the self. Acting upon creative expression, was the view of self and the view of society, as per the previous version of the model. In this case they were now both part of an ongoing, self-perpetuating system; a system constantly changing, morphing and re-inventing itself in a reflexive cycle.

This view of self is also influenced by social interactions between individuals, analogous to the influence of relationships as experience. In a similar way, this view of society, which I now more appropriately call cultural identity, also dynamically changes with cultural interaction or involvement with society. And all of these elements affect, and are in turn affected by, each other. In this way the dynamics of the system are responsible for the ever-changing outcomes of creative manifestations.

A highly appropriate analogy for this model can be once again found in atomic physics. Quantum physics (Particle Data Group, 2002), suggests that an atom consists of many rapidly energised and vibrating particles all constantly interacting with each other, in ways that often seem quite random, but occur within defined areas of space. Probability theory defines where a particular particle can be found at any
one time, but the crucial aspect of the model is that atoms appear, in most cases, quite stable to the observer if viewed from outside the system. Analogous to that scientific model, the model is able to represent a similar dynamic stability. Further, in order to avoid the suggestion of any implicit hierarchy of action, the subsequent version of the diagram held the dynamic system of creative haecceity along side, rather than under, the dynamic system of self (see Figure 4.4). Creative haecceity is now used as an overall label of the dynamic system which has, at its core, creative expression.

Stage Seven: the self
The model now appeared to be gaining a greater degree of sophistication, as well as an improved heuristic authority. It seemed better able to fit observable behaviour. One system now represented the self and another represented creative expression, and both interacted with each other as well as themselves; that is, as one changed so did the other.

An unresolved issue of concern still existed within the model. Contained inside its structure, there were still two distinct representations of the self; one described by the system of self, and one within the system of creative haecceity. This appeared to be a major flaw in the model and had at this stage clearly not been adequately addressed; it implied that although the model was based upon a dynamically balanced system, it was also based upon a circular argument.

How could the dynamic system of self be anything other than the same self identity indicated within creative haecceity? Notwithstanding the disembodied cartesian self as pure subject, without qualities or content of its own, in contrast to the self as a phenomenological subject of psychological life that can be considered in terms of experience; the current structure of the model suggested an uneasy duality or doppelganger representation of selfhood.

The means of overcoming this dilemma required a major, yet at the same time quite simple revision. The model should indicate not one dynamic system impacting alongside another dynamic system (as in Figure 4.4), but one dynamic system within the other. The model needed to indicate a dynamic sub-system that becomes the building block of the other dynamic system in which it is contained.

Once more this can be seen to be analogous to models of atomic physics, where once considered discrete atomic particles such as neutrons and protons, are in fact made up of systems of smaller, sub-atomic particles known as quarks - a fact
discovered independently by two separate physicists: Murray Gell-Mann and George Zweig (Santa Fe Institute, 1995; Research Laboratory of Electronics, 2002). In turn those sub-atomic particles may themselves be made up of sub-sub-atomic particles and so on (Particle Data Group, 2002; Weber, 1999). Similarly, in the model, the “dynamic system of self identity”, now known as the “dynamic system of social identity”, is now a sub-system in turn making up a larger system.

Elaboration of the dynamic systems

The major change initiated by this conceptual leap, that is the notion of systems within systems, leads to four basic dynamic systems influencing creative expression.
and the self. These basic systems, with the resulting creative haecceity at their core are what I have termed the Dynamic System of Reflexive Selfhood. The four building blocks or sub-systems that comprise this dynamic system are: social identity, cultural identity; and social action and cultural action. In the following section I will elaborate each building block.

**a. social identity:**
As defined within the model (see Figure 4.5), the system of social identity is best considered as a dynamic system with four major components. They are: relationships, inherited characteristics, environment and memory, with society at its core. The notion of a dynamic system implies that all components act upon each other,
and alter themselves continuously through this interaction. At any one point in time, the self will not be the same as at another single point in time; since the actions of the components making up the system continue to exert change upon the system itself. This is consistent with observable behaviour; where lived experience clearly has an influence on who we are and how we perceive ourselves to be, even if the extent of that change is sometimes small and difficult to observe.

A significant alteration to the model made at this point was the removal of *culture* from the system and its replacement with *memory*. There were two reasons behind this change. Firstly *culture* and its effect plays a more fundamental role than can be indicated in one element within the system of social identity. In fact, the effect of cultural interaction on creative output, essentially the core of this research, requires far more elaboration, and is discussed further in the following chapters.

Secondly, a major omission within the system was the lack of reference to memory. Without a stable memory, our entire sense of ourselves would be considerably different and most probably extremely fractured. Memory is a fundamental determinant of a coherent sense of self, for although it is possible to exist without relationships or environmental stimulus, we cannot know who we are without memory. Once born and bestowed with the neurological means for memory formation, we would not be able to learn or have a stable self awareness without it. This and other issues underlying the fundamentals of this model are further examined in the forthcoming chapters.

### b. cultural identity:

Within the model, the *system of cultural identity* (see Figure 4.6), is quite analogous to that of *social identity*. As a means of collective memory we have history, and instead of individual *relationships*, we have *milestones*. In each case there is a connection of one is to many. That is, in the *system of social identity*, we are examining the influences on the individual; in the system of cultural identity we are examining the influences upon the group and the individual within the group.

Each system is dynamically balanced, such that cultural identity is influenced at any single point in time by the components that constitute the system; in this case: *history, milestones, environment* and *inherited traditions*. Each system, namely *social identity* and *cultural identity*, is also ultimately influenced by the other, as they themselves are components that make up the *system of Reflexive Selfhood*, as shown in Figure 4.7. Just as with currents in an ocean, colours of a rainbow, or exposures on a piece of film; the model is composed of constantly changing, interre-
lated dynamic systems. In this way, the two dynamic sub-systems of identity become the components or building blocks of the greater dynamic system of identity within the system of Reflexive Selfhood.

At this point, the model has progressed towards an underlying structure that could not only be defended through observable behaviour, but also provides an understanding of that behaviour. The point had been reached where two dynamic sub-systems were the prime elements within the dynamic system embodying identity.

The system of Reflexive Selfhood is composed of four dynamic sub-systems; cultural identity and social identity already elaborated upon, but what of the other two? This logically led to the issue of how cultural and social actions, themselves dynamic systems according to my model, were comprised. What were their building blocks? What forces or considerations informed their function? Until this point the entire focus had been on aspects of identity and how they led to creative expression. It was necessary now to consider how phenomenological interactions completed the picture.

c. social action:
To begin this development, examination of those meta-factors that impacted to produce social interaction were considered. Listing notions that were associated with the phenomena and related to the
previous systems of identity, resulted in: public, private, sexuality, beliefs, values, appearance, personality, fear, affluence and poverty. Upon further reflection, some of these, such as sexuality, were in themselves too specific and were clearly informed through other more encompassing concepts. Hence, the list was ultimately adjusted to the eight indicated within the system of social action, Figure 4.8, namely: beliefs, goals, public, private, appearance, personality, community and family. Each of these is represented within the nodes of: Relationships, Inherited Characteristics, Environment and Values. The central focus or core outcome of this system could simply be described as behaviour.
d. cultural action:
Having now arrived at the structure for a model describing our social actions, extending those concepts into a more general and broader notion of cultural action was required. In keeping with the notions from the previous system, but now tending to reference the group rather than the individual, resulted in: significant others, significant events, ideology, religion, traditional, modern, ritual and celebration. Each situated within the nodes of: Milestones, Inherited Traditions, Environment and Customs.
In its final form, it became as shown in Figure 4.9 which as a central focus contains the label conduct. The two sub-systems of action, namely cultural and social action, act in concert resulting in the dynamic construction of action as indicated in Figure 4.10.

e. reflexive selfhood:
Turning attention now to the representation of the central system itself, the dualities of identity and action as represented, seemed to require a stronger interaction. Were they not each two sides of the same story?

Upon further reflection, it was apparent that a more succinct representation could be constructed; one that showed the dynamic system of Reflexive Selfhood as being composed of three clearly defined notions: identity, action, and creative haecceity; each working in tandem to construct the self within a system in overall dynamic harmony. Action and identity are both mediated by social and cultural influences, as shown within the system, but creative haecceity is both constructed by action and identity, and constructs action and identity.

It is the agentic essence of an individual that both processes and interprets identity into action and action into identity. Without creative haecceity, we would be little more than complex machines, lacking agency, unpredictability, or individual free will. Identity informs our interactions with others and these actions give rise to re-evaluations of our identity, but throughout this constant examination and re-examination sits creative
haecceity. A little like a lens through which we compose and deconstruct the perceptions of our experience.

The final outcome therefore is a system of Action and a system of Identity, each made up of two sub-systems with Creative Haecceity mediating and linking across both, in an overall representation of the self, selfhood, or meinheit. To best depict this transparent, reflexive, modifying and adapting system, a glass prism was chosen as an appropriate symbolic representation. In keeping with the notion of a preciousness that this creative expression fostered, it is represented by a cut crystal; one that breaks down light into its essential hues within the spectrum, lit via the glow of a multifaceted subsystem of identity and action. (Figure 4.11)
exploded view of the dynamic system of reflexive selfhood

Figure 4.12
The model had now been formulated. A model that by its very nature is simple and clear, but still able within its underlying structure to represent layered phenomenological behaviour and its impact on the individual. In addition, it could demonstrate how this behaviour engages with the creative experience itself. The exploded view, as indicated in Figure 4.12, shows its complete, underlying construction. Each quadrant of the model represents social and cultural action and identity; whilst the self is shown to be a fundamental construction of three pillars: Action, Identity and Creative Haecceity.

The many assumptions and hypotheses that have informed the production of this model have now to be tested. The constructed model comes from both a researched and a subjective view of lived experience. The propositions embedded in the model will be examined further, to determine relevance and the appropriate deconstruction of conceptualisations of selfhood; incorporating identity, action and creative haecceity. The following chapters will explore these issues.
Chapter Five: The Interviews

The following chapter examines the application of the interview process that provided the stories of the participants, as well as analysing the questions utilized. The elaboration of the reasons for asking each question, provides the connection between the interviews and the propositions embedded within the model. In addition, the method of analysis of the interview transcripts and its relationships to the research questions are examined.

Interviews with the photographers

Each participant was interviewed individually either at their own work environment, their home, or office. Three interviews were conducted, to adequately cover issues under consideration and to also allow sufficient time for adequate reflection, by both the participants and myself. Interview One and Two were used to address the issues of the study through dialogue and narrative discourse. Interview Three was used to analyse and discuss the creative output of the participants as produced for the study.

Integral to the conduct of the interviews was not only the overall approach but the nature of the interview questions themselves. With the intent of facilitating a level of consistency relevant to the areas of investigation, and to loosely contain the broad areas discussed by the participants, a semi-structured style of questioning as defined by Burns (1990) was undertaken: “Rather than having a specific interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide may be developed for some parts of the study..” with the result that “a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues” (p. 330). The interviews were recorded onto audio tape and later transcribed with the original tapes archived. Participants were given copies of the transcripts, for comment and verification. Thorough member checking was fundamental to the design of the study, as each participant was identified in the research. The criteria of fairness, relevance and accuracy together with participant confirmation were used to establish the validity of the study (McTaggart, 1991).

Further discussion conducted in subsequent interviews provided the ongoing narrative record, which in turn was transcribed and made available to the participants. In so doing, a collaborative relationship was formed. A relationship of equality
and empathy was created, where the voices of the participants were not only heard and acknowledged, but also respected as part of the research discourse, (Burns, 1990; Coles, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbow, 1986). This was achieved, in part, by the use of “empathic listening” as described by Gerard Egan (1998):

Empathic listening centers on the kind of attending, observing, and listening - the kind of ‘being with’ - needed to develop an understanding of clients and their worlds. Although it might be metaphysically impossible to actually get ‘inside’ the world of another person and experience the world as he or she does, it is possible to approximate this. (p. 73)

Formulation of the interview questions
The framework for the semi-structured interview arose from the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, described in the previous chapter. Five broad areas were covered in the interviews and these were the key areas of family, environment, history, memory and creativity. Table 5.1 indicates the relationship of each topic area to the links in the model.

Table 5.1 Interview topic area relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question topic</th>
<th>Sub-systems</th>
<th>Sub-system nodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. family</td>
<td>social identity</td>
<td>relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social action</td>
<td>relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. environment</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. history</td>
<td>cultural identity</td>
<td>history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural action</td>
<td>customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. memory</td>
<td>social identity</td>
<td>memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. creativity</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each question was framed to encourage the participant to elaborate on their own experience, with particular emphasis on emotional responses and visual imagery. For example, a question relating to the subject’s arrival in Australia was phrased as: “If you were to create a photograph of your (or your parent’s) arrival in Australia, how would it look?” Or a question about the family home was put as: “Describe how a picture of the house and neighbourhood, where you grew up, would have looked.” This was followed by: “Is this the way you would have photographed it today?” These descriptive type questions, as suggested by Burns (1990) are “useful in allowing the respondent to control the flow of information” (p. 333) and help to create a feeling of trust, particularly at the early stages of an interview, as they are general and non-threatening. Every effort was made to ensure that judgemental or value oriented remarks or questions were not asked, so that “respondents were not made to feel uncomfortable with their own thoughts.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 93)

In the first interview, the following questions were asked. The interviews themselves were recorded onto a “Dictaphone” style tape recorder, which was chosen as it was relatively unobtrusive. As the microphone on this device was non-directional, it was necessary for both the participant and myself to sit fairly close together. This slight logistical difficulty was in fact quite conducive to establishing an immediate sense of shared endeavour, as each participant went out of their way to create a suitable, yet comfortable physical solution. In the main, the intention with the questioning was to draw out memories based around the respondent’s early years. It was hoped that by recontextualizing these rememberings, in some cases around events and occurrences that may not have been thought about for quite some time, the participants were able to shed (new) light on their feelings, emotions and attitudes. Since:

> the coherence or structure of the self’s narrative is provided through the integration of value, purpose, and meaning, where value represents the valence we attach to the present, purpose entails our sense of future possibility and aspirations, and meaning is our memory and interpretation of the past. (Witherell, 1991, p. 93)

The semi-structured interviews involved a list of pre-determined open-ended questions. As the interviews progressed, the questions were modified and adjusted when appropriate, in response to the flow of conversation and to help create a sense of individual dialogue and discourse. Each interview occurred over a time-span of one to two hours.
The questions

1. How old were you when you came to Australia? or 2. How long had your parents been in Australia when you were born?
   This question sets the scene for the remainder of the interview and is designed to establish the positioning of the participant within the research.

3. Who made the decision and what were the reasons for coming to Australia? What were the stories your family told you about that event?
   Once the bare facts of the migrant experience have been established from the previous question, the feelings and emotions behind the move to Australia were explored. As each participant had a different experience, not least of all because of their age at the time, the amount of first hand knowledge of that event varied. For that reason, the further question relating to stories of the family experience was added. In this situation the rememberings, whether real, imagined or redefined by the passage of time and subsequent re-interpretation of events; are important as they are of significance to the participant.

4. Tell me about your immediate family? What family members did you grow up with?
   Question 4 acts as a factual framing device. The way of the phrasing allows for an open-ended response, thus the assumption of the presence of a nuclear family is avoided.

5. Describe your relationship with your parents.
   In trying to elicit open-ended responses from the participants, questions were phrased in a non-judgemental manner, thereby enabling the participant to voluntarily contribute their thoughts and feelings without an overlay of opinion. In addition, this question raises the detail of the family structure and any resulting implications from the point of view of the participant.

6. Since adulthood, has this relationship changed significantly?
   This is a follow-up question that delves further into the role of the parents and the resulting effect on the participant. In many cases, this question seemed to require considerable thought, as it appeared the respondents were re-assessing the issues in light of present circumstances and current values. It appeared in many cases that this issue was either not contemplated previously, avoided, or at least not thought about for some time.
7. *As you were growing up did your parents have clear expectations about your future? Did they talk to you about this or was it merely understood?* The emotional environment from the point of view of overt or covert family influence is explored in this question.

8. *Do you feel that you share the same core values as your parents?* This question, addressing some of the same issues as Question 6, was an attempt to determine the extent and degree of family influence upon the attitudes of the participant.

9. *Would you say your parents were supportive of your choices and what were the indications of this? Give me an example.* This question has a twofold purpose. Firstly it determines the relationship of the parents to that of the participant with regard to their choice of artistic pathways. Secondly, it offers the participant an opportunity to ponder the exact nature of that relationship, and further determines whether a critical event, retained within the memory of the participant, has occurred. In many ways it is the memory of the incident which is even more important than the incident itself.

10. *Is there a member of your family you would describe as having a great influence upon you? Why?* The notion of significant people affecting an individual’s life journey is an important one to explore. This question allows the opportunity to establish any possible influences within the family structure.

11. *Describe your relationship with your siblings as you were growing up.* To complete the exploration of the family structure, in particular in so far as relationships and influences are concerned, this question examines with regard to siblings the same elements considered in Question 5.

12. *How has this changed now that you are an adult?* This question is analogous to Question 6.

13. *What emotion would you most often associate with your family? Can you explain why this is so?* A sense of self as determined within the family unit is often commonly defined through an emotional response. In many cases, individual notions of identity
are “frozen in time” through the role relationship and emotional resonance of the family structure - particularly as constructed through the turbulent years of adolescence.

14. *Can you remember when you first set foot in Australia?*
This question refers the respondent to a critical event examined indirectly in Question 3. At this stage of the interview the respondent has been encouraged to consider many aspects of his/her early years, perhaps even in ways they may not have considered previously. This question re-visits that key event in light of newly remembered, or at least recently discussed feelings and memories of the family relationships. The currency of this previous discussion may in fact lead to a “thick” description, rich in evocative, personal resonance. It also has the role of fixing a time and place within the narrative structure, thus creating a simple frame for further discussion.

15. *What do you recall most about that event? Can you describe your feelings?*
By posing the question in this way, the interviewee is encouraged to contemplate deeper and reflect on the event. From the personal viewpoint of the respondent, any significant, remembered aspects associated with the family’s arrival in Australia are being sought.

16. *If you were to create a photograph of your arrival in Australia, how would it look?*
Through prompting, the role of this question is to encourage the respondent to create and contemplate upon a non-verbal reference. The power of the visual is thereby conjured in the mind, together with the use of language to describe the image; in so doing, the two are magnified thereby heightening clarity.

17. *Were you and your family settled during your childhood years?*
Once again, through this question, details are encouraged with regard to the physical environment.

18. *Describe how a picture of the house and neighbourhood, where you grew up would have looked. Is this the way you would have photographed it now?*
As for Question 16, this is an attempt to encourage a visual connection with the remembered environment. Memories of this nature are often distorted when compared to the reality of the situation, for example a large room or huge street upon re-visiting can be much more modest in proportion than first
imagined. The way that memory locks in a personally significant construct, such as room size, is more important than the actuality of the place itself. Memories, in such situations, can be a pointer to feelings and emotions of the time.

19. Did you have your own room or did you share?
A simple reference to the physical environment once again, in an effort to facilitate and elicit open-ended discussion about the respondent’s relationship with their family.

20. Would you say your place was typical of your area, or was it unusual?
A child’s need to belong can often magnify any point of difference, whether actual or perceived. This question seeks to determine how the respondent felt about their place in the community.

21. As you were growing up, did your family follow any rituals or traditions that were unique or typical to your background? How did you feel about this?
Following on from the previous question, differences are explored; with a further questioning of how the respondent felt about these points of difference.

22. Do you still follow any of those traditions? Why?
This question seeks to determine whether the differences felt and the associated implications of those feelings were so powerful that they impacted on the respondent’s identity. Do they in fact negate the family influence, or is the self identity bound within the value system of family culture.

23. Will you (or do you) encourage your children to follow these traditions as well? Why?
Further to the previous question, I am seeking to discover how powerful the nurturing value system of the family is when applied as an antagonist to the prevailing culture.

24. Are there any values you find within your cultural background, that are different from those found in Australia?
As adults we all possess a basic frame that encompasses our beliefs. Where this frame originates and what influence it has, is a much more complex question to define. In articulating and reflecting upon those fundamental beliefs and values, we perhaps can identify differences between those we possess, and
those of the prevailing cultural milieu. In this way, the extent of the opposing value systems, and their underlying influence, can be revealed.

25. Do you know a lot about your family’s history?
This question is a further way of exploring the degree of influence that the family unit, as a historical construct, has on the individual.

26. Are the lives of your family’s forebears talked about or referred to within the family unit?
The stories and narratives told within the family contribute towards defining a unique family tradition and history. The extent and power of these stories and the influence they might have is explored here.

27. Do you ever look at family pictures and albums together?
As per the previous question, except this time the visual aspect of narrative is explored.

28. Are there any family heroes or ‘black sheep’ that are talked about?
The notion of story, of a narrative told, handed down from generation to generation, is explored here. Historical family members, long since disappeared, can often have a permanent place in the family culture and in so doing contribute and define the unique family history.

29. Are there any artefacts or items of significance that your family hold dear?
A visual reference to those aspects explored in the previous question.

30. Can you recall an event where you may have felt ‘different’ because of your background?
With this question the respondents have the opportunity to discuss any occurrences where difference due to their cultural background has been an issue - or perhaps if not an issue, simply awareness.

31. What feelings did you have about this event?
As per the previous question, an opportunity is given here to discuss their feelings about the event.

32. Can you recall an occasion where you felt pride because of your heritage?
A further exploration of the issues raised in Question 30, however this time with a positive implication.
33. If you were to create a self-portrait of yourself as a teenager, what over-riding emotion would it contain?

An unusual question, because combining an emotional response with the notion of a self portrait poses difficulty for some people. The intent here is to encapsulate a single, dominant feeling that represents the teenage years to the respondent. As a form of retrospective gaze, this can often say more about their view of that period rather than how they actually felt as a teenager.

34. Do you have a sense of being different, or do you feel that you belong?

This question goes to the very heart of self perception, particularly as it applies to how the respondent views the prevailing culture. Do they in fact see themselves as the ‘other’ or do they feel part of the dominant paradigm. The question allows the respondent to reflect on this particular aspect of self.

35. Do you see yourself as being creative? What does this mean to you?

Another fundamental aspect of self, that in turn helps define the individual’s view of themselves as artists. This question is attempting to elicit the conceptual frame the respondent uses when reflecting upon notions of creativity and what it means to be a creative person. How this informs their status as arts practitioners will vary with the individual’s own view of what actually constitutes creativity.

36. How do you feel about your photography? How important is it to you?

From the general question of creativity to that of the specific arts practice, this question requires consideration of the importance of photography as a vehicle for individual’s creative expression. Since for the respondents, photographic practice is the core of their professional life, it also allows them to reflect on how important that aspect of their life is, in defining who they are.

37. Do you think you bring any ‘baggage’ into your photographic expression?

A probing question, which allows for consideration and reflection upon aspects of bias, or indeed how neutral each participant is with regard to their world view. It is unlikely that with this question alone, any deep discussion will be prompted, but the issue having been raised will be revisited in the second interview.

38. Are there any elements within your work that you can identify as coming from your own experience?
Following from the previous question, this is an attempt to probe for levels of awareness regarding the respondent’s view of their photographic expression.

39. Do you recall any particular times when you have responded to specific incidents or people and expressed this through your photography?
This question is another way of probing the issues tackled in the previous two; this time, asking for specific examples. Through this repetition, I am allowing time for the respondents to reflect from the general to the specific.

40. Does your photography satisfy your desire for creative expression?
Having previously discussed the particular view each participant holds about how they define themselves creatively, this question explores whether avenues beyond photography are utilized as vehicles for their expression.

41. Do you have a clear, defined place within your creative work or do you separate yourself from it?
Another way of referring to the same point as in Question 37.

42. Do you feel your creative expression is impacted upon by elements from your past?
This question is included by way of summary. It encourages the respondent to reflect upon many of the issues raised throughout the interview and gives an open ended prompt for a further response. It also acts as a signpost for where the next stage of the interview process will be leading.

Follow-up interviews
The follow-up interviews were used to address many of the responses from Interview One, and explore them in further detail. This process allowed for an elaboration of common themes that had emerged, however at all times of paramount importance was the notion of engaging with the participant’s own narratives. As part of the process of addressing the sense of placement the participant feels within their current culture, their cultural beliefs and the adaptive nature of their sense of self were also been interrogated. (Follow-up questions directly related to the first interview, have retained the same question number, with an added letter suffix.)

7a. How important are your parent’s ideas and thoughts about your chosen profession?

7b. Are these ideas very different from your own?
7c. How important are your friends ideas and thoughts about your chosen profession?
These questions follow on from questions in the first interview and seek to further explore the basis of the respondent’s beliefs regarding the genesis of the arts practice.

7d. Are these ideas very different from your own or are most of your friends within a group allied to your creative field?
The often conflicting nature of the belief and value systems of our family and peers, can lead to tensions and uncertainties in our own ideas. This question is designed to explore the relationship between the respondent’s own beliefs and whether they are in sync with those of their peer group.

21a. Do you celebrate festivals and holidays that are specific to your ethnic background?
Once again, this question explores the sense of acculturation in the respondent.

21b. Do you think you will (or do you) encourage your children to celebrate such festivals?

24a. What would you say are the key differences between your cultural background and that of general society in Australia?

24b. What are your thoughts about these differences?

30a. Would you say your childhood was different to that of a usual Australian childhood experience?

30b. Tell me how it was different.

30c. What were your feelings about that during the time?
Issues of difference are explored in light of the perceptions of the respondent. These perceived differences can often indicate acculturation issues.

34a. How many of your friends (if any) would you classify as being part of your ethnic group?
The purpose of this question is to explore the sense of acculturation that the respondent may have by examining the nature of their peer group.

34b. If you had to describe yourself as being Australian or (insert ethnic group here) what grouping would you most associate with?
Acculturation and inter-cultural identity are fundamental to a sense of self formed through the immersion of the individual within the diversity of the modern day world. This question is designed to elaborate the respondent’s own view of their place within the society in which they function.

34c. When you see or read of (insert ethnic group here) successes or failures in the media, how do you feel?

34d. Does this effect you more strongly than such events from other groupings?
Following on from the previous question, the purpose of this question is to encourage the respondent to evaluate and elaborate on emotional responses they may have regarding their intercultural identity.

34e. Did you speak a language other than English in the family home when growing up?

34f. Do you still speak this language when you are with your family?

34g. Do you intend/ or are you teaching this language to your children?
The use of language is germane to the enculturation process and is often the only major outward representation of identification with a particular culture. This study is mainly looking at participants who grew up with English as their major language and therefore is not concerned with the barriers that language itself may produce, nevertheless, the use of a second language can be a signifier to the association and identification of the individual with another culture.

35b. Is creative expression important to you?

35c. How do you express your creativity?

35d. Were there periods in your life when you are not expressing yourself creativity?
35e. How did you feel then? What was occupying your time and your thoughts?

35f. In your life so far, if not right now, what other period would you say was the most creative?

35g. What were your feelings and thoughts then?

35h. Think about those times when you are most creative. Would you describe yourself as happy?

The above group of questions are designed to elicit reflective, emotional responses from the participants. Feelings and emotions related to the creative process are often influenced by perceptions and moods at the time. In seeking this type of reflection, the participant is encouraged to frame their creative practice in light of their emotional response.

42a. Do you feel the past has influenced your creative expression? Are there aspects of your past history that you can identify in your creative expression?

42b. How do you think memory has played a part in your creative expression?

42c. Do you think “difference” has played a role in your creativity?

43. Who or what was the biggest influence in you becoming a photographer?

43b. Why did this have an impact on you?

This question is designed to determine whether a significant person (or event) was instrumental in the respondent’s choice of creative career. This can often be a pointer to the motivations and value systems that underlie an individual’s choice of creative outlet.

44. What motivates you creatively?

44a. Do you think you see things differently to most people? Can you describe this?

44b. Do you think your background has any impact on this?
Similarly to the previous group of questions, this is designed to elicit motivational influences.

45. Try to think of a time when you would not be a photographer, what would you be?

45a. Can you describe yourself in that circumstance? Do you think you would you be different?

These two questions are designed to determine how closely defined the sense of self of the respondent is related to the pursuit of photography.

The final interview was conducted as a open-ended conversation with two goals. Firstly any outstanding issues or clarifications could be explored, and secondly the photographic pieces produced by the participant could be discussed. In particular, the participant was encouraged to explain why they had produced the images and discuss their response to the brief, and how they reflected on the meanings within the images.

Coding method and integration of the model

The interviews conducted with the participants were transcribed, and the tapes archived for future reference. Participants received a copy of the interview transcripts for review, clarification, and suggestions. Changes were made on the advice of the participants to correct errors and remove statements they were not comfortable with, and transcripts were then re-presented for further verification. All data was verified through this process. The transcripts were then imported into NVivo Qualitative Analysis Software, to assist with the examination of the data. The coding of the transcripts involved creation of two sets of nodes; one to seek out aspects of relevance to narrative analysis, and the other with regard to the application of an IPA methodology. The overall interview data was the same for both types of coding; the natures of the "nodes" were determined by the theories underlying each respective methodological approach. Narrative coding took the form of temporal, situational and plot-based codes, such as "adult view of family life" and "view of own creativity"; whilst the IPA coding subscribed to the details suggested in the “Model of Reflexive Selfhood” (Chapter Four) and the nodal points within it.

Three broad areas of coding were utilized in both the narrative methodology and the IPA methodology applied in the research. They can be categorized as: external narrative sequences, which are most commonly descriptions of events; internal narrative sequences, which focus upon perceptions and emotional states; and
reflexive narrative sequences, which entail participant analysis and interpretation of events to assist in meaning construction. Table 5.2 shows a comparative list of coding, and how the codes conform to the three categories.

Table 5.2 Examples of codes and coding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative sequence category</th>
<th>Narrative analysis code</th>
<th>Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) code</th>
<th>Narrative sequence category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>external</td>
<td>stories of family rituals</td>
<td>narrative memory</td>
<td>internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal</td>
<td>perceptions of family bonding</td>
<td>reflective memory</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive</td>
<td>adult view of family life</td>
<td>significant others</td>
<td>external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal</td>
<td>perception of nationality</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external</td>
<td>becoming part of this culture</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive</td>
<td>emotional connection to culture</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internal</td>
<td>perceptions of feeling different</td>
<td>social environment</td>
<td>external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external</td>
<td>childhood experiences</td>
<td>physical environment</td>
<td>external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive</td>
<td>view of photography</td>
<td>religion</td>
<td>internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive</td>
<td>view of own creativity</td>
<td>beliefs</td>
<td>internal</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>friends</td>
<td>internal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>personality</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
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</table>
Chapter Five

Narrative analysis involves dealing with transcripts in an effort to create discernable stories from the interview responses. In the process, the basic issue of structure, interaction and expressive syntax must be dealt with adequately to enable meaning to be derived from the narrative. If we agree with the view put forward by Labov (1997) that "a narrative of personal experience is a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker by a sequence of clauses that correspond to the order of the original events" (p. 398), the importance of temporality and plot become evident. At the same time, the essence of a told story is extremely powerful in its ability to posit a person’s point of view, and therefore worthy of elaboration through analysis, regardless of the difficulties of arriving at a singular interpretive field.

As Mishler (1991) suggests “through language we describe objects and events, explain how something works and why something happened, express feelings and beliefs, develop logical arguments, persuade others to a course of action, and narrate experiences” (p. 67). It is because of the potential to be gained from stories of lived experience, and in particular those of the photographers in this research, that two methods of analysis were used; each with its own strength in the extraction or construction of meaning from the data.

The coding scheme used in the analysis of the narrative is fundamentally important to ensure that the richness of the embedded meaning in the told story is captured. The detail of the scheme will inevitably influence the type of conclusions drawn from the data, since “analysis is shaped both by the researcher’s perspectives and theoretical positions, and by the dialogue about the subject that one cannot help but enter” (Bogdan, 1998, p. 177); nevertheless, the coding system is merely the vehicle and not the content of the research and must be considered in this way. This study is about the lives of its participants, and it is the perceptions of their existence that colonizes the “thick” description of the study.

In this chapter a Narrative Analysis and an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis were proposed as analytic tools for examination of the stories of the participants. The rationale behind the choice of participants was also given, and the questioning procedure, interview process and the questions themselves were discussed. In addition the coding system to be utilized for analysis was also proposed. The following chapter discusses the use of visual data and its place within the study.
Chapter Six: Symbols of the self

This chapter will examine ontological debates surrounding notions of selfhood, thereby framing the issues underlying the use of photographic images and symbolic visual data as a key component of texts supplied by the participants. The use of the model to render the links and interactions between identity and action as an underpinning to the thesis is also discussed. In addition, the means by which visual data is to be integrated into the research, how it is to be utilized and assigned meaning, and how issues of validity are to be addressed, are also considered.

Philosophers and psychologists have been in broad agreement with the proposition that the central tenet of the self, is to facilitate unity and purpose in life (Albright, 1994; Barclay, 1994; Heath, 2000; Maslow, 1998; Taylor, 1989; Teichert, 2004). This is realized via the self being both the guardian as well as the instrument of a coherent view of the world. The issue which is under on-going debate, and likely to continue engaging scholars, is exactly how this is achieved.

The means, as well as the method by which it is elucidated, the influences upon its formulation, the degree of agency accorded to the individual, as well as the extent of possible social and cultural influences; are issues open to worthwhile examination to further our understanding of the self and identity. In addition, they are all issues that should be part of any ongoing consideration of creativity and the influences that may come to bear upon its existence, its cultivation and its facilitation. These issues are also relevant to any educational examination of how, and by what means, the environment and landscape for enhancing creative expression can be nurtured.

In the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood the system of social identity is composed of four key influences: “memory”, “relationships”, “environment” and “inherited characteristics”. The nature versus nurture debate has to a great extent shown that both environment and genetics play a significant role in the determination of individual characteristics. Studies on twins, such as the seminal work in the 1930s by Newman, Freeman, & Holzinger (1968) or the more recent research by Bouchard (1990) where he and his colleagues chronicled the lives of about 60 pairs of identical twins raised separately, showed that their behaviour, personalities and social attitudes were often remarkably alike.
Findings such as these tend to support the notion illustrated by the model that the social environment, both emotional and spiritual, together with genetics, are key elements in identity construction. As indicated in the model, influences from the inherited characteristics of a mother and father, as well as the environment, can each play a determining role in identity formation. The two remaining significant contributors to social identity suggested in the model are “memory” and “relationships”. Further detail on the inter-connection of these factors is necessary to better gauge the veracity of the Model’s heuristic ability to situate new knowledge.

The following section examines ontological discourse related to identity and selfhood. Often termed under the umbrella of constructionist thought, a current view is of the self as reminiscent of an unfinished story, one that may take many twists and turns as it meanders along its pathways, changes its direction, perhaps even doubles back on itself, but always moving onward along a particular trajectory. As Giddens (1991) has termed it, the self is a reflexive notion, a “work-in-progress”, that is constructed by the individual in an ongoing manner. It is a formulation of the individual, rather than the a priori signifier of an iconic essence of selfhood. In many ways, like a builder, engineer or artist, we are responsible (even if not totally, then certainly to a major degree) for the selves we construct.

This notion is not new, as Mead (1913) had suggested it nearly a century ago: “The growth of the self arises out of a particular disintegration, the appearance of the different interests in the forum of reflection, the reconstruction of the social world, and the consequent appearance of the new self that answers to the new object”. (p. 379) The extent to which the self is a social or cultural construct, is very much still questioned; but to even begin to tackle the implications of how this may impact upon the individual, a number of other more fundamental concepts must be first examined. These revolve around the Cartesian notions of the inner and outer worlds, the body together with its role in consciousness and perception, and phenomenological observations about the world in which we are active participants. Indeed, the nature of sensation itself must also be examined in light of its impact on the existential self.

In a discussion of those issues, it is necessary to reach back to some of the philosophical debates that have characterised humankind’s search for identity. The issues and developments characterising many of the explorations of modern philosophers, psychologists and sociologists, build upon outcomes of earlier philosophical discourse and metaphysical examinations. Much of this discourse has been generated by scholars prior to even the ancient Greeks, but for the purposes of this thesis I do not
propose to delve that far into history. However certain landmark ideas have been proposed by key philosophical figures, whose ideas are worthy of examination within the parameters of this discussion.

Self and perception

Early in the 17th Century, the radical notion that we have a subjective inner life made up of our own thoughts and feelings was initially proposed by Descartes. Considered by many as the father of modern western philosophy, his ousting of the Aristotelian traditions of physics, led him to also construct a new philosophy, independent of those before it. Descartes’ aim was to reassess current knowledge of the world, by importing the certainty of mathematics into the physical and metaphysical spheres.

In general, his ideas differed from those holding currency prior to his major writings, on three key grounds. Firstly, he rejected the analysis of physical substance into form and matter, denying that substance can be categorised as wet, dry, hot or cold. He argued that contrary to the view of Aristotle, the properties of bodies must be explained in terms of size, shape and motion. Secondly, Descartes rejected any appeal to ends, be they natural or divine, to explain phenomena. He rejected the authority of the senses, and was determined to ground his thought within himself and his ability to reason. Descartes claimed that, since reason gives us genuine certainty, this must mean such knowledge is certain. Thirdly, and most importantly to this discussion, in a highly radical proposition, Descartes suggested that all knowledge of the outside world must be mediated via the inner world. In fact, he suggested, as this passage reveals, the outer world exists only in so far as the inner world describes it:

But I had the persuasion that there was absolutely nothing in the world, that there was no sky and no earth, neither minds nor bodies; was I not, therefore, at the same time, persuaded that I did not exist? Far from it; I assuredly existed, since I was persuaded. But there is I know not what being, who is possessed at once of the highest power and the deepest cunning, who is constantly employing all his ingenuity in deceiving me. Doubtless, then, I exist, since I am deceived; and, let him deceive me as he may, he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I shall be conscious that I am something. So that it must, in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind. (Descartes, 1641, para. 3)
In this view, the inner mind is the only possible direct experience we can have; therefore the outer world can only exist indirectly mediated through subjective experience. The logic of this Rationalist position even extends to our own body. Its very existence is placed under question, and certainly it can only ever exist in a state totally separate from the mind. This position raises a number of concerns, not the least of which is the obvious interconnection that our intuitive experience suggests, between our bodies and our minds. We feel hunger when our bodies need nourishment, we feel pain (unless a neurological problem intercedes) when our bodies are injured, we feel the sensation of liquid when we are immersed within water, and we smile when we are happy. Our bodies are without question the sensual link to the perceptions of our mind. Descartes’ acceptance of this close interrelationship between body and mind, stopped short, with his stated position that we can never be certain of the existence of our bodies. Our body could in reality be a gross perceptual hoax played upon us by our senses, or at the very least, we can never be truly certain of the form our body might take in the outer world.

The Cartesian duality of mind and body, holds firm to the subjective position of the mind. The singularity of the mind as the only aspect of existence not susceptible to doubt, as expressed in the austere “cogito, ergo, sum” (translated as “I think therefore I am” from the Latin) statement formulated by Descartes, sits at the pinnacle of all his thinking.

If all experience is subjectively filtered by our consciousness, then a problem arises, namely how can we ever agree on any aspect of our existence? Descartes proceeded to build upon his theories from the starting position of the one thing he was certain of, the mind. In examining the so called qualities of the mind, Descartes makes the claim that humans have understanding, have an independent will and can reflect on their position in life. Indeed, individuals are able to reason; as they are first and foremost rational beings. The primacy of reason is then the basis of the Rationalist position, summed up by the suggestion that it is possible to establish knowledge based purely on the intellectual ability to engage in logical analysis. As Descartes’ only certain point of knowledge is the inner substance called mind, how can he then make the transition to any certainty about the outer world?

At this point, Descartes invokes the assistance of God to aid him in making this quantum leap. Since in his view, God as a perfect and Supreme Being is a perception that exists in the mind, “…certainly no one can deny that we possess such an idea of God” it therefore follows that God must have implanted this perception. And since God is supreme and the embodiment of perfection, he must also be truthful, "it is
quite inconsistent with the nature of God that he should be a deceiver”. Therefore the “unavoidable conclusion” that Descartes leads to is the outer world as perceived by us cannot be a lie, since this would suggest that God is the originator of that lie.

This position of course does not sit at all comfortably with anyone who may choose to argue against the existence of a supreme being. Or in fact a Supreme Being that may not be so truthful in nature. Perhaps one that even may possesses a wicked sense of humour! Fortunately, another school of thought that followed Descartes was able to move beyond this conundrum. The Empiricist framework as proposed by Locke and Hume, amongst others, posits another view of the world. Locke suggested that the self was the embodiment of a conscious, thinking entity; one that is neither spiritual, nor material nor anything else. An entity that through the exercise of memory, is the conscious link between who we are and who we have been. Such a memory notion of selfhood removes the importance of the body and significantly places experience at the fulcrum of our perceptions of the outer world (Locke, 1690) “… self is not determined by identity or diversity of substance, which it cannot be sure of, but only by identity of consciousness…” (Chapter XXVII, para. 23)

The ontological standpoint of Hume’s (1748) position, begins with his assertion that we simply cannot rely on popular superstition and accepted wisdom, no matter how pervasive, without offering rational arguments in support. Nor can we, he suggests, achieve understanding through some type of metaphysical speculation. Rejecting both these positions, Hume employs “philosophical scepticism”, a critical attitude which systematically questions absolute knowledge and certainty, as a starting point for his Empiricist perspective. In seeking to address the question “what is the nature of self identity?” Hume formed the view that we cannot have an impression of the self as we are never aware of any constant, uniform impression that answers to such a notion.

No matter how closely we attend to our own experience, or introspectively attempt to notice the mental operations actually occurring in our mind, we are never, according to Hume, able to perceive a “self”. He suggests that any notions of self are actually derived from successions of rapid perceptions which we interpret as a conscious identity. He is therefore led to the controversial conclusion, particularly so for the time in which he lived, that the soul or the Cartesian self, are philosophical fictions. Rather, he posits the view of the self as a composite structure, which retains its identity not through some enduring core coherence, but by being composed of many related, but diverse, elements. According to Hume, the self therefore, is the characterisation of aggregated, subjective, lived experience.
Similarly, he suggested any knowledge we may have of the world, is based on experience, and this experience is merely a succession of separate and individual ideas, associated with each other through vague connections of resemblance and causality. These connections may be extended and related by memory, but Hume finds no evidence to accept they have any ongoing coherence. Likewise, Hume argues that knowledge of the external world cannot be induced, as induction rests on the assumption that the future will resemble the past; a position that is clearly unsupportable. Nor, he continues, can knowledge of the external world be gained through deduction, as information about physical objects goes beyond our immediate perceptions. Therefore Hume takes a position he calls “mitigated scepticism” and proposes that our view of the world is based on observable, human experience, expanded through the reasoning of mathematical logic. “The existence, therefore, of any being can only be proved by arguments from its cause or its effect; and these arguments are founded entirely on experience” (Hume, 1748).

As to the question of why then, we would actually believe in the existence of an outer world, Hume answers that we are “carried, by a natural instinct” to suppose the existence of an external world, independent of our perceptions of it. Hume’s epistemology therefore proposes, that belief in this external world is not because of reason or Cartesian logic, but because of an innate, irresistible, natural instinct. He tells us that:

All belief of matter of fact or real existence is derived merely from some object, present to the memory or the senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object ... This belief is the necessary result of placing the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to prevent. (Section V, Part 1)

This brief philosophical discourse has therefore moved from Descartes’ subjective reality requiring a supreme being to facilitate our knowledge of the world, to the Empiricist view that all knowledge is based on experience. Sharing a certain empathy with our intuitive and anecdotal perceptions of existence, the latter view starts to unravel as we consider the abundant knowledge gained of the world that cannot be observed or experienced. Unobservable knowledge is nevertheless in modern times, scientifically knowable; for example travelling beyond the speed of light although not
achievable for us bodily, is theoretically possible and cannot be explained within the Empiricist viewpoint. A further problem also arises: for us to have an experience, we must already have the ability to recognise the perception as an experience. But such ability cannot occur as a result of experience, because it must come before that experience; thereby giving rise to a circular, logical position which cannot be satisfied.

Immanuel Kant (1929/1781) in his “Critique of Pure Reason”, further adapted the idea of the inner and outer world, through first affirming that knowledge of the outer world comes from our experience. He moved beyond the strictly Empiricist view of knowledge in an analysis that in some ways bridged the two prevailing positions of Rationalism and Empiricism. According to Kant, the form of an object in the phenomenological outer world, is not derived through the senses, but is imposed by the mind, in a (fortunately) universal, logical and common manner, as a response to perception. The form is therefore, in his terms, a priori; it exists in its own right, since it is independent of our experience. He suggests that if we:

.....eliminate from our experiences everything which belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and certain judgments derived from them, which must have arisen completely a priori, independently of experience, inasmuch as they enable us to say, or at least lead us to believe that we can say, in regard to the objects which appear to the senses, more than mere experience would teach - giving to assertions true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge cannot supply. (Kant, 1929/1781, p. 41)

In other words, knowledge is gained through perception, but the mind understands this knowledge via basic concepts that exist prior to, and independent of, the perceived experience. The mind in this schema is pre-armed with these a priori concepts which must, according to Kant, be “necessary and universal” and thereby provide together with our senses, the basis of our knowledge of the world.

Consequently, Kant postulates a “Transcendental Self”, a self that is to some extent independent of experience; a self that is more than merely a passive recipient of experience and perception, but is an active originator of that experience. Intuitively we can readily agree that perceptual input must in some way be recognised, or processed for it to be in any way meaningful. An operating system, however elementary, must be present in some form to enable us to make sense of experience; notwithstanding that not all perception necessarily leads to understanding.
For example, one of the primary aspects of a computer operating system is the translation of keyboard input into binary notation, in order to enable the computer’s understanding of keyed inputs. Similarly, the Kantian view is that a priori knowledge exists and together with sense perception, enables all other knowledge. The computer analogy is a tenuous one at best, not least of all because of a human ontology that is recognised to include free will and agency (which clearly do not reside in computer systems), Kant’s notion of a priori knowledge is a significant stage in our understanding of the self.

Extending his argument further, Kant arrives at the position that space and time are the fundamental intuitions upon which all our other a priori concepts are built. Together, they are the source and the building blocks of all other a priori knowledge. “Time and space, taken together, are the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and so are what make a priori synthetic propositions possible” states Kant (1929/1781, p. 80) Therefore, according to Kant, we are part of a system where inductive knowledge of the world, stimulated through perceptions, representations, or appearances of objects that exist in the world, are mediated upon the a priori concepts devolved from the pure intuitions of space and time.

To follow that line of argument, two further questions need to be resolved. Firstly, if all we actually know are perceptions, then how do we know the outer world is not an illusion? And secondly, how do we take our perceptions and turn them into knowledge of the world?

Kant answers the first point, by maintaining that although our knowledge of the world is based on appearances, these appearances nevertheless are not illusions. When we perceive an object as being outside of us, it really is outside of us. Even though we gain our understanding of an object from our perceptions of it, there is a consistency with this perception that is in accord with the reality of the object. His argument justifying this position is based on the proposition that since our perceptions of time are also based on a form of appearance, that is, it too is an understanding we have that is gained through our perceptions; if that too were an illusion, all our perceptions would be illusions. But our understanding of time is an a priori upon which all other understanding is based; if it were an illusion, according to the logic of the argument, along with all of the outer world, our inner self would also be an illusion. This denial of the existence of the self, contrary to Descartes’ famous undoubtable proposition of “I think, therefore I am”, means we could not have perceived the illusion of the outer world. Hence logically this position is not sustainable.
The second question lies at the very heart of any understanding of self and being. Kant’s ontological position with regard to our inner world is not without contrary opinions. And it is fair to say that endless philosophical debate about these basic questions has followed Kant, and exists to this day. Kant’s significant contribution to western philosophy (one he termed the Copernican Revolution due to its repositioning of our frame of reference with regard to the self) is that he placed the active, rational human subject squarely at the centre of experience. Contrary to subjective perceptions conforming to the objects of the outer world, (which could never be demonstrated anyway), objects conform to the forms represented by perceptions. And these forms of perception are concepts, or templates of organisation, supplied by the mind itself.

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. (Kant, 1929/1781, p. 22)

We must also consider as an implication of this position that the mind itself is devoid of content until it interacts with the world, as the mind possesses a priori templates for judgments of knowledge, not a priori knowledge itself. Only the content of these forms is given by the objects themselves. An important outcome of this epistemological position is that the mind constructs experience based on the a priori intuitions of space, time and causality, which according to Kant are necessary conditions for all possible experience. Therefore, the objective order of nature and the causal necessity that operates within it are both products of the mind in its interaction with what lies outside of the mind. This suggests we are actively involved in interpreting the world, and rather than merely being passive recipients of experience; our subjectivity actually limits the way we perceive the world to be.

This is a crucial point that I will discuss further at a later stage, as it has a significant bearing on the discussions investigated within this thesis. The idea, that the mind plays a pivotal role in structuring reality is now so intuitively apparent to us, that it is difficult to imagine the significance of this insight. With his innovation of a priori judgments, and through his “Copernican Revolution” of re-alignment, Kant unified the two distinct traditions of Empiricism and Rationalism in such a way as to clear the ground for new ways of thinking and questioning. The further relevance of
Kant’s epistemology to this research, involves yet another aspect of mind that needs to be addressed; the fundamental role imagination plays in Kant’s formulations of the self.

Imagining and conceptualisation

Imagination as a concept has many meanings and connotations in our western society. The American Heritage Dictionary (Pickett, 2000) defines it as: “The formation of a mental image of something that is neither perceived as real nor present to the senses”. It has also long been associated with irrelevant and whimsical notions of fancy, notions that are not altogether serious and not at all to be trusted. Samuel Johnson, in his case study of mental illness, some 250 years ago suggested:

There is no man (sic) whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannize, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties. (Grange, 1962, p. 163 )

It is illuminating to observe his language. “Airy notions” and “fancy” are somewhat pejorative terms implying fictions and fantasy, and the expressions themselves are bundled into a context where he emphasises “imagination predominating over reason” leading directly to a “depravation of mental faculties”. It is not even correct to imply that such ideas are not prevalent in more recent, modern times. In his essay “Art and Neurosis” Lionel Trilling (1979) states: “The poet is in command of his fantasy, while it is exactly the mark of the neurotic that he is possessed by his fantasy.” Even if not associated with mental illness, imagination was often considered an indulgent pastime, an activity of artists and bohemians. Definitely not a serious activity, such as the cognitive processes of reason and logic.

Imagination in more recent times is associated with inventiveness and creativity, as well as original and insightful thought; and sometimes, we apply it to a much wider range of mental activities dealing with intangibles, such as supposing, pretending, and thinking of inventive possibilities. But prior to Kant, philosophers had relegated the imagination, together with feelings and sensations, as being of lesser importance, and certainly less reliable than reason. This estimation of imagination held by
many, does a great disservice to a unique aspect of our inner mind. My contention is that imagination is very much at the core of our cognition - and the privileged role of imagination within Kant’s epistemology is quite central to his argument.

Imagination, according to Kant, (Makkreel, 1990) functions in concert with the rational and intuitive faculties of the mind. He argued further, that imagination not only helps shape all perception, it gives us the capacity to contemplate what lies beyond perception. Indeed, it is imagination that mediates between sense and intelligence; and metaphorically bridges two radically different aspects of perception. It is an argument that happens to be extremely complex and invites the possibility of contrary interpretations.

The detail of his “Transcendental Deduction” where this matter is examined, is not easy to follow and this is not aided by the circumstance of the revised version of his “Critique of Pure Reason”, written some six years later, which is altered from the original to the extent that any scholarly examination needs to be quite clear which version is being discussed. Indeed, it is accepted practice to refer to the exact version, be it the first or second (often listed as A or B), or both. This study does not provide space for a full analysis of Kant’s theories of imagination; however I do wish to summarise some of the more recognised aspects of his theories, and identify their relevance to this thesis. Also, we need to look at how the mind comes to play its part in turning perception into knowledge. And Kant’s landmark theories have had an important role to play in this regard.

Despite the density of his texts, some of his propositions are unmistakable: Kant was quite clear on the importance of the mind as the situational base of experience. This is made clear when he states:

> Whatever the origin of our representations, whether they are due to the influence of outer things, or are produced through inner causes, whether they arise a priori, or being appearances have an empirical origin, they must all, as modifications of the mind, belong to inner sense. All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relation. This is a general observation which, throughout what follows, must be borne in mind as being quite fundamental. (Kant, 1929/1781, p. 131, A99)

He does of course bring to bear great scrutiny upon the Rationalist and Empiricists debates alluded to in the beginning of this quote. He comes down clearly in favour
of a subjective view of the outer world mediated by our inner mind. Kant then asks how is this achieved? It is quite clear Kant accepts that we derive perceptual data from our senses as subjective experience, which is then in some way processed by our mind. But processed how? Kant examines this within the section of his critique known as the “Subjective Deduction”. It is here that he separates out the role of the understanding, which is a logical function of the mind, with that of the imagination. According to Kantian thinking, the imagination is the home of the actual process for making meaning from our raw sense perceptions, and although he emphasises that all intuitions and syntheses occur as an act of understanding, imagination is integral to the process in its own right. In fact, the following detail can be seen as a wider and more explicit attempt by Kant, in his hugely ambitious project, to account for the temporal nature of consciousness.

He suggested that there are three syntheses acting upon the sense data we acquire from our experience. Kant termed this as the “transcendental synthesis”, the process whereby the imagination associates past representations of objects in the outer world, with present representations. These are then conditional on a priori principles of time and space, and enable us to reformulate and re-issue the past in the present. The first synthesis Kant labelled “intuitive apprehension”, which is the ability to discern and differentiate between subsequent (and previous) impressions of an object. Achieved via our a priori awareness of temporality, this enables us to separate out as unique, a continuous flow of sense data, at any given single moment.

The second synthesis he called “imaginative reproduction”. Once again through our awareness of time, we are able as a result of this synthesis to preserve past representations and compare them to present representations. In other words, we are able to build upon representations that we have received previously and not treat each subsequent sense experience as brand new. This is an imaginative process of being able to present to our thinking, an image of an object that is not actually there, and compare it against the object delivering the sense perception. Kant perceives that,

...... appearances follow one another, that is, that there is a state of things at one time the opposite of which was in the preceding time. Thus I am really connecting two perceptions in time. Now connection is not the work of mere sense and intuition, but is here the product of a synthetic faculty of imagination, which determines inner sense in respect of the time-relation. (Kant, 1929/1781, p. 218, A189, B223)
The third synthesis, which together with the previous two, Kant sometimes termed the “reproductive imagination”, is called “conceptual recognition”. It is the ability of the mind to produce unity amongst representations from many specific sense experiences of the one object. One way of interpreting this process is that “intuitive apprehension, orders; imaginative reproduction, connects; and conceptual recognition, unifies.” (Makreel, 1990, p. 26) However, it is not quite so straight forward, in that it can also be argued that without conceptual recognition we cannot have intuition of apprehension. Even Kant is a little inconsistent with this aspect of his critique, and on occasions alters the order in his discussion. This seems to imply a circular route is more applicable, with each aspect building upon the other within the process. This circular and reflexive notion is a treatment which I will discuss further in subsequent chapters.

From Kant’s point of view, the role imagination plays in our acquiring of knowledge has an even more important purpose as a result of its final, but possibly most significant function. As Kant described in his “Objective Deduction”, transcendental synthesis “involves a productive synthesis of the imagination which applies the categories of the understanding to sensibility.” (Makreel, 1990, p. 29) In other words, it is within imagination, through the productive imagination, that we are able to compare individual perceptions of objects and produce meaning as we relate them to categories of those same objects.

For example, my perception of a square, metal object with four rubber wheels and three people inside, travelling along a road in front of me; is the concept of a car, and I understand it to be such. The productive imagination therefore structures our general experience, the reproductive imagination can only be used for experience limited by our explicit knowledge. As Kant (1929/1781) describes it, “In so far as imagination is spontaneity, I sometimes also entitle it the productive imagination, to distinguish it from the reproductive imagination, whose synthesis is entirely subject to empirical laws, the laws, namely, of association” (p. 159, B152), or those laws that are affected by our immediate perceptions. And: “Since this unity of apperception underlies the possibility of all knowledge, the transcendental unity of the synthesis of imagination is the pure form of all possible knowledge...” (p. 142, A119)

Using the language of Kant, we can suggest that imagination is the workings of the mind that has a facility for combination or synthesis, is able to apprehend the sense data, reproduce it for the understanding, and recognize its features according to the conceptual framework provided by categories, or concepts. An appearance given
in intuition is structured by imagination, governed by the rules of understanding and recognised as an object through the unity of apperception. Since Kant has also suggested that knowledge is simply a web of concepts, it could also be postulated that an object is the presence in intuition of criteria (in relation to other concepts), as recognized by the structures of the imagination, via the rules of the understanding.

Makreel (1990) suggests that “the imagination becomes the hand maiden of the understanding” (p. 42), since it is in many ways subservient to it. Even though I expect Kant would not have gone that far, beyond dispute is the importance of imagination within Kant’s epistemology as a direct outcome of its formidable function translating raw sense experience, through a figurative and productive synthesis, into meaning mediated by the rules of space, time, and causality.

If we examine how Kant’s epistemology sits within the structure of the system of social identity in the constructed model, it is clear that memory plays a crucial role. According to Kant, the mind constructs experience of the outer world through perceptions gained of that world, judged against a priori concepts. From Kant’s point of view, memory is both “reproductive”, a reflection of events in the world, and “productive”; that is shaped by the creative force of imagination. These two aspects of memory are in complete accord with the “narrative” and “reflective” dualities reflected within the “memory” influence in the model. The notion of reproductive memory as being that which constitutes our perceptions of the world is analogous to the narrative we have of those same events. Similarly, the reflective aspect of memory can be seen to be fuelled by imagination, which is a key signifier enabling
our perceptions to move beyond immediate experience. In this way, the model, postulating a dynamic interchange between narrative and reflective memory, is in accord with the reproductive and productive memory of Kant.

Last century, a number of thinkers, under the umbrella term “Existential Phenomenology”, proposed alternative views to those of Kant and his followers about the role of the mind in our understanding of the world. Martin Heidegger, Wilfrid Sellars and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, amongst others, suggested there exists a direct dealing with the outer world, over and above our internal mediations of experience. In other words, ordinary perceptual experience is not created in the first instance through internal sensations, but through our actual contact with external objects, people, places, and events.

As Carman (2005) suggests of Merleau-Ponty’s contribution to the debates about perception and the mind, what emerges is an

.... original conception of perception as our most basic bodily mode of access to the world, prior to the kinds of reflection and abstraction that motivates the idea of discrete passive qualitative states of consciousness and spontaneous acts of cognition” (p. 51).

Taylor (1989) takes the argument even further, by introducing the conflict that moral imperatives imply, and suggests that a “fully consistent subjectivism would tend towards emptiness: nothing would count as a fulfilment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfilment.” (p. 507)

The complex struggle of debates such as these surrounding the nature of being, progress further when the linguistic aspect of knowledge, as privileged by Wittgenstein, are added to the mix. Communicative Theory suggests that a transcendental self, not too far removed from the Kantian notion, is constituted through experience: “A transcendental theory of the self presents a framework for the self which includes the elements of freedom and imagination as essential conditions” as stated by Heath (2000, p. 2), with the Wittgensteinian notion of language as a priori. But in an extension of Wittgenstein’s ideas, Heath suggests that in any functional constitution of the self:

The use of language presupposes a humanity of other language users who must be in the “language game” before they can make such a supposition. This is truly a priori in that each player of the language game must presuppose the humanity of other language users in order to play. The meanings already exist
“external” to the language game player in the language. This is how we have knowledge prior to experience and is the true source of the a priori. (Heath, 2000, p. 178)

In addition, Heath proposes that the functional purpose of the self is given form through communication, and tells us “What one must presuppose is that consciousness has a purpose or intentionality that becomes self-conscious through communicability of that purposeness” (p. 179).

It is worth at this point examining how these two significant positions, namely the existential nature of our dealings with the world, and the privileging of language as the a priori condition, sit within the proposed model. The notion that our direct contact with people, places and objects is pivotal to our perceptual experience is reflected within the model through the system of “cultural action” and how it interacts with the systems of “cultural identity” and “social identity”.

All systems have as a key influence the “Environment”, which is mediated by “emotional” and “spiritual” associations, and “social” and “physical” aspects in the systems of identity found on the left side of the model. On the right hand side, representing action, the environment is mediated by “community” and “family”, and the level of modernity found in the culture. The construction of phenomenological experience by the individual’s engagements within the culture, is framed and indeed influenced, by these aspects. These determinants of experience are the foundation upon which existential perceptions of the world are able to be based.

To examine how the interactions of communication through language are situated within the model, we need once again to consider the left hand quadrants. Whilst language is the most common medium of transmission of cultural traditions, as indicated in the “system of cultural identity”, emphasis is also placed on the “Milestones” and “Relationship” aspects of identity. The influence of “family” and “friends” upon the self is clearly familiar through observable behaviour, however the impact of “Milestones” achieved through connections with direct “ancestors” and the broader group represented by “nation” are equally important. Episodic narratives communicated through language reflect not only direct interactions in the world, but also the related interactions and stories of others. Friends, family and cultural persons of note, both past and present, convey experiential stories, which are then able to be assimilated into the further understandings of where the individual sits within the culture. In this way, language is positioned firmly within the model, and reflects the communication paradigm of philosophers such as Wittgenstein.
The issue at the forefront of this thesis, rather than the transcendental nature or otherwise of the self, or the exact a priori aspects that must be constituted for the self to have function or purposefulness, is the role of imagination. The model itself is able to accommodate current debates without relying on an exact resolution of this argument, and the notions upon which this thesis revolves are not reliant upon that outcome either. This is because the various strands of the ontological debate discussed earlier are in agreement on one key issue: the self is constituted through experience of our world and imagination is a key component in its construction. As suggested by Heath (2000), “Freedom and imagination are here combined, as one
is only free to intuit self-determination when one can imagine the other of understanding. In this act of reflected self creation, imagination is the more fundamental capacity, because without it freedom would have nothing to determine.” (p. 180) It is precisely this fundamental capacity of imagination, and the role of visual expression in rendering imagination, that I wish to turn to next.

Meaning through symbols

As discussed in the previous section, the notion of “concept” suggested by Kant in his 1781 Critique of Pure Reason (Kant, Pluhar & Kitcher, 1996) is a rule, or set of rules, that specifies the particular properties related to an object; thereby identifying what is common or universal in different representations. For meaning to be shareable, a “concept” must be universally acknowledged and agreed upon. This is demonstrated most readily in language, which can be seen to be a shared, universally communicable system of interrelated “concepts”. By way of example, the word “baby” implies certain accepted and agreed rules, which must be adhered to for an object to be able to be represented and associated with the concept known as a “baby”. Of course not all aspects of language have such clearly defined rules, universally shared with such relative precision. For example, the word “home” has a much more flexible set of rules associated with it, and as such, many varied structures and places could still be described quite adequately and accurately by the word.

Visual language, rather than spoken or written language, has an even more open ended set of rules by which concepts can be represented. A shared meaning, resulting in a common understanding that derives directly from a finite set of rules, is not as critical (or even attainable) as it is within linguistics. In language, without sufficient shared meaning and defined structure we simply cannot communicate. For language to be able to share this meaning, an agreed and historically located set of rules and definitions must be in place. The clearest evidence for this lies in the concept of the dictionary – literally a warehouse of words with their defined and accepted shared meanings. The Dean of Westminster, Richard Chenevix Trench, in an address to the London Philological Society (Winchester (1999), explained very clearly the role of a universal English dictionary, and its purpose in defining and shaping language:

At the heart of such a dictionary, he went on, should be the history of each of the life spans of each of the words. Some words are ancient, and exist still; others are new, and vanish like mayflies.....Yet all of these types of words are valid parts of the English language, no matter that they are old and obsolete, or new and with questionable futures.....Any dictionary that was to be based on the historical principles that, Trench insisted, were the only truly valid prin-
ciples, had to have, for every word, a passage quoted from literature that showed where each word was first used. (Winchester, 1999, p. 92-93)

He went on to say that “for each word also, there should be sentences that show the twists and turns of meanings – the way almost every word slips in its silvery, fish-like way, weaving this way and that, adding subtleties of nuance to itself, and then perhaps shedding them as the public mood dictates” (p. 93). In that address, at the London library in 1857, Trench laid the foundation for what was to become possibly the largest single work of scholarship ever undertaken - the harnessing and referencing of the Kantian notion of “concept”, or the agreed rules behind every single word in the English language. This mammoth project was to result in the publication, some seventy years later, of the Oxford English Dictionary. Shared meaning through language could by then not only be traced historically, but subtle shades of difference could be recognised over time and further agreed upon; or if need be, arbitrated through reference to an acknowledged point of authority.

By comparison, visual language requires a far lesser basis for sense construction or a shared meaning to be evident. Notwithstanding Aristotle’s statement “To think is to speculate with images” (Aristotle & Hett, 1935) the efforts of philosophers and scholars in general, have for the large part, attempted to examine only specific subsections of the visual, symbolic world. From the Renaissance times of Giordano Bruno, with his exploration of symbols and their association with the art of memory (Yates, 1992), to Juan E. Cirlot’s work in collecting together religious symbols and iconography in his Dictionary of Symbols (Cirlot, 1971), or the perhaps more germane graphic symbols of today’s society as collected together in The Dictionary of Graphic Images (Thompson & Davenport, 1980); only small parts of this vast world of visual language have been attempted to be collated in any coherent form.

Indeed, the idea that a complete visual dictionary could ever exist, which like its linguistic counterpart, would track and define every visual nuance and concept in some semiotically based document, is in itself almost impossible to contemplate, let alone articulate. In order to be able to reach at least some form of limited understanding, the minimum that is fundamentally necessary for visual representations to possess a level of shared meaning, is merely to require some sense of previous sensory perception by the viewer. The viewer needs not to have seen a particular depiction of a “home” to understand its meaning; all that is required is simply to have had some unique prior knowledge of shelter, structure and belonging, as a fundamental condition of individual, lived experience.
Chapter Six

Because of this very open-ended, yet demonstrably communicable, nature of visual expression, many of the inherent restrictions and constraints are not encountered in the same way that bedevils linguistic communication. Essentially, the ability to speak “the same language” usually only requires a very basic level of experience. It is precisely this aspect of the visual that nourishes its compelling place in our world of knowing. The power of the visual, as an expression of understanding and sense making, is without peer; and as a source of data located within this heuristic study, visual images will illuminate meanings that are unavailable purely from the spoken word.

Art works produced by the participants

The central theme of this study concerns creativity, and how creativity may be influenced by issues of culture. Indeed, how culture as a function of collective memory can play a significant role in the definition of self, which in turn can influence the expression of self displayed and communicated through creative outputs. For this purpose, the definition of creative outputs includes visual data or symbols in the form of photographic images. These images, which can be readily investigated, analysed and considered, in a similar fashion to the way linguistic narratives and stories may be used as source data about an individual’s experience, are able to add further scope and dimension to the lived experiences under review.

It is acknowledged that the use of the visual in social science research is not without controversy. Most commonly the argument seems to hinge on the validity of the situational, iconic presence of the photographic image, as against its ability to be considered as merely metaphorically representational. As explained by Emmison & Smith (2000):

Throughout the twentieth century, although the realist conception of photography has been dominant, it has refused to forego its expressive function, lingering ambivalently at the recognised borders of the art world. This tension is manifested in treatments of the photograph within the social sciences…..for some it is best thought of as a document or tool for faithfully capturing what “really” goes on. For others it is a text – an artefact, best thought of as an expression of culture which has to be read or interpreted much like a painting. (p. 23)
The images to be used as visual data and analysed in this research, neatly sidestep this argument as they do not conform in any sense to the documentary or recording genre of photography most commonly found in social science research. It is the illustrative or documentary photographic image that has borne the brunt of vehemence surrounding the debate regarding relevance of the visual in research modalities. Emmison & Smith (2000) offer this all too commonly held position: “Photographs have tended to be used in a purely illustrative or documentary fashion. Sometimes it is hard to see how academic uses of the camera have progressed much beyond the photo-essay of the Sunday newspaper supplements” (p. 55).

It is precisely in response to such views that the photographic images created by the participants for this research are, to the contrary, visual artefacts representing aspects of their own lived experience. They are images construed as representational, subjective and metaphoric, and offer themselves as further contributing to the rich data of narrative. Since the participants are practising photographers who understand the semiotics of visual language and the constructs used to portray visual meaning, they are familiar with, and fully embrace, the power of visual texts on a daily basis. Thereby, they are able to bring a richness and depth to the meaning within their images, a meaning, informed by a sense of their own creativity, a sense of who they are – a sense of self.

In addition, I too am a member of the same photographic community and am thus fully able to decode and understand images. In particular, as a practising photographer for over twenty years, I am readily able to deconstruct images, decipher meaning and make explicit the embedded representational aspects of imagery, based on the principles of expert observer and practitioner. The richness of meaning brought to the study by the images of the participants, is therefore able to be interpreted through my analysis and becomes a meaningful aspect of the research data.

Participants were invited to produce three images - the first to represent themselves, the second to represent their families or background and the third to represent their photographic practice. The images thereby assembled, form part of the data collected and analysed for the purposes of the study. Any photograph is by its nature representational, but it is the specifics of meaning the photographer wishes to represent in tandem with understandings brought by the viewer, that make a photograph unique. As Price (1994) suggests

Photographers transcribe some reality, but the photographer has to determine what reality it will be. He makes the photograph by using the convention that it
is impossible for him to do anything except transcribe conventional reality and then makes it possible to see in his transcription the new forms he saw. What the viewer thinks he recognises as reality is effectively a new reality. (p. 84)

Two separate domains of information were thereby available in the production of meaning constructed through these images. The first is the direct content portrayed within each image. The subject matter, the symbols used for representation, the disjunctions or harmonies of form and tone, and the emotions resonating from the images; are all important aspects relevant to the interpretative or constructivist position derived from the photographs.

A second equally or perhaps even more important aspect, is the discussion by the photographers of how they viewed their own images: how they were expecting the photographs to be interpreted, how they anticipated achieving this interpretation through the symbolic content and technical resonance of the images; in fact, how they made the choices that became part of the overall creative process. In this manner, the images are a stimulus for discussion and a catalyst for the photographer to reflect on the content as well as the process of construction.

The voices emanating from the images thereby have a double benefit, both visually representational and orally reflexive. They each add substance to the depth of overall data available to the study. The personal voice of each participant, directly through the medium of their arts practice, is clearly seen and heard through these images.

Implications of the chosen study approach

This qualitative study, based on the analysis of life stories, has at its core the use of language. That is to say, the narrative form by its very nature relies upon the shared meaning that language brings to our domain. This form of communication or expression is not unique in being able to give meaning and depth to the study. The notion of the “thick description” as used by Geertz (1973) to describe his method of detailed anthropological analysis based on immersion, rather than a dispassionate standpoint of objectivity, is further supplemented by the visual. Indeed, the production by the participants of photographic images as an example of their creative expression adds further richness and clarity to the life stories that are offered. It is this “thick description” that in a qualitative inquiry of this nature, gives us a framework for validity.

The issue commonly raised with regard to qualitative studies in general, but particularly those that include visual data, is the reliability of such studies. Can studies
that openly aspire to a constructivist methodology, including data which by its very nature, is open to numerous interpretations, be in any way considered meaningful, let alone in any sense objective? Eisner (1998) in his excellent discussion on the nature of qualitative inquiry, has this to say:

Any report of the world has to take some form and be carried by some symbol system. Some systems, such as language, describe. Others, such as visual art, depict. Some languages describe literally, others metaphorically. Some visual systems depict visually, but appeal to our imagination – as in surrealism. Still others depict visually, but appeal to our optical experience – the work of Joseph Albers and color field painting come to mind. Within a single symbol system there are unique constraints and unique possibilities......in fact, the form we select is constitutive of the understanding we acquire: the medium is a part of the message. (p. 46)

Since this research is examining the effect of cultural change on creative expression, it is for that very reason the “form”, to quote Eisner’s term, of photographic imagery is selected as part of the research itself. Put simply, this study is examining the lives of photographers, indeed a group of photographers who are in the “business” of creating photographic images on a daily basis. Since this qualitative examination of lived experience uses the production of photographic images as its outcomes of creative expression, it stands to reason that photographic data included as a part of this research offers extra resonance, extra depth of meaning, extra richness of substance, as well as additional contextual framing; over and above that which could otherwise be gained.

Utilizing multiple data sources to essentially examine the same stories, as Eisner (1998) suggests, is one of the ways that structural coherence to the research can be generated: “The use of multiple data sources is one of the ways conclusions can be structurally corroborated. As different kinds of data converge or support each other, the picture like the image in a puzzle, becomes more distinct” (p. 56).

Richardson (1994) offers the notion that rather than “valorising triangulation” as an accepted means (particularly in quantitative studies) of assigning validity to research, there is a clear need to look further and create a more appropriate model; especially with regard to qualitative research. The metaphor suggested is that of the crystal, which rather than being a fixed two-dimensional model, is infinite in form, multidimensional in nature and able to both reflect and refract that which is cast upon it. The use of this far more complex structural form as a representation of
validity offers the opportunity to be less confined by language and more open to the possibilities of other media. As Richardson (1994) states:

Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of ‘validity’ (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic” (p. 522).

In qualitative research, as Eisner (1998) says, “there is no statistical test of significance to determine if results ‘count’; in the end, what counts is a matter of judgement” (p. 39). But through the use of multiple data sets, each contributing to a coherence of assigned meaning; “judgements” gained from qualitative research studies such as this are never prescriptive, but do indeed matter. Without doubt, comfortably for those who undertake qualitative research, “judgement is alive and well, and hence the arena for debate and difference is always open” (Eisner, 1998, p. 39); and each judgement, tested against the debates it has spawned, adds to our understanding of the complexities of lived human experience.

Constraints and limits
The purpose of this study is to discover, through the use of life stories, connections that can be made between cultural dislocation and creative expression. The chosen means of conducting this enquiry is through examination of the narrative form expressed through language, and the visual form expressed through the creation of photographic images specifically for this study. The insights this study brings to the field of human creative endeavour are important for broadening the scope of educational inquiry, by helping to expand our understanding of human cognition and developing associated pedagogic practice.

Creative expression is more fundamental to our behaviour and does not reside only in art practice. To better understand the impacts and mechanisms of creativity is essential to all educational endeavours. As Eisner (2002) suggests “when we come to understand that thinking is not mediated solely by language and that intelligence is not exhausted by tasks employing word and number, we are more likely, I believe, to provide more diversified and equitable programs in our schools” (p. 245).

It is not the small sample size that determines such limitation - even a sample of one is able produce qualitative outcomes that are able to add a dimension to the body of knowledge within an area of study. The limits of this research relate more to the complex nature of lived experience. Study of phenomena as suggested in this
study, will yield valuable information that can be used to identify and direct further examination. But a research outcome that will apply with total causality across all circumstances is simply not possible to obtain, because each person’s experience in the world is unique, with a unique history and a unique footprint of action.

As a result, the way each person views a particular situation, interprets an action, or responds to particular stimuli, will sustain a personality that is not the same as any other. We are individuals who can share commonalities with others, but whose experiences cannot make us identical to any other individual in the world. There is no total conformity to rules, external influences and perceptions; and even though some behaviour can be predicted under certain circumstances, it can never be totally preordained with absolute confidence. In fact, it is our expression of self, though our creative haecceity, that makes us unique.

All such qualitative studies are interpretive by nature, individually focused, and based on judgements determined through the examination of lived experience. On the other hand, their importance also revolves around these very same considerations. Precisely because of the individual focus of a qualitative study, the constructed interpretations based on a lived human life, that meaning of intrinsic value can be attributed. As Eisner (1998) says “Neither science nor art can exist outside of experience, and experience requires a subject matter. That subject matter is qualitative” (p. 27).

Our ability to gain genuine meaning from qualitative inquiry depends in large part on our ability to interpret. It is through interpretation that we can draw inference and thereby generate conclusions and hypotheses, which are relevant from one lived experience to another. It is through observation and reflection upon the richness and depth of a uniquely lived, complex, life that we are able to draw inferences applicable to another’s circumstances. The strength of qualitative inquiry is tightly wound with the complexities of human existence, and both the strengths and limitations of this research are wound with the same coil.

In this chapter, the use of visual data in relation to the context of the research has been discussed. Issues of validity and objectivity, considered in light of the nature of the study have also been examined. The methodological analysis and theoretical context of the research has also been addressed.

The following chapter of the study involves the voice of the participants. Narrative methodology is used to bring forward the richness of meaning embedded in the
stories of the practising photographers who are the subjects of the research; whilst in Chapters Eight and Nine, the narrative form itself is examined in light of narrative as the basis of consciousness, communication and thereby identity itself.
Chapter Seven: Narratives of Lived Experience

In this study I suggest that cultural dislocation, through a heightened cognitive activity, can result in an increased imaginative awareness. In turn, this potentially gives rise to an increased level of creative expression. The mechanisms underlying this process are contingent on identity formation and the consequential actions of the individual as they make sense of their lives. Utilizing the narrative mode, this chapter will bring to the fore the stories of the participants. It will add body and depth through their described experiences, to assist in explicating the processes illustrated in the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, discussed in Chapter Four. The discussion is broadened in Chapter Twelve to include images as a means of elaboration of their stories; however, in this chapter, the material under consideration is gained from the semi-structured interviews undertaken for the study.

To further the relationship between cultural dislocation and its potential to heighten creative expression, the focus now turns to the lived experience of the group of eight professional photographers (see Chapter Two: The participants) who are involved in this study. Using the voice of each participant, together with occasional additions of my own reflections and experiences, in line with the justifications made in Chapter Two: The personal voice, stories from the backgrounds and lives of each photographer are examined.

Childhood and difference

Key aspects underlying identity within the constructionist paradigm acknowledged in this study, are found in the individual experiences of childhood. Whilst it can be said that infants and children are not actively fashioning a unified and coherent identity in their earliest years (McAdams, 1996a), they are actively accumulating experiences and stories as material to be used later in the life. Episodes from an infant’s earliest experiences can influence their future identity formation (Erikson, 1963) and the nature of how they interact with the world later in life. Normal cognitive development, and cultural demands that encourage an examination of the adolescent’s place in the world, with a growing awareness of the sexual nature of much
social interaction; results in adolescence being the most turbulent period of identity construction. As McAdams (1996a) suggests:

High points, low points, turning points, and other nuclear episodes are chosen and reconstructed to create followable and convincing narrative explanations for how the past gave birth to the present, and how the present may pave the way for the future. (p. 311)

Many of the following stories relate to childhood experiences in general and adolescent experiences in particular. Childhood events that are focused on change or difference, often manifest through immigration or cultural reconfiguration, are particularly relevant to this study. The example revealed within the title and described in the introduction, is symptomatic of the type of narratives often found within the experience of those straddling dual cultures. Heather provides another quite similar story:

**My girlfriend came over for dinner and she was very conservative in her food tastes. In those days Australia was quite conservative, like garlic was an exotic spice (laughs). And mum had cooked octopus. She pressure cooked it and chopped it up in little pieces and created a sauce and put it over rice and it’s really quite yummy, but it is octopus and you can see that. Like it’s got little fine tentacles and mum actually turned to my friend Nicole and said, “Ah Nicky, you eat octopus?” And that was it man, I got that rubbed in for so long, I hated it, I was so embarrassed and humiliated, my family ate octopus and we were dumb Wogs, you know? (Heather)**

Often, the frame of reflection is a comparison between the circumstances of those with whom the individual interacts and their own experience, such as in the following:

**I remember some of my friends used to get strapped with the cane, in the sixties, you know. Where the thought of a father taking a belt off and…. which wasn’t that uncommon back then. Not because they hated their kids, those kids that got belted by their dads back then, today they love their dads. It was just something… whereas….. my family, I thought, my family: “geeze”, I’ve got it good! I’ve got a good family, I’ve hit the jackpot. I’ve got a family where my dad doesn’t take the belt off, you know. (Joe)**

Or in the following from Heather:
I seem to think that my parents were stricter than some other friends and people I saw around me. ... I don’t know if there was such an emphasis on my friends that they had to learn, that they had to help, as much as I did; like with the cooking and things like that. I mean, I could be wrong. Pretty much mum did everything anyway, but more that she was pushing us to learn those household things. (Heather)

Differences in the degree, as well as the manner, of parental supervision within the family, are also at times an issue:

And when I got older um... you know not being allowed to have boyfriends was, you know, a thing. Boys were a big deal you know? So the culture where the girls have to remain chaste um... yeah, so there was pressure in my teens when it came to those sort of things. And going out, I could go out but um... not as often as I would like. So that’s where a lot of the conflict came with my dad when I got older, yeah. Whereas he was following the culture where girls don’t go out and you’ve got to protect them from the boys, and I wanted to go out and I didn’t need his protection! (laughs) (Heather)

For James, the duality of cultures was represented in the parenting and the social interactions of youth, within his personal lived experience as well as that of his brothers:

When we were growing up.... the community was very strong, you know. My dad pretty much controlled the household ... it was a certain structure and a certain strictness. But my parents thankfully, I don’t believe, were as strict as other Greek parents of relatives and friends of mine. In my adolescent years and teen years of going out, you know, I was actually given a fair amount of freedom. Possibly also because of the advantage that I was the youngest and um the oldest had already done all the hard yards, so to speak. But still, even my brothers who... one of my brothers was a bit of a rebel, you know. He was always out late and out drinking and having a good time; he got into a lot of different things in his teen years, you know. He had a group of friends who were pretty good guys, but you know, they sort of went out, went out a lot; and I remember that caused my parents a bit of angst. But they still sort of accepted all that, and they just sort of had to accept that we were young kids growing up in a different culture. So obviously the culture clash thing, which was a very common thing with all migrants.....is that, you know, we would go
to school and we almost tried to hide our ethnicity. But then at home we were totally immersed in our ethnicity. (James)

Mead (1913) was one of the first to argue that the self is constructed as a result of social and cultural interactions. The presentation of the self to others, or a reflection upon the nature of the self, is most readily facilitated through the telling of stories. As stated by Markham Shaw (1997), since "the self is made up of memories, and personal narratives are made of these memories, it follows that the personal narratives reflect self" (p. 306).

The observation from Louis, which addresses another aspect of parenting, reflects his relationship and his interactions with significant adults, in his extended family grouping:

Because basically you’ve got parents who (not that they had parents that didn’t care for them) but, because there was that family involvement,...both on a parent level as well as uncles and aunties, and extended sort of family. I think you’re well adjusted that way because you experience a lot of things through these older uncles and aunties and cousins, and I think you draw on all their expectations and influences. And the stories they would tell. ..... even simple things like our attitude towards drink, or attitudes to food, all these things that we find to be a natural occurrence on a daily basis would be very, very alien to say an Australian culture. So in simple things like that and how we handle the social side of it, the social aspect of drinking and eating, that would definitely be different, definitely. (Louis)

Further, Louis reveals another story of difference, connected essentially to narratives surrounding food, as mentioned previously in relation to Heather and James:

Oh, food was different. We had... I mean we laugh about it now but um... we were given these huge lunches you know. The sandwich was this big! And we had pastrami, sardines, tuna..... and the kids just, they just ridiculed you. (Louis)

As identity is bound together with notions of difference and belonging, the underlying emotional basis of our responses, as suggested by Elliott (2001), need to be considered. Elliot maintains that our sense of who we are is affected by the "peculiar kind of emotional needs that all of us experience and express in our personal and
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social worlds” and that this is “not something outside our social determination”, but rather relies on “the complex affective ways in which individual selves interact with others in the social world” (p. 44). For example, a potential minor concern like not being aware of the prevailing football code, can figure heavily in the mind of a child:

One thing about culture that I remember, I didn’t know... I remember asking a person, "What is Collingwood? These things are so basic, as a young child and all.... these things became real issues because you didn’t... I didn’t know anything about these sort of things that kids, that the other kids, held so highly and I didn’t even think..... Because my parents didn’t barrack for any team or anything, they were into soccer or doing other things, they brought other things over with them you know? (Louis)

My own experiences as a child growing up in outer suburban Melbourne of the sixties, involves a similar story:

I think all kids hate to feel singled out for being different. I guess the other thing I recall was the fact that my father didn’t have a culture of football or cricket - or any of the other Australian sports, but particularly football and cricket. In an Australian school at that time, if you didn’t play football or cricket, then you were no one......literally ..... there weren’t other sports - except football and cricket. In high school, in later years, I played tennis and even that was frowned upon in those days. That was like... you only played tennis because you weren’t good at cricket. So, the fact that he didn’t have a culture of football and cricket meant that he didn’t teach me how to play those games, which meant that I wasn’t very good at them. I really resented that actually, at the time. (Les)

James makes the comparison between his childhood experiences and those of his Australian friends in terms of separate facets, related through the central aspect of family ritual. The first is the strong connection his father had with the church:

I suppose the biggest difference would be what happens on Sunday, like with church and what have you, and the whole family day. You know, church in the morning, coming home, having a big lunch with the family. It would be the one time we would get together as a family, because when I was younger my father was working night shift, it was the only time I really sort of sat down,
and because he was working night shift we never had evening dinners with him. So therefore it was a very important day for the family as a unit to catch up, and people would come sometimes for lunch after church......we could never really go anywhere, like on a picnic or whatever, because my father was wanting to go to church with us. Because he felt, you know, he was part of the church, part of the committee at various points and he also used to go and, in the latter years, he used to go and do a bit of chanting. You know, singing in the choral groups. (James)

There was also the unusual situation, for an Australian environment, of his father not driving; thereby restricting the overall sphere of activity of the family:

My father didn’t also drive, so therefore everything was within walking reach or public transport reach for us. So therefore we didn’t really often go away. Like your typical family would probably get in the car and go on a picnic whereas we didn’t as much, we didn’t really venture out as much like that on Sundays. They were very rare; if we did they were very rare occasions, so that was already, so that was one of the big points of difference. (James)

And finally, it is through the traditions behind the Sunday meal itself:

Of course the food we bought was probably different. The way my mother cooked you know was very different too. You know, she would buy chickens from the market, take them home, slaughter them, pluck them, prepare them for Sunday roast. Because in the early days frozen chickens weren’t a big thing, they had fresh chickens... and my mother always. So therefore you know, it was always the roast chicken on Sundays and in the evening it was the beautiful egg lemon soup. You know, you used chicken, and you made a broth, and you put egg white and lemon juice and rice. And you make a beautiful egg lemon soup which was to die for, .... if you do it properly. (James)

These vividly described associations between religious experience as a socially mediating influence, the localized, neighbourhood based lifestyle, and the predictable nature of the family Sunday lunch; are together positioned at the climax of the day’s activities. Through these shared experiences, James’ sense of identity is constructed not only through the experiential aspect of the activities themselves, but also through their integration into his self narrative. As Giddens (1991) points out, we are constantly refining and “working on” our identities and life narratives. Over
time, these narratives gain coherence through not only a consistency in the individual’s behaviour, but also through the consistency of character and the “believability” of plot, maintained by the logical “sense” derived from each episodic element.

A completely different comparison is made by Carolyn as she reflects on her childhood in Wales:

> Well definitely the climate is different and I would have spent a lot more time indoors. However, I remember my childhood as being outside, ...., I grew up (until I was about eight) on a little farm, so I was always out playing with the animals. Or in the haystack or you know things like that; or walking around fishing and had lots of pet animals. But in the teenage years, I would have spent a lot more time indoors, I think. But maybe a lot of kids spend their time indoors now, you know with the media and computers and all that sort of thing.....But I suspect, ...... I would have spent more time reading or colouring or.....And I used to like colouring in and things like that as a little kid. (Carolyn)

Implicit in her description of the impact of the climate upon lifestyle, is the reference to a rural environment, itself having only a passing resemblance to farm life in country Australia.

Lifestyle and leisure activities also often define difference, as indicated in these memories spoken about by Bronek:

> The sort of things that Australian families do which, you know, going camping down on the Prom and all that sort of thing, ..... I never went camping in my life when I was young. It was something that we never did. Until about five years ago I couldn’t have given a toss about football and you know that’s very much a part of... Like you know, I look at Dan and his boys, the football thing on the weekend is a really important thing that they do together. And it is something that has obviously been going on for ages in Australia, and that wasn’t something that we had as a generation family here. (Bronek)

A sense of “otherness” to the prevailing patterns of social exchange, is clearly evident in his reflections. In a similar vein, the following stories of difference in social expectations, regarding my father’s early experiences in Australia, are part of my own narrative:
There were stories he told me, where the lifestyle was so different that he just found it quite incredulous at first. Things like: we moved to Black Rock, and he was renting a house, and on the first week he was there he wakes up one Saturday morning and there was this guy mowing his lawn. He couldn’t work this out. It turned out that he owned the house and he’d just come around to mow the lawn for us! (Les)

The other thing.... was that in Hungary at that time you couldn’t just move. You couldn’t just go to a new house..... it was all regulated. If you moved out of the district you were in, and the district would be quite a small area, a small part of the town or city; if you moved you had to go to the local police station to inform them and get authorization. So dad was here for a week and he thought it high time he called into the Black Rock police station to get his papers authorized, and of course they didn’t known what to do with him. They probably thought he was just a lunatic! Here was this guy who was a “refo”, as they called them in those days; and he lobs into Black Rock police station, which is an outer suburban place, announcing he was there... and they go: AND?? (Les)

These stories of difference have been told and re-told within the family environment, becoming part of the narrative that informs the identity of its members. This type of acculturation relates to the framing notion of culture that Bruner (1994) suggests influences our way of knowing, feeling and behaving. Dominic’s experience, with regard to his father’s history and the expectations that are transferred through his father’s values, imply a similar acculturation; in this case through a deliberate rejection by Dominic of those influences. He starts by describing his father’s background:

My father was... he was um... he was a very quiet man, he kept things to himself but because he came from a ruling military background....... because his father was a General, a ruling military Governor of his region. He was very, you know.... it was like National Service. I suppose we were raised... our family home in China was a military compound you know, with four walls and barracks and stables at the end. So it’s... he came from that sort of formal... it’s almost like um... you know, it’s almost like medieval times turning to twentieth century Melbourne. (Dominic)
Dominic continues by explaining how this translated into the expectations passed on to him and thereby framed his negative response:

_Dad died when I was twenty-one, when I was at third year art school. And ... my father couldn’t understand, because of the long history... because he was... going right back now.....our family is from the Manchurian caste of the Chinese who were virtually rulers of the area which dad was from, which was North West of Beijing. And you either joined the army and became, you know, an officer, or you did science. So me going off... both of my sisters, one’s a micro-biologist and the other one’s a genealogist;...... and I decide to do a fine arts course! It didn’t wash too well. So there was a bit of tension there and he didn’t quite understand that there were alternatives to making a living._

(Dominic)

Yenny remembers with fondness her childhood engagement with her grandparents in Norway, a place she would go to from Vienna to stay with her mother’s family:

_My grandfather, my mum’s father, he would enjoy, you know. I remember every year we would go up to Norway, stay there at his house or at our holiday house. I would love going there, you know, he would have all these photographs up of my grandmother when she was pretty young. All this stuff, different photographs.... and he would always talk you through and tell you stories. And that was the beautiful part of it._

(Yenny)

However, for Yenny, an undercurrent of loss existed through the early death of her maternal grandmother:

_My grandmother, I didn’t know her very well. She died when I was four, but I still feel a very strong connection with her. I think we are very similar in many aspects...... so the story of her really interests me but, and it has had a major effect on my mother, but unfortunately in many ways not a very good one. But even that...... that is what makes you as well, whether it is good or bad experiences,... absolutely. I don’t know how old she was exactly but she died of alcoholism very early on, very young. So I guess that’s given my mother a lot to deal with. There are many question marks left there but it’s definitely formed a lot of her, and a lot of my brother and a lot of everyone really,..... in my family._

(Yenny)
For Yenny, difference is embedded in her parent’s background, with her mother originating from Norway and maintaining her connection with that country through visits to family, and the holiday house the family still kept there. On the other hand, her father’s Austrian background was a vivid contrast, both personally and culturally.

My dad is very untraditional...Yeah so my dad you know he doesn’t really care whether you celebrate his birthday on this day or whether you celebrate Christmas on Christmas day or a day later or before. Whereas my mum is the complete opposite you know, all she ever wanted was the real family home with all the Christmas traditions. I guess also she was more traditional because she was away from home. She moved to Austria when she was, I think, twenty-one or twenty-two; so she was far away from Norway. (Yenny)

This duality is often referred to by Yenny, and is an aspect of her self identity that is clearly important to her.

Ritual and remembered traditions

Of significance to this study is the manner in which interactions with ritual and tradition, together forming the keystones of an immersed culture, facilitate, define and frame memory and action. However, it is action, through individual agency, that is at the centre of this study. Not any type of action however, but action that is recognised as being born of creativity, that is, creative expression.

The proposition at the heart of this study is that a cultural dislocation, or a disruption to cultural belonging, precipitates a re-definition of selfhood, which can result in enhanced creative outcomes. Underlying this premise is the acceptance that concepts of selfhood are not self generating or internal, but constructed as an ongoing project (Giddens, 1991) through acculturation and the social interaction of the individual (Hall, 1991). Such acculturation is constituted through memory and mediated via the cumulative histories of significant people (Conway, 1993; Hirsch, 1997; Neisser, 1994), in many cases drawn from family or those involved with an individual’s family life.

Immigrants bring memories of past people, past objects and past events, which can operate as filters through which their present is viewed. As Foner (1997) makes the point, “immigrants live out much of their lives in the context of families” (p. 961). In
the study of how immigration affects family and kinship patterns, Foner goes on to say:

In this account the family is not simply a site where immigrants create and carry out agendas or strategies; nor are family relations and dynamics reducible to rational economic calculations. Rather, the family is seen as a place where there is a dynamic interplay between structure, culture, and agency – where creative culture-building takes place in the context of external social and economic forces as well as immigrants’ premigration cultural frameworks. (p. 961)

Key ingredients in this “cultural framework” are shared experiences within the family unit, of rituals and culturally based celebrations. Carolyn remembers rituals and festivals based around the landscape of her native Wales:

One that I think was perhaps a stand out, which wasn’t really an acknowledged festival but I think was a community thing in a way. In the outskirts in the town that I lived in there was a range of hills like a ridge, and at the end of the ridge there was a kind of, in the distance it looked like a pimple. Every Good Friday people would walk to this pimple on top of this ridge, ..... and it was said that this pimple, on the end of this, was actually a druid burial site. And I remember quite often walking..... like people would walk there, it was no organised thing but it was just something people did. My family didn’t do it; it was something I did with teenage friends. And the fact that there was this myth about it, that was ancient and Druidic, and the ritual of walking there, walking into the landscape.... (Carolyn)

In this case, the walking ritual did not involve her family, but was an event shared with her friends. A visit to a "sacred site" that indicates a respect and attachment to a landscape which constitutes memory of a collective past; a past that was “ancient and Druidic”. A further example spoken of involved a similarly shared event:

And also the other kind of ritual that involves walking, would be that to do with the church on the chapel, the idea of a kind of banner. Around Easter, Whitsunday, there would be a lot of walking of groups of people in the main streets of the town behind the banners. And that kind of.... a bit like the trade unions used to walk behind the banners kind of thing. (Carolyn)
Reflecting upon this activity, Carolyn notes that the countryside and nature are recurring themes in her creative work; themes supplemented further by a connection with water:

*I suppose holidays would be a ritual that really sticks in the mind. We used to always go on holidays to North Wales and to the beaches in West Wales. And in the work I do now, I do a lot of work to do with water and sea creatures, and um I suppose those times,..... I am reconnecting with. (Carolyn)*

Overlaid upon these joyous reflections are a series of dramatic and tragic family events:

*I have a very interesting response to water. I am both terrified of it and adore it. And um... I’ve been thinking about that, and how.... I remembered that prior to my birth, my mother used to always tell me about one of my cousins who was drowned in the swimming pool. Only as a very small baby and it was obviously a great loss. She used to tell me about that and then just recently, last year, one of my relatives was drowned. And probably that helped me connect those two things. (Carolyn)*

Neither event was directly connected to Carolyn’s experience, as the former occurred prior to her birth and the latter occurred in Wales after she was already living in Australia. But these shared significant stories of loss, have clearly framed Carolyn’s associations and connections with water.

The influence of customs through ritual and celebration is indicated in the model within the system of cultural action (see Chapter Four).
Further such connections can also be experienced through the inherited traditions of ideology and religion, also indicated as a node in the system of cultural action. In this manner, James connects associations of tradition through religion, as he relates in this passage:

*I would say that the religious thing is very much tied up with our culture... because for example, the whole idea of celebration and having a party, you know. I suppose in the old days my parents grew up in a village, their village life was very much orchestrated by, you know, the name days, St Johns and St Demetrius and St George....They're public holidays in Greece, so.... they were like pinnacles...... the whole idea was this crescendo, this build up to Easter Sunday where the whole village would celebrate. There would be a party in the village, there would be ten lambs being roasted, and dancing in the village square. And therefore the church was very much the thing, the magnet that kept the village together. Because, it was the celebrations of religious days, that brought the community together as well. (James)*

Shared events form a much broader frame through which James’ intersections with his Greek culture can be seen. Not only are the connections and shared experiences being constructed from the locus of family, but they can also be viewed in terms of a larger family, that of the village. As well, they can even be seen in terms of a larger family, that of religion.

*In any hard times they go to faith; in good times they thank their faith, you know. So it’s very much,... the church is there for good and bad times; it’s what binds the whole thing. So therefore that part of the culture is very much important, its what makes people Greek; because, .... the church was the fundamental thing that kept the glue together. (James)*

James’ reflections on the importance of the church, particularly in terms of the village life of his parents, indicates a profound relationship between individual lived experience and that of the historical experiences of a culture. Not only is there an explicit bond through the shared experienced events of the present, but also through the implied promise of stability and coherence in those future events and experiences yet to come.

Heather, also from a Greek background, remembers the same type of events with a different focus. In her recollections, the web of connectedness comes from the sharing of food, rather than from the umbrella of religion:
Fasting for Easter and not having meat. We followed that and... Lent... and um... having the big lamb on the spit. If we didn’t have it, someone else that we knew would have it; so then when Lent was over, and you know having gone to Church, ... we’d have a big barbecue. The foods during those occasions were quite festive, lots of people and the dips. And... yeah... Greeks are very food orientated and very welcoming with their food. I thought everyone was like that until I got older and I saw other... like Australians are more.... you don’t pop over at dinner, you know, whereas if someone popped over to our house at dinner they’d eat with us. It was the normal thing to do. (Heather)

In the Italian tradition, once again food, social interaction and religion are strongly integrated. For example, Louis remembers fondly the Sunday traditions of his childhood:

Oh Sunday... I really liked Sunday mornings um... Sundays used to be fantastic because we used to have a fantastic meal at lunchtime and we were getting together. (Louis)

But Louis’ stories centre more on the social aspects that result from the family visits, weddings and religious picnics:

Yeah, yeah I mean, well... we had extended family all through the week. We had like almost every night, an uncle would drop in. You see, they didn’t have kids then, so we were the only kids in the family. So they would come and stay till twelve/one o’clock in the morning, every night...almost every night. Every second night there’d be someone there ... so that sort of side of it was fantastic. (Louis)

And the weddings, as a young kid I used to like going to the weddings... As a young child it was great, because you could see other kids the same age and cousins and other people. That was exciting, weddings were a big thing. (Louis)

We used to have picnics in the bush, we used to have religious picnics... you know, roads would just be cluttered with cars and Italians with you know, tables and chairs and spaghetti ready to start cooking. You know, we’d go on
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In these examples, Louis is clearly relaying the warm affection in which he remembers these events. Ritual and tradition in his terms are associated with a positive memory of social engagement.

In the reflections that Joe gives us however, is a reminder of the cultural duality he and other first generation children were straddling.

By not mentioning the making of the sauce to his Australian friends, Joe is reminding us of his attempt to move fluidly between two cultures.

In trying not to alienate one culture through the infusion of a ritual experience from another, an experience that would be foreign and not understood, the decision Joe takes is one of silence.
Yenny was also straddling dual cultures in her childhood in Austria. With a Norwegian mother and an Austrian father, she reflects on the traditions brought by her mother, from what was at the time, a far-off land:

*It took almost as long to go to Norway, where she is from, because she is from the north; than it takes to go to Australia now...back then it was a lot more difficult. The Austrian tradition side of things would come from the surroundings, not from the family, so because we, we had hardly any contact with my dad’s part of the family. Until, I don’t know, I think I was starting to be a teenager. So we had very little, he sort of broke up a lot of contact, so things came yeah from my mum, or from our immediate surroundings. (Yenny)*

Unlike the traditions brought to Yenny through the influence of her mother, Austrian traditions were not brought to the family unit, or integrated through celebrations and activities with her parents. Yenny did however, absorb an acculturation into her prevailing Austrian culture, via interactions with her friends:

*Yet a lot of my friends, they’re very typically Austrian. And one in particular... she has a very large family so they were really, really big on tradition. So I experienced a lot of traditions with them and religious ones as well. My family wasn’t religious and they were. So yeah, I think I took over more Norwegian traditions, which is probably why I got along with Norwegians here in Australia very quickly than Austrians. That’s probably what made me feel a lot more Norwegian for a long time than Austrian, probably up until now, where I feel more Austrian than Norwegian in Australia. (Yenny)*

Dominic was another of the participants who also saw the connections of ritual and tradition through the lens of food:

*We weren’t as traditional as a lot of um Taoists or Buddhists or whatever. So a lot of the ceremonies and everything else wasn’t that embellished. Like you know, one of the main traditions we had was church on a Sunday... but then you also do Chinese New Year and things like that. But fortunately, there wasn’t any sort of incense, or um temples or anything, because we weren’t... we were Catholic so we missed out on a lot of that, that sort of more formal tradition. But fortunately a lot of it was based around food, which is always a great thing. And at every sort of major event there was lots of food, it was more centred around food than anything else as I remember, as a kid. (Dominic)*
In his recollections, religion was secondary, in that three differing religious groupings still had a common cultural connection through food.

Bronek’s rememberings of childhood traditions are also framed in the social, connections of eating and drinking, even though the events were precipitated by religious occasions:

“There’s the typical you know, Christmas, very much ritual based there. We go to midnight mass, we have a big feast on Christmas Eve, Christmas day was always just looked on as being something a little bit second rate. Easter was always a big thing, like Easter we’d do the big Polish breakfast, you know Vodka, the whole bit, that was always very important and fun and lots of painting of eggs before hand; so yeah we really got into those rituals.

(Bronek)

However, Bronek moves the notion of ritual into a more generic construct. Although not subscribing totally to the traditions of his past, he nevertheless is actively initiating new patterns of behaviour in an attempt to construct fresh traditions and rituals more relevant to his contemporary attitudes and way of life.

“Although now, as me, I um.... I don’t really like routine on a day to day basis. I do quite like ritual, I think there’s a real difference between that, you know. I like going to the same places, I like having the same coffee. I like having two coffees as I walk into RMIT on a Saturday morning, I like finding a good restaurant and going back to that place, you know. I like that sort of repetition that becomes ritual. I think that’s going to start to continue more and more. Like having a family you know, having a bit of a connection to an extended family; those things are becoming more and more important again.

(Bronek)

If through shared patterns of common behaviour a sense of belonging and stability are engendered, rituals and traditions can be seen as the external representation of such connections. Following the notions of a shifting and constantly revised construction of self, suggested by Foucault (1982) and Giddens (1981), these outward manifestations of ritual are thereby able to be seen as constructions of the self in action.

“Like you know, Dan and I, it’s a little ritual and it’s only been going for about four or five years now; but the Collingwood Melbourne game, every year we
go, we go to the MCG. He’s a member. We go to the members if the long room’s functioning and we go and have lunch in the long room. And now the girls are coming along and it’s turned into a bit more of an event now, so that is turning into quite an important ritual. (Bronek)

Connectedness through family, ethnicity and culture

The constructivist view of self identity interprets the self as a work in progress informed by lived experience, and shaped through our emotional, social and cultural engagements. Within the Model of Reflexive Selfhood (Chapter Four), identity is composed of two aspects: cultural identity and social identity. One of the key influences that inform the construction of self, as suggested in the model, is the impact of relationships identified through the nodes of family and friends, as well as interactions via the milestones of nationality and direct ancestors. Ethnic customs and traditions confirm in the individual a sense of belonging, thereby bridging the singular, individual and solitary to the plural, collective and communal. Within our social and cultural networks, our place in the world is enacted and thereby made sense of and understood. In the model, this is illustrated through the dynamic nature of the linkages in the systems of cultural and social identity.
As James indicates in the following passage, even contemporary mainstream media culture often has its echoes embedded in a classical cultural domain, by which the process of generating cultural connectedness is emphasised:

*The interesting thing is we used to go to church and rush home so we could catch the end of the world championship wrestling. Because we'd go to church to preach about love, we'd come home and watch people beat the crap out of each other. ...... it was all very culturally based you know, because of course even the world championship wrestling had its ethnicity. Because it was the Australian, the playboy Gary Hart, you know, one of the wrestling majors and his crew of guys, against Mario Milano who was the Italian Stallion, and Spiros Arion, who was the Greek god sent here to save the Greeks in Australia, you know. (James)*

Such “easy” polarisations enable a simple and quick link to be made. In this case the enhanced scope for barracking and lending support beyond the individual wrestler to that of the cultural grouping the wrestler represents, is facilitated by the theatre of association presented to the viewer. As a result, identification and connectedness are successfully polarised, harnessed, and manipulated to engender support within the group, even if only for a superficial and transitory moment.

However, the particular history of individual family members often brings a more direct form to the connections we may feel. Take for example the particular case of Heather’s grandmother, as described in the following passage:

*Some of the stories that I hear are really fascinating but um... it’s like they’re quite... it’s like my grandparents were quite cagey with their history. So there are dribs and drabs that have come through. Like my grandmother. My father’s mother actually wasn’t from northern Greece, she was from a Greek Island very close to Turkey. The Turks declared that everyone had to leave the Island. They had two hours and anyone left behind they would kill, and they did. Anyone left behind they killed... and my grandmother apparently was from quite a wealthy family that was in shipping, and everyone just fled to the ships. And she met my grandfather on the ships. He was journeying up north and um... and she ended up meeting him on the journey and marrying him. (Heather)*

This story, of how Heather’s grandparents met through a chance meeting founded upon war time tragedy, casts dramatic tension and circumstance onto an otherwise
routine “boy meets girl” occurrence. As McAdams (1996) suggests: “The unfolding drama of life is revealed more by the telling than by the actual events told” and this constructivist telling of history is “judged with respect to such narrative criteria as ‘believability’ and ‘coherence’” (p. 28). Narrative drama gives meaning and identity to the characters of the story, and can be used subsequently to make sense of behaviour and the outcomes of the constructed history. As Chodorow (2002) puts it: “history affects people psychologically no less than it does physically and materially” and this impact is registered “emotionally and unconsciously as well as consciously and cognitively” (p. 298).

She was quite a closed woman though. She was a very loving, generous, woman, but for some reason, she … I think because it was such a disaster, such a tragedy in her family. Some of her family members died, her family members were scattered across Greece after that happened. I think because it was a painful thing for her, she didn’t talk about it much. (Heather)

Carolyn tells of a different family history as she ranges across the story of her parent’s background:

I would also have to say that um… my generation in my family, not me personally but another cousin of mine, were the first that ever went on to tertiary education. So um… I mean that’s quite common place now, but my… my father was denied this because of his poverty. And he never went back, he went into the mines, he never really had the kind of career that he wanted to have. And then my mother also had ah… she was very intelligent and had a very photographic memory, she has a fantastic memory. My mother when she was about fourteen was discovered… she went to boarding school in England and um at fourteen they discovered that she had a double curvature of the spine. And so she had to spend about two years on her back, and she had an Italian masseur and was massaged with olive oil. And she could never stand the smell of olive oil for the rest of her life (laughs). And when she went back to school she missed I think nearly two years of schooling, and crammed to kind of get it all in. And then kind of had a bit too much and had a breakdown. (Carolyn)

Almost as a follow-on from the story encapsulating the disappointments of her parent’s aspirations, Carolyn relates the story of how she felt connected to a series of elderly women she had met, since living in Australia. She begins by telling us about her experiences in Wales:
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I had a variety of my mother’s friends who were kind of aunties to me, I called them aunties, though my God-mother would have been the strongest one I think there, especially because she was the headmistress of my primary school. And we used to see her quite often. (Carolyn)

But goes on to describe a situation from her more recent experience in Australia:

Well I kind of feel like I’m an orphan here. I don’t have family connections, my friends are my family in a way. And I recently, I don’t really seek out older people, but I recently made a friendship; a quite a close friendship, with a friend of mine’s mother who happens to live near me. And I reflected on the fact that maybe she’s kind of a mother, but she’s an artist as well. And it’s really interesting, how that mother and daughter, have a not very good relationship, you know a very uneasy relationship. Whereas I was having a good relationship with my mother and maybe I’m seeking that out. But I don’t know. I mean that’s something that’s a huge loss to me, you know; I don’t have that, so I had to find alternatives. (Carolyn)

The narration of life events is a significant and powerful vehicle for presenting the self and bringing understanding to experience. It gives the opportunity for the teller to express “who I think I am’ or ‘who I think you are’ without explicit statements” (Markham Shaw, 1997, p. 317). Carolyn’s need for family connections expressed through narrative, enable her to bring forward emotions and cognitions that are significant to her self-perception. These are given authenticity and fidelity through the telling of the narrative, since humans are essentially story tellers (Fischer, 1987), and validity and rationality through the coherence of story.

The importance of narrative can be taken even further with the suggestion that it is at the heart of identity (Bruner, 2004), (McAdam, 1996a), (Conway, 1996). In fact, Singer (2004) expresses succinctly a commonly held view that “we can draw inferences from stories with particular self-relevance in order to gain insight into our own nature, values, and goals” (p. 442). Such notions can be readily observed in Carolyn’s narratives, where the theme of familial need is pursued further as she reaches once more into her past:

One of the jobs I got in the eighties was a three month, a two to three month, residency in an Aboriginal community in Weipa, in North Queensland. I’d worked with some Aboriginals in the Museum, Museum of Victoria, putting
some images of historical photos in an exhibition. I hadn’t really had much to do with Aborigines and ah... and I’d got this job really because I had been involved in a kind of “art in the community” project. I’d written an article about it and then the um... the person that got this Aboriginal project going, he rang me up and said that he’d got the idea from something I’d written about. So they really wanted me to be part of it and in the end I went to Weipa, or Weipa South. It was a little village and I felt quite at home there, and not in an area that I connected to visually. I think it was the connection.... of... because I spent a lot of time with Aboriginal grandmothers, and they reminded me of the older women that I’d grown up with. (Carolyn)

She continues by elaborating upon her reflections brought about by this connection:

And what was interesting, when I was growing up in Wales, was my grandfather had this butcher shop. And he bought this land on a hill and we had a kind of big house on the hill, but the butcher shops were in the valley down the bottom where the working class used to be. And when I was a teenager I used to go and earn pocket money. I used to spend Saturday’s working in the shop. It was more of a German style butcher shop, where out the back all these things would be made, and it was on a kind of working class area. Sometimes I’d go off on the rounds with my uncle delivering the meat. It was quite a working class area really, and I got to know all these characters that worked there. And some of them were these little old ladies, you know, interesting people... interesting people who kind of talked a lot and, you know, didn’t mind who they talked to. And I just connected to them. And when I went to Weipa, the grandmothers reminded me of these people and I just felt at home with them. (Carolyn)

Finally, Carolyn concludes with this observation:

And so even though I think my mother was certainly more of a snob.... it wasn’t that she didn’t agree with me being with them, I just felt connected to these people and I think that helped me ... Yeah, so I felt at home with these people. I felt like they were kind of family and I think it was because of, um... they accepted you. And if they accepted you, they kind of accepted all of you. A much more working class thing where they just accepted, they didn’t put all
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Through this story, Carolyn is bringing past events and histories to bear upon her felt emotions and her present views of the world. In the cultural and social associations upon which she reflects, meaning is constructed in the juncture between the connections made through historical ties, between past emotional and political positions taken by her mother, and between herself and the population of the Aboriginal community in Weipa. As suggested by Barclay (1994), stories of the past “are composed, analyzed, and re-assembled leading to the assimilation of individual histories into existing family histories” (p. 341), thereby constructing the autobiographical matrix Carolyn uses to create meaning from her experience. Her feeling “more at home in that more community environment” is an outcome of the connections already made through her past experiences.

Similarly, Yenny explains how past cultural lived traditions helped create meaning for her, in an aspect of life that was very differently celebrated once she came to Australia. In this instance, Yenny talks of the familiarity and comfort of ritual:

Like there’s certain rituals that yeah, meant a lot to me. And I found really, really - particularly at Christmas - I had a lot of problems here. I really craved things that I was used to in Austria. Whether it was just the whole Christmas, the whole month of December; you know the whole Christmas time in Vienna with all the markets and gingerbread and particularly all the smells from the hot punch, and all these kind of things, to Christmas itself. It’s such a different story here; it’s such a party here. And it’s really such a reflective - no matter what age, religious or not - reflective time. And it’s a time to be with your family and really everyone, whether they’re apart, separated, divorced or not, everyone comes together and tries to have a really nice feast together. And then the day after, have a really big breakfast and brunch. And it’s little things like that….. took a while to get over. (Yenny)

Breaking with these traditions fractured Yenny’s sense of connection and created a feeling of loss at a time when such connections are quite visibly amplified in a very public display of celebration by the community.

Family connections are also a means by which emotions are understood and given form. The loss of family members enacts not only a ritual of family bonding, but
also enables shared grief and consent to express and feel emotion through the commonly felt, lived experience. Even if that experience is not shared in the same way by all concerned. As Joe explains in this passage:

> My mother bawled her eyes out. And as a five year old child watching your mother bawling her eyes out, and really, really, bawl her eyes; out it’s something you’ll never forget. As a five or six year old, I mean, we don’t expect our mothers to be crying. But her mother died, and I didn’t know who this lady was, so I didn’t feel the emotion. (Joe)

The level of emotion that Joe observed in his mother, signalled a strength of connection with the greater family group. As a child, through that experience, he was able to comprehend in an unspoken way, the magnitude of loss and sacrifice that his parents made when they decided to immigrate to Australia. Later as an adult, this connection with family, allows Joe to reflect on those circumstances:

> My mum left all her brothers and sisters, and they had nine kids there. For her to leave them it was like, I mean, I’d hate to leave my family. And I think the expectation was, when they came out here, was like a lot of immigrants; was to make some money and go back. It wasn’t leave your family and never see them again; it was to go back to the family. (Joe)

Louis tells a similar story of the family his father left behind, through the focus of a treasured memento belonging to an uncle:

> I think the one thing I do remember is um... we were talking about an uncle that died, that killed himself. He was... he was a real inspiration to all of... to his younger brother and sister and I remember him being a musician. And he sang and he played the guitar and he was a very good looking guy. And that guitar,...dad had that guitar. And I remember seeing a photograph of Uncle in um... in the garb, beautifully photographed obviously in the studio, and he had the guitar on, round his neck. And that guitar... dad still has that guitar. He just had the guitar, only had the guitar, he was never that musical. I mean not musical in the sense of playing but he loved music, but he’d never actually played an instrument um ... well thats the thing, he actually left everything you know? I mean his family stayed there, his mother and father stayed there and a couple of brothers stayed there. But the rest, with my mother’s family came out so... he left a lot ... a lot behind, you know? Um... but he had so
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many people here and he had his wife... you know, the adopted family through marriage. (Louis)

Such stories of loss are typically reflected, told and re-told in most immigrant communities. In the views of Singer (2004), these stories allow us to “come to know ourselves and to know about the world”. In addition, “through the meanings that we construct from these self-defining narratives” (p. 454), we can make sense of our lives. My own background, contained in the following story, was expressed as I reflected upon the reasons for my family leaving Hungary:

During the war my family had a very tough time, because our background is Jewish - even though my parents are not Jewish, as they had actually converted to Christianity before I was born. But they had a hard time during the war. And after the war, in particular with the communist regime, my father had a difficult period. He was director of Phillips in Hungary and when the Communists took over they nationalized the company. He was the only guy they sacked, which is normal, but then in the early fifties the Soviet Union started to try directors of multinational companies as spies.....It was at that stage my father got a bit twitchy. Combined with the fact that he felt Europe was really just a basket case, he thought it was time to start a new life..... The overriding thing was that he wanted to be as far away from Europe as you physically could be, ....and Australia was it. But it was interesting because he had five mates; five mates from childhood, and one went to England, one went to America one went to Canada, one stayed, and he went to Australia..... They all didn’t have the same idea that he had. He felt the overriding thing, for him, was that it was to be as far away from Europe as possible. Plus.... he did have his sister living here.... so there was a little bit of family to draw to as well. (Les)

Family history, in this way, helps define identity. As stories of the past are told and re-told over time, they become a crucial aspect and determinant of the continuity of the storied self. In the constructivist paradigm, the narrative expressions of the past brought to the present, are related to the future through the coherence of story (Bakhtin, 1981), and thereby become an active factor in the construction of identity. As Elliot (2001) says:

Selfhood is not determined or pre-packaged; rather, the self is a work of active construction and reconstruction, built on inner workings of fantasy and
its unconscious contortions – anxieties about difference, about otherness and strangeness, about intimacy and proximity – in the wider frame of culture, society and politics. (p. 156)

Joe’s narrative gives a rich example:

My dad on the corner of New street and Brighton road, it’s the only.... in Victoria it’s the only manned crossing to this day. You know they open the gates manually to let the trains through. Yeah, it’s the only one that’s still done by hand. Now my dad worked there, and from the age of.... before we went to Italy this was, .... because I went to Italy when I was ten years old. But before I went to Italy, for a couple of years, I used to go there and help my dad. ..... I used to actually get the gates, undo the latches, wait until a few cars come through. When those cars have gone I’d put my hand up, stop the traffic..... close the gates, go and turn the signals on for the train to pass through! That was my job right, so I had so much responsibility for this Brighton train going through to Flinders Street. And one day I said to my dad...... what would happen if we didn’t actually do the signals to let the train know that all the gates are ready for them? “Oh, okay. Well, I’ll show you”. So we closed the gates and all the traffic stopped, and we didn’t actually turn the signal for the trains. By the time they’re half way down the track, there’s a signal that goes up that lets the train driver know it’s all clear. So he said okay we’ll stop the train for you. And we didn’t do the signals.... we stopped a Brighton train! And the train driver goes .....what the hell are you doing? You’ve got the gates closed .... opened for us.... but you haven’t given us the signal! And my dad’s, you know, he’s pretending he’s just an uneducated immigrant. “Oh... sorry, sorry, sorry”. So he goes and puts them back on for him. So I was kind of rapt that my dad stopped the train for me, the Brighton train with all the passengers. But the weird thing is, that..... after about six months I used to go out there and open the gates on my own! Now you think about this. For a year and a half an eight year old..... goes out there and stops traffic in Brighton. Has the responsibility of closing the gates, getting the signals and letting the train through. But the weird thing is,.... all the locals, all the traffic, all the drivers...... no one dobbed me in. (Joe)

This story is an example of how Joe’s own identity is constructed not only by the event that occurred, but also by his associations and interpretations of that event. The manner in which it is related to the prevailing culture, through his father’s
role and the actions he and his father took, are shaped by both felt and predicted outcomes, and framed by his own contemporary interpretations as an adult.

In my own narrative, I relate the story of how my family came to this country. By doing so, the past becomes integrated with the present, and shapes the future in a social and cultural mediation:

> It was an escape, yeah. There was a little window of opportunity after the 1956 revolution, or counter-revolution as the Soviets used to call it. In ‘56 after the Olympics here in Melbourne, when the Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest, we came out just after that. There was a very small window where the Soviets decided to open the borders and allow people to go, but they didn’t make it official, they just turned a blind eye towards people escaping. There was my father, mother and my brother - so there were four of us, plus grandparents and we came out as a unit.... So dad decided he couldn’t flee. He couldn’t surreptitiously slide out, as there were too many of us and my grandparents were old, they couldn’t do anything too fancy. So he decided he’d bribe his way out. He bribed a couple of people and sent off parcels of money to various authorities to get the paperwork, and for them to nod and wink and to do all the right things. But even then, I remember him saying, it was pretty treacherous, as he had no guarantee they wouldn’t double cross him. There he was with the whole family..... and until he was actually out of the country he didn’t really know whether it was going to work. (Les)

Regardless of the risks involved, or indeed the hopes realised; the circumstances of the individuals concerned invariably alter as they develop new roots. Financial and social imperatives encourage a greater and greater commitment, until there is more at stake here than in their previous lives. These considerations are often recognised through markers of achievement, which although differing from community to community, have in common an outward, easily measurable sense of achievement:

> And of course what happens is there’s plenty of work, there’s plenty of food, you start to eat meat. Sicilians ate meat rarely ‘coz it was unaffordable, but because it was so cheap and available here you could eat meat everyday - my point is that they could do things here that you couldn’t do over there. The kids go to school; you can actually buy a house. You can afford to buy a house here and if you worked hard you could buy a second or a third, forth and fifth house. But everyone would buy their first and second house eventually, so why would you want to go back to a country where there was no work, there
was no work prospects for your children? So what happens is that 90% of them end up staying here. (Joe)

To replace the connection which has been fractured through the severing of family ties and the leaving behind of siblings, Joe has embarked on a goal to form new family experiences to be shared and remembered by his children and emerging extended family. In a manner very similar to that of Bronek, described in the previous section, where he purposively engaged in the creation of new contemporary traditions; Joe’s activity can also be seen as an active construction of self and identity. As McAdams (1996) says: “All good stories require satisfying endings” and our own self narrative is no exception:

As we move into and through our middle-adult years, we become increasingly preoccupied with our own myth’s denouement. Yet all of us are profoundly ambivalent about the sense of an ending. Few of us are eager to die. Mature identity requires that we leave a legacy that will, in some sense, survive us. Many individuals, at this stage in their lives, refashion their myths to ensure that something of personal importance is passed on. (p. 37)

It is in this context that Joe is keen to provide a memory legacy for his children:

When we were younger, we used to come and see our cousins more. We used to....and then of course the family gets big and starts splitting, you know. Well there are a lot of relatives I don’t see anymore because of that, but we’ve started something at our place. Every Easter, all Annie’s family and my family are here. We put up a soccer table, we get two trophies made up, get them engraved - two nice big trophies. We get a plaque on the wall and every Easter we cook something different to eat, like this year we had camel. We also have a soccer match and we make teams and it gets quite intense, a lot of screaming, a lot of shouting, everybody wants these trophies. Everybody wants an Easter trophy and there are a lot of accusations. Cheating, if you get away with it good on you, but you just get that trophy. And then, we record it - it’s all filmed and it’s just amazing. And then at the end of the night, we have a big slide show of twenty-five years of recording my family and friends.... we see shots that haven’t been seen for ten, fifteen, twenty years literally. And so it’s a very traditional thing, very traditional. (Joe)
Bronek, in a similar way, is also undergoing a constructivist process of identity, through the re-creation and collection of artefacts relevant to his father’s life. By collecting items of significance from his father’s war years, Bronek is able to create tangible connections for his children and re-enforce the form and substance of his own deceased father’s lived experience.

*It’s all wartime stuff you know. Probably the most significant thing we’ve got is dad’s flight logs from, you know, being a Spitfire pilot. That’s probably the most significant thing. So there’s nothing that goes back to their father’s generation or anything. And that’s probably been the motivation for me ….. it was to go and buy the badges and the medals and everything that my grandfather and my father all had. Yeah, I’ve collected all of those things. Like my grandfather was in the Polish-Russian war in 1921, so you know I went and found out what medals he had and bought those medals ….. they’re not his but…yeah, sort of recreating them. I mean, I guess a big one for me is: Polish pilots used to have a dagger, you know, a ceremonial sort of dagger. Rare as hen’s teeth to get, but then when I was in the UK I was able to find two of them. A pre-war one and then a wartime one, so yeah you know, collecting those things that actually belong. (Bronek)*

Items from his father’s past are not only of emotional value to Bronek’s own sense of identity; but through his own past, he intends to transfer the continuum of family history to his children, made real by the connections of collected artefacts:

*There aren’t many people out there who can go yeah, what did your dad do? He was a Spitfire pilot. You know, it’s a pretty sort of glamorous, romanticised bit of history. I’m not really a collector now…..I’m not really a horder of things now, but there are also things that I wouldn’t let go of. I think they’ll probably sit there until it’s time for my kids to want to rediscover that. And then they almost become like teaching aides for … when they want to learn about it. …. So yeah, I sort of see it as a way of connecting you know, the next generation back. (Bronek)*

As suggested by McAdams (1996): “The stories we create influence the stories of other people, those stories give rise to still others, and soon we find meaning and connection within a web of story making and story living” (p. 37).
Reflections on photography and creativity

Through the connections of family and culture, the expectations arrived at as a result of individual personal associations and general social interactions, help form our sense making mechanisms. We observe, we feel, we act and we reflect; and in so doing, we reflexively construct our sense of who we are. Channelling our life experience and observations of those around us into a creative process can take many forms. As suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1996a) "creativity is a central source of meaning in our lives" and that "most of the things that are interesting, important, and human are the result of creativity" (p. 36). However, an individual journey into creative expression takes a unique path. The story behind the circumstances of how Joe came to be involved with learning the guitar exemplifies the many forces at play:

> My father bought my older brother the best piano accordion, squeeze box that money could buy. My father had to work for many weeks to buy this piano accordion for my brother and he had this thing that my brother is going to be the best piano accordion player in Australia. Because back then there were a lot of piano accordion clubs in Melbourne and they were very, you know, it was the thing to be in, the piano accordion club. And so there was this huge expectation for my brother to be this piano accordion player. My brother has no...not one... cell in his body that’s musically inclined. I just remember coming home everyday from school and watching my brother practice and literally tears coming out of his eyes while he’s playing. I mean it was the most miserable thing. ..... So one day, when I finally bought my own guitar, saved twenty cents a day for maybe a 28 dollar guitar, with my own money,....and I came home with this guitar. My father looked at me.... like what did you waste your money on that for? (Joe)

Joe’s journey into creative expression began with that guitar; in spite of, or perhaps even because of, his father’s negativity. The story he relates is an example of what McAdams (1996a) terms “nuclear episodes”, which can be considered as distinct scenes that stand out in a life story: “These reconstructed scenes typically affirm self-perceived continuity or change in the Me over time” (p. 308). Through the telling of that story, Joe affirms the importance of creativity for him as an individual, and how his sense of self is thereby defined. As McAdam (1996a) suggests:
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

Therefore, what may be most important in a nuclear episode is not so much what actually happened in the past but what the memory of the key event symbolizes today in the context of the overall life narrative. (p. 309)

Carolyn, reflecting on her particular creative journey, finds it not dissimilar to her early years of play as a child:

*It’s an on-going play really. And sometimes, I think I would relate my creativity to when I was a kid…. I would go out and play. It’s the same kind of thing. I kind of do it with more... sometimes, with more varied intent; but very often I do it to discover what will happen when I do this. Especially with photographs, you never know what you’re going to get, and there is that element of surprise and the unconscious. I do find what I do on an intellectual level or a perceptual level, but the actual physical act when it works is always a very pleasant surprise and I love that. That’s a kind of drug, a drug of choice. It’s a high. (Carolyn)*

By suggesting that financial reward is not a major motivating force, as Carolyn does in the following passage, she gives further emphasis to the notion that identity is actively being created through her perceptions of the creative experience. This becomes a two-way interaction that may begin at any stage in the perceptual process: that is, through creativity, identity is constructed and configured, but it is also from identity that the outcomes of creative expression are given tangible form:

*What I find really interesting, and I suppose this is the drug, is that it’s a bit of a spiral. Things don’t often work out in the way that you initially conceive them and the difference between the image you have in your mind and the final outcome is really an exciting journey.....I find that a drug really. It makes you want to do it even though there are no other rewards in a sense. I don’t care whether my work .... I’m not really interested in selling my work. Sometimes I don’t want to sell it because I would rather keep it. It’s not why I do it. (Carolyn)*

Carolyn’s photographic work draws heavily from her relationship with water. Much of her imagery is based on the sensual, languid, shapes and moods found within the fluidity of liquids. As she reflects on aspects that may have influenced her creative vision, Carolyn draws from elements of her childhood:
I’ve always felt a bit uncomfortable in water ….. I think that definitely makes me different. Because most Australians can swim and grew up with the water; and I didn’t. Plus, ... I had a.... when I learnt to swim, I remember this; when I learnt to swim as a kid I had some kind of ear, not just an infection, I had something really seriously wrong with my ear and I was advised not to get my ears wet. Well, my mum was advised for me not to get my ears wet, so I didn’t really learn to swim. Although it was more swimming with caution, so I didn’t have a gay abandonment with water like most Aussie children would. And as I said before, there were all these stories of drowning in the pool. My first husband did a lot of windsurfing and that was something that I never mastered. So we spent a lot of time on the water with friends and we would have holidays on the water. And, you know they would go off and windsurf and I would take photographs. So I was always near the water. I loved the light, the ambiance, but I was quite happy to paddle and splash around. Although, I’m going to deal with that, I might do some diving in the near future, so that might change things. I might have to find my sea legs. So I think there’s a sort of......because I feel uneasy with it, it stirs my imagination. (Carolyn)

By contrast, James’ photography is often very structured and precise. In this passage he relates a particularly successful occasion, where he was able to craft an award winning image from a collection of disparate metallic elements:

I mean, if I’m able to draw on a particular shot for example: an experience, like going a long way back, but just that nice simple little steel shot that I did. Just being given five or six... ten elements from the client and say here, you make the front cover, it’s up to you what you do with it. And just being able to sit there and start, you know, at a point and work and fine tune and work and fine tune. And I remember distinctly at the time, I had no other instructions. And it was nice because I was just working on this thing and I was taking my time, there was no rush, there were no restraints on time. I spent a couple of days on it. It was.... it came together really nicely and then when I got the first trannie back, it looked fantastic. And then I made little adjustments, and that was it. (James)

When reflecting on how he felt at the time, James indicates a sense of order and structure that perhaps came from his earliest experiences:
That geometric, sort of beautiful, constructed sort of world, that I created with these bits of steel; says something about me. In that I like a regimented ..... I like things to be organised. A sense of order, and that’s part of my character coming out. But whether it be the science background, or whether it be the order, of you know, the religion that I was brought up in. The orthodox faith is a very ordered world, nothing has changed in the orthodox faith and the liturgy, is still very much the way it was done six hundred years ago. And it’s funny, it’s not necessarily being, you know ...... there’s nothing churchy about my image.... but what I’m saying is there’s a sense of order, a sense of discipline. (James)

Coupled with the sense of satisfaction the creation of this image gave him, was also the recognition it bestowed. Such positive affirmation re-enforces feelings and emotions that contribute to the construction of self, often within the Freudian notion of the subconscious. The nature and role of the subconscious has been significantly revised since Freud first introduced it in his work over a hundred years ago, with more recent approaches tending towards a cultural and social, constructionist view (Chodorow, 1999; Giddens, 1991; Lacan, 1997). However, psychoanalytic theorists still largely subscribe to the notion suggested by Lupton (1998) that emotion is central to understanding motivation and action. Creative expression as a form of action can also be linked to emotion, as demonstrated by James when he relates feelings of satisfaction he achieved through one of his favourite images:

I look back at all my favourite images and there’s a sense of order and design about the ones that are my favourites. And creating a sense of order with these bits of steel made me feel really, you know, I felt good about what I was creating. And it’s funny, but I knew I was on a good thing. And then the validation of all that was when I entered it into the award, and I won an award a year later and I got a gold award. And that’s about the only gold I’ve ever got in anything; but that is a pinnacle.... that is a pinnacle. (James)

Heather’s creative journey was one of searching. She talks about a need for creative expression, but without knowing exactly what form it will take:

Yeah, yeah I remember really being creative from quite a young age. Like painting being important as a kid, not being happy with how good my paintings were. Whereas most people don’t have standards for children’s paintings, but I did (laughs). Like my mum used to knit a lot and crochet a lot but she wasn’t
just your average knitter. Mum could knit... her record was knitting a jumper in a day. That’s... that’s a lot of knitting, so kind of... there was creativity in her way, from mum. I was looking for a creative outlet, I wanted to be good at something that I could express myself with, whether it was painting or drawing or playing a musical instrument. (Heather)

Oh gosh being creative... I think at a younger age it was something I could express my feelings through. So, you know, if you’re upset or sad you can play the piano and get those feelings out. Also visually, something that was exciting and interesting and other people could look at, and relate to, or admire. Yeah, so it’s like a visual thing, more so for me. (Heather)

Heather’s linking of emotion and imaginative construction is reflected in the notion that emotion is a conduit to a deeper psychic reality (Chodorow, 1999) which is utilized by the individual to make sense of the world. As suggested by Dirkx (2001):

Our initial construal of meaning within particular emotional situations is largely an act of fantasy and imagination, guided by our emotional connection with both our inner and outer worlds. They help us understand and make sense of our selves, our relationships with others, and the world we inhabit. (p. 66)

For Heather, the need for a connection between her sense of self and the world to which she belonged, led her to choose photography as the creative medium that best enabled her own subjective construction of meaning.

Even though it can be said that “through the image, emotions help us connect the inner dynamics of the self with the outer objects of our world” (Dirkx, 2001, p. 67), at times, cultural influences can play an even more significant role. Dominic’s creative explorations began at school, but were at times a marker for his separation from the prevailing school culture:

Honestly, we had the cutest art teacher in form one, two and three and that’s when I started getting interested in art. I didn’t really start getting creative... Oh I was always a daydreamer, and I’ve always sort of did things like played visual games with myself by lining things up and making different patterns and looking at shadows and things. But... you know it wasn’t the place, because the school was a very sports orientated school, it wasn’t the place to be sitting
... it just wasn’t the done thing to be sitting in an art room, you know. You either... if you were in the art room or in the science club during lunchtime, you got beaten up (laughs) you know. You should be out playing British Bulldog with the boys with the Anglos... or soccer with the European kids you know. But fortunately somebody built this dark room in the studio, which I stumbled across and um... that’s how it all started. (Dominic)

In my own reflections, I saw creativity as an ability to find solutions in unlikely ways and in unlikely places:

I know I’ve always been bored very easily, so repetition and doing things that are monotonous and repetitive just don’t interest me. I’ve always wanted to do something that involved change. I’ve never been scared of change, in fact I’ve always been excited by the idea of change, and I have immensely admired people who I see as being particularly creative in maybe non-traditional ways. A friend of mine back in my student days....we used to be impoverished and we used to always work on our cars because they were never going properly. He was one of these guys that had a very good mechanical grounding, as his dad was so mechanical.....But what I used to really admire about my friend Richard, was that he used to be able to solve problems. Trying to battle certain bolts and undo certain bits of the car that weren’t functioning, and you couldn’t get off because you wouldn’t have the right tool for it or whatever. He would always find a way of doing it. And whether it was a really big whack with a hammer in the right spot, or whether it was something more sophisticated, he’d find a way to do it. I used to think that was incredibly creative, because he wouldn’t follow the manuals....because we didn’t have the money to buy all the right tools and all the rest of it. But he would always find a way of doing it. I used to think it was very creative. (Les)

Bronek’s creativity grew from a sense of freedom he felt when he was able to indulge his creative pursuits as a teenager:

I think that period, which I was talking about before you know, sort of when I just went off and experimented by myself and did my own thing. I think that was really important to where I ended up. I think having that very sort of, not a strict up bringing, but having a very family orientated type up bringing, and then having those few years when that was removed..... I just sort of went
wild and did it all my way. I think, that’s really made me sort of appreciate that freedom of being an artist, you know. (Bronek)

Defined through the major event of the death of his father, Bronek was catapulted into a new existence requiring a major adjustment to his sense of identity. Traumatic as the loss of his parent was, it nevertheless enabled him to choose new directions, behaviours and thinking; that contributed to a construction of self very different to before. A sense of identity that was able to deal with the new world order he found himself within.

I think it was freedom. It was the feeling that I’d gotten through this period that was very difficult with my father dying; quite successfully. And you know, we were still all on our feet and sort of feeling quite arrogant about that. You know, a bit indestructible. Sort of like all children have that thing, they’re indestructible; they can do anything, but really exaggerated. And at the time I was working in a mini lab and earning well. For back then. So you know; I had the cash, I had the car; it was what the hell I wanted when I wanted. I felt indestructible and I think it was really.... it’s the type of thing that if you’d taken it too far you could fall off the deep end. But I didn’t, you know. (Bronek)

Bronek’s story of his life after the passing of his father, encapsulated in the preceding passage; is an example of the McAdamian notion of identity actually being the life story. At the very least, the ongoing construction of a “narrative identity“ is shown as an affirmation of the goals and concerns that are important to Bronek as he reflects on his past and looks to his future. As explained by Singer (2004):

> Each addition to the ongoing life narrative offers another opportunity for individuals to understand where they belong in the world and to determine what takes them closer or further away from the goals to which they aspire. The progressive momentum is from story making to meaning making to wisdom accumulation that provides individuals with a surer and more graceful footing on life’s path. (p. 446)

In a manner that mirrors this trajectory, Joe saw his early creative journey as a dam waiting to burst. From the time he saved up and bought the guitar, to the period in his life when he was able to move beyond the shy introvert he was at school, Joe constructed a new sense of who he was:
I think being that loner, being that person who was you know detached from the world. Yeah I think all that time was kept......all the stuff that wasn’t coming out, all the creativity that wasn’t coming out, is actually being you know, stored away, stored away, stored away. And then just bang, okay, there’s no time to muck around. Because, when I turned eighteen, I got the car, started music, the band..... six months in the band practising guitar. It was like this explosion of this personality, confidence and music, photography, just the whole thing. I think it was an advantage in way. (Joe)

Throughout this chapter, the lives of the participants have been laid bare through their stories. In particular, their narratives have been examined in terms of their childhood influences, their sense of identification and connectedness to family and ethnicity they have told have enabled and enriched understandings of self-identity. In the following chapter, I will elaborate the role of narrative in this process and discuss how narrative is utilized to order experience, validate consciousness and construct identity.
Chapter Eight: The conscious journey

In this chapter, the means by which we use narrative to inform our awareness of identity is examined and its relationship to the participants and the model constructed in Chapter Four is explicated. Through narrative, the ontology of consciousness is made real to us, and the relationship between lived experience and the awareness of consciousness is given form. Identity, indicated in the left side of the model, is construed in the “System of Cultural Identity” and the “System of Social Identity”. In this instance, the nodes of “Memory”, “Environment”, “Inherited Characteristics”, “Relationships”, “History”, “Milestones” and “Inherited Traditions”, together with their dynamic connections within each sub-system, illuminate the heuristic power and meaning made visible through the model.

In the world of our existence, we live out the stories of our lives. Narrative is a crucial constituent of our means of awareness of existence; that is, the awareness of mind necessary to be able to know, in a Cartesian sense, that we exist. The purpose of an examination of narrative within the context of this study is to further elaborate upon the mechanisms that support the hypothesis of the research.
The contention that cultural stress or dislocation creates the necessary conditions for a heightening of creativity is based on the need of the self to maintain a sense of unity or consistency, within the parameters of normal cyclical and developmental change. Put simply, an unusual level of stress or disruption to the framing of identity results in a greater level of awareness and imaginative cognition as the self attempts to create a consistent, stable coherence. The role of narrative as a guiding force in our concept of selfhood is critical to this process, and an examination of this mechanism is a key component of this research.

Self identity and narrative

Guiding the underpinnings of this study and the reasoning behind the chosen methodology is the implicit proposition that the self can be considered as narrative in form. Bruner (1994) suggests that at its core, the self has a narrative structure, in that it relies on the telling of stories to explain itself to others. He notes: “....another property of the Self as we encounter it in ourselves and in others. It is ‘storied’, or narrative, in structure.” (p. 43) Of even more significance, he goes on to say that these stories conform to the same notions of genre that are familiar to us within literature.

When you ask people what they are really like, they tell a great many stories involving the usual elements of narrative. (cf. Burke, 1945; Bruner, 1990): there is an agent engaged in action deploying certain instruments for achieving a goal in a particular scene, and somehow things have gone awry between these elements to produce trouble. One encounters the hero tale, the Bildungsroman, the tale of the victim, the love story, and so on. If one ever doubted Oscar Wilde’s claim that life imitates art, reading autobiographies lessens the doubt. (p. 43)

This use of narrative to describe ourselves to others enables the self to take on different characters, thus having a capacity of adapting to the audience to which it is playing. The notion that we can portray different sides of ourselves when in the company of different people, family, friends, workmates and others implies the self is contingent on the role we are playing.

This view was initially put forward by Mead (1934) who suggested that meanings we apply to other people together with the impact of the surrounding environment, gives rise to the individual's behaviour. Action, decision and communication are the products of the interpretation of surroundings and interactions with others, which
in turn can then produce and influence subsequent behaviour. Such interactions include the notion that a person can take up the role of another individual. This involves representing the self to others in an alternative social role, taking on other interpretations and points of view, in fact taking on a surrogate narrative. This is further pursued by Natanson (1973) particularly with regard to the role language plays in this process, when he states “The human animal has the unique capacity of isolating his responses to environmental stimuli and controlling those responses in the very act of isolation; he is able to pick out meanings in his responses and to indicate these meanings both to himself and to other selves: this ability is the product of language” (p. 7).

How is it possible then to reconcile an adaptive self, to a self that has some form of continuity and consistency? Indeed, if we are many things to many people, as indicated by the stories of ourselves we transmit and offer to others, how can we hold to any basis of reality in our self concept and not head towards a confusing, conflicting set of multiple personalities?

Marcus & Nurius (1986) have proposed that rather than the self being one single narrative, we in fact have a collection of “possible selves” that are available to us in response to our needs and aspirations. Indeed, these possible, or “mini selves”, can also be brought into play through the external stimuli of culture, as suggested by Mead (1934), by society as suggested by Barclay (1994) and by the individual, as suggested by Albright (1994). At all times, these possible self narratives combine in a reflexive manner, in such a way as to be able to lead towards a consistently defined and stable version of the self.

As an example, consider the response given by Louis, to the question of the cultural grouping with which he identifies. His answer, resonating with my own experience, is one commonly felt by those living through the dual cultural influences of society and background.

I suppose, more than anything else it’s that we have the freedom to be what we want to be....I think that’s the great thing about Australia. And for me to be called.... because I am happy to be Australian,... because I’m happy to be a part of a society that allows you to do that. So to Australians I’m Italian, and to Italians I’m Australian,...that is the upbringing. But when you’re in a group of people who are putting down the Italians, you’d be an Italian. If you’re with a group of Italians who are putting down the Australians you’d be an Australian. (Louis)
In this situation, Louis is demonstrating aspects of two different narratives of his life, his Italian narrative and his Australian narrative. Such multiple narratives do not always exist within the self at the same time. It is often a transition from one self narrative to another, each adding to a larger, more complete narrative of lived experience. Consider the manner in which Bronek alludes to the shift from one narrative to another, via the vehicle of altered characteristics of the hero of the story; that is, of himself.

I really was quite sort of independent and really did my own thing and kept my mother in the dark as much as possible as to what was going on. And you know, physically in the house I had a whole section of the house, it was an old garage that was converted and that was my space and you know I did lots and lots of art and painted and played bass very badly and took lots of drugs. So yeah, I think if I was going to do a portrait from that period it would be very much, very much that sort of independent defiant “bohemian-esque" sort of artist-type thing. Probably earlier it would be a very different sort of portrait, the way I saw myself when my father was still in the scene it would have been a lot more regimented, a lot more disciplined, you know that sort of, quite different between the two, there was a huge shift after he died. (Bronek)

Over time this self-narrative can be seen as a complex story, with a traditional structure of a beginning, middle and end. The complexities, twists, turns and side plots, when viewed externally, portray a continuum of plot, character and perhaps even genre, that when analysed over the individual’s lifetime, form the ingredients of a consistent story. It may be taking the argument too far to suggest that identity is based entirely on the notion of life narratives, but it clearly has a significant part to play. As Neisser (1994) suggests: "Self knowledge depends on perception, conceptualization, and private experience as well as narrative. Self-narratives are a basis but not the basis of identity” (p. 1). As Bruner (1994) explains: “...the narrative mode is one of the few ways we have for organising indefinitely long diachronic sequences involving the activities of ourselves, our fellows, and the symbolic world of culture” (p. 52).

Therefore, it would be consistent to postulate that if not for the narrative form of selfhood, identity would become a random, chaotic, transitory set of experiences and stimuli; which pass in time and space without any further transition, reflection, elaboration, debate or sharing with others. As Dennett (1989) suggests, this unrealistic mode of experience, perhaps adequate to describe the lives of spiders, cows,
birds and other animals, is not characteristic of human nature. We are, through our very fabric, story telling beings with lives that are not just a continuum of experience or linked, separate events; but ones where our past and future structure our present. We as individuals typically care about our lives as a whole. As Taylor (1989) claims: “We find the sense of life through articulating it” (p. 18) and this holistic structure to our identity is enabled by the narrative form.

Organising experience and ordering memory

How then do we create this holistic structure? One answer is the use of narrative to assign a linear structure to our lives. This structure becomes available to us as a means of coming to terms with time and the temporal nature of existence, or as Ricoeur (1991) expresses it so succinctly, time is “both what passes and flows away and, on the other hand, what endures and remains” (p. 22). It is this notion of existence, elucidated through the temporality of time, that is so difficult for humans to deal with in any reflections upon their day to day lives. One of the ways that we as individuals interpret narrative, is as a tool to assist us in formulating an organisational base, which then enables us to better deal with this conundrum. Ricoeur (1991) has been most important as an advocate for this notion of narrative; that is, narrative as a means by which we attempt to deal with the paradox that underlies our temporal nature of existence.

Ricoeur takes this even further, by proposing the notion of small fragments, or narrative parcels that are essential for any potential understandings we may bring to bear. He suggests that through these narrative fragments we are able to construct complete, mini stories, or plots; bite size portions with a beginning, middle and end, which allows us to deal with the indefinable nature of the time continuum. This is the notion of “emplotment” as Ricoeur has termed it, which he postulates is the foundation of our story telling.

Heather shares one such “mini story” when discussing her relationship with her mother:
I think one of the fondest memories I have of mum is: I moved back into mum and dad’s home, I don’t know, in my mid twenties or late twenties and I had a Cat Stevens CD. And when it would hit a certain song, Cat Stevens actually had a Greek background, and he would... it was called “Ruby My Love” and it would actually break into a traditional Greek melody and I’d come running out of my bedroom in my bath robe or whatever. Mum would come running out of wherever she was, we’d not say a word, not say hello, what do you think, shall we dance, nothing. We’d grab each other hands, do a Greek dance around the lounge room and then when the song finished we’d just part and walk away. I still remember that and I think that was really cool. (Heather)

Telling stories in Ricoeur’s view, is a synthesis between elements, “a synthesis between the events or incidents which are multiple and the story which is unified and complete;...the plot serves to make one story out of the multiple incidents or, if you prefer, transforms the many incidents into one story” (p. 21). Or as Erben (1998) describes it in his discussion of biographical methodologies, “Ricoeur is saying that time is the universal, defining architecture of human experience, and that it is only made comprehensible in terms of narratives” (p. 13).

One thing is clear about our lives: we are aware of a yesterday, a today and a tomorrow. As Neisser (1994) says: “We have known it for a long time - perhaps since we were 2 or 3 years old, though it didn’t seem important then. Knowing it, each of us is a special kind of self: a human self,” (p. 16). To be human in Neisser’s view, involves the clear understanding that we have had a past, and will have a future; although of course most people have no accurate awareness of the length of that future. The temporality of our lives is intrinsic to this awareness, and it is via a narrative structure we are able to fashion day to day events into finite stories, made meaningful via an adherence to a recognisable narrative pattern of beginnings and endings.

Through stories which assimilate lived experience into comprehensible form, everyday existence, founded upon the continuum of time, can be made meaningful. That is not to say all narratives to be meaningful must be linear in nature. Clearly, some of the best narratives to be found in modern literature are composed around fractured and disjointed moments of story. What is relevant here is the enabling of an understanding of time’s essential temporality through narrative, and how this sits with the “eternal” present of consciousness. A suggestion voiced by Teichert (2004) but
readily accepted by many others, is that “Narrative is the bridge between time as an objective feature of reality and time as a form of subjective experience” (p. 177).

In fact, the narrative structure itself is even sometimes difficult to distinguish from the act of living in the world. Bruner (1991) identifies this by explaining, “As with all accounts or forms of representation of the world, I shall have a great difficulty in distinguishing what may be called the narrative mode of thought from the forms of narrative discourse” (p. 5). He even suggests a further blurring of this separation by pointing out that “…just as our experience of the natural world tends to imitate the categories of familiar science, so our experiences of human affairs comes to take the form of the narrative we use in telling about them” (p. 5).

If we consider that a narrative is an account of a sequence of events occurring over time, it may conform to multiple modalities of any sequencing convention that are understood by the audience. The concepts of a temporal “flashback” in a film, or multiple time environments applying to characters in a novel, are not in themselves problematic for appropriate meaning to be articulated and understood; as long as the conventions of these mechanisms are clearly laid out to the viewer or reader, and understood in the culture. As Barthes (1975) puts it:

> There is of course a sort of freedom to narrative (similar to the freedom experienced by any speaker with regard to language), but this freedom is limited in a literal sense: by the stringent code of language at one end, by the stringent code of narrative at the other, with a sort of slack in between (p. 270).

Through these accepted codes, narratives are made meaningful, and through this meaning an understanding of the linear temporality from which they derive is made clear. The notion of “flashback” is understood only as it relates to a linear modality of existence, referenced by the singular and unequivocal nature of human life from birth to the Heideggarian notion of “being-toward-death”. But narrative also enables us to consider a future progression of experience. It enables an exploration of the interrelation of past events, with a current present, together with a perceived future. It enables the formulation of future events through imaginary self-narratives and potential narrative scenarios.

The ‘emplotments’ of these narratives, situated in a future not contained in the present of consciousness, is understood in terms of the linearity of our perceptions of time. As re-enforced by Teichert (2004):
Narrativity concerns not only past actions and events but also gives shape to the future. Conceived in this way it is evident that there is narrativity even without any explicit narrative text. Narrative in this perspective is not only a way of representing past facts that are themselves in part independent of narrative modes of thought and speech, but a way of forming expectations about future events. (p. 183)

Such an expectation is given through this answer by James as he considers the emotional response he might have when he visits Greece for the first time.

*I think going back to Greece for me, or going to Greece for the first time I should say, is going to be a very interesting project to see what emotions are actually stirred and what is unearthed and how I feel about things. Things may come to a head, I might turn into a bawling, babbling emotional person when I go. I might see my father’s sisters for the first time and start crying my head off you know, for an inexplicable reason. Seeing where my parents were raised, you know, in the village that we spoke about in the first interview and seeing the abandoned village and just, finally coming into contact with their links could open up a whole Pandora’s Box. It might change the way I feel, it might be a real turning point so that will be interesting to see. (James)*

The narrative of James’ future emotions, sits within the frame of his past and is made sense of through the linearity of perceptions of time. In the Ricoeurian notion of narrative, the self-narrative is the platform where temporal consciousness plays an essential role in the shaping of identity: “Indeed I take temporality to be the structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent” (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 169). The structural nature of the narrative, as it progresses along its emplotments towards a storied conclusion, becomes the linear reference used to understand the temporal nature of existence. Ricoeur (1990) states: “Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal experience” (p. 52).

An extension of this narrative form can be considered as an ability to assist in organising the cornucopia of human experience into a unified and yet constantly evolving model of existence. This notion is in many ways the hub around which all human activity and awareness is based. Similar in some ways to the Ricoeurian notion of the
temporality of time, this sense of the narrative is firmly based on an organisational structure which in many ways builds on temporal frameworks.

Anchored around the idea that individuals are able to weave their own life events into an ongoing coherent state, MacIntyre (1981) explains that this is how we create our own sense of identity, so that our human action is lived through narrative, “the narratives we live out” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 216). Narrative is the process by which we continually order and re-order experience; which in turn goes to make up a more cogent story of us as individuals. It is precisely this coherence or unity that makes us who we are; that is, the self is in effect a construct of this ongoing narrative.

As MacIntyre suggests:

In what does the unity of an individual life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life. To ask “What is the good for me?” is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion. To ask “What is the good for man?” is to ask what all answers to the former question must have in common. (p. 203)

Through such ideas, MacIntyre puts forward the argument that narrative is the organising principle of human action, and personal identity is resolved by a unity of life given form in ongoing personal narratives. He argues that narrative structure is the organising principle of experience, ordered via our intentions (beginnings) and our goals (ends). He goes even further, by forwarding the notion that it is through our lived narratives that we can better understand the lives of others. Thus he claims: “It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out, that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others” (p. 197).

Postulating narrative structure as the organising principle of our actions and experience, MacIntyre contends that it is precisely the unity of character that a story requires to be intelligible to others, as well as oneself, that constitutes the identity of the individual. In this way he differs from Ricoeur, in that MacIntyre’s emphasis is more upon the nature of character, or the Bakhtin notion of “hero”, rather than the temporally defined nature of the narrative form itself. Without this unity, MacIntyre argues, there cannot be an ongoing story, certainly not one that “makes sense”. Or, as he puts it, “personal identity is simply that identity presupposed by the unity of character which the unity of narrative requires. Without such unity there would not be subjects of whom stories could be told” (p. 203)
The Ricoeurian view that our narratives are organised into small plots (or emplotments) to enable us to better digest our narratives into a more holistic totality, sits extremely comfortably with MacIntyre’s views, and in fact complements them.

As Erben (1998) explains, “individuals create plots for themselves out of occurrences in their own lives in order to manage the process of living” (p. 14). The grand narratives that are our lives are too complex and involved to configure into one simple story, with one constant character, the self, going about its existence, its actions, its experiences in a unified manner. But by creating subsets of our story, or, as Erben suggests by selecting “from a bewildering array of actions and events those that can compose a sustainable narrative” (p. 14), which in turn form the episodes or chapters of our ongoing lives, we are better able to organise our sense of self into a unified, coherent persona.

The formulation of individual memory events is complex, and involves integration within an overall autobiographical knowledge database. For each individual memory to have meaning, it must conform in the broadest sense to the accepted notions of story. Fragments of memory, in themselves usually making sense to the individual; are able to do so only in the context of a broader, continuous narrative. For example, (to take an extreme but personal occurrence) if we are able to bring to mind a childhood memory of hiding in an air raid shelter as shells exploded above ground, such a memory would not make sense if we could not contextualise that event with our past history. It is only because I know, for example, that as a three year old I lived in Budapest at the time of the Hungarian Uprising, that this memory fragment could possibly make sense to me. However, if I was born in Australia and spent my childhood exclusively in Melbourne, such a memory fragment would be extremely disconcerting, as the “remembered” event could not have been possible. My knowledge database, in that example, would somehow be inaccurately giving rise to a memory that does not confirm an ongoing, coherent narrative. Because of this disjunction, I would be alerted to the fact that somehow this memory is not real, or has somehow been constructed in error. In this way, the consistency of a coherent narrative acts as an agent of meaning-making, filtering out improbable memory fragments and maintaining a cohesive sense of self.

Barclay (1994b) elaborates on this notion of the “remembered self” by adding another element. He suggests that a further sense of internal cohesion is offered through the public commonality of individual stories, as these stories are shared and transmitted to others.
There are known and verifiable events on one’s life to be accounted for at different times and for different reasons; and, for most individuals, there are needs to satisfy a sense of personal coherence and integrity, at least as these needs are understood in most Western cultures. Each of these constraints on possible self-narratives is limited even further by the more public negotiations associated with establishing and maintaining self-legitimacy and acceptance of one’s self-narrative by others who share a common culture. (p. 59)

Consistent with this notion is the need for individuals to maintain a sense of cohesion as a basic cognitive function. The organisation of autobiographical memory and remembered events, can indeed be altered at times, in an attempt by the individual to hold faith with a consistent narrative. As Bruner (1994) suggests: “Could there be any human activity in which the drive to reduce cognitive dissonance is so great as in the domain of ‘telling about your life’?” (p. 47) It is through the construction and reconstruction of autobiographical memory that this cognitive process can occur.

False memories can at times be as real to the teller as any other memories might appear to be. Through the social interactions of the individual, as well as the need to maintain a more or less consistent view of the self, false memories are usually filtered out. As Neisser (1994) suggests, when discussing the fallibility, or potential inaccuracy, of autobiographical memory:

The self that is remembered today is not the historical self of yesterday, but only a reconstructed version. A different version - a new remembered self - may be reconstructed tomorrow. How different? I myself am biased toward continuity, and tend to think of most remembered selves as fairly stable from one day to the next. (p. 8)

**Mode of consciousness**

Underlying the theoretical basis of this study is the perception of consciousness “felt” by the individual. In order to result in cognitive change, possible cultural dislocation experienced by the individual must be perceived in some manner; even if that perception itself is a response to external factors. Examination of the ontology of self and its link to perception and imagination will be discussed in Chapter Eleven. However an examination of how a transcendental self, constructed through lived
experience may be perceived, is also of key importance to this study. The role narrative plays in ontological perception requires further explanation.

The proposition that the self is formed through our capacity to compose, tell and retell stories has been supported by Taylor (1989) from the point of morality, MacIntyre (1981) from an organisational viewpoint, Riceour (1991) from the temporal standpoint, and significantly by Dennett (1989), whose view can be summarised by the proposition that consciousness is an abstraction. He contends that consciousness is built from a continual narrative of one’s life that is told and retold to ourselves and to others. As he explains when comparing humans with ants, crabs and spiders:

We, in contrast, are almost constantly engaged in presenting ourselves to others, and to ourselves, and hence representing ourselves - in language and gesture, external and internal. The most obvious difference in our environment that would explain this difference in our behaviour is the behaviour itself. Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee and conspecifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spiderwebs into self-protective strings of narrative. Our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is not building dams or spinning webs, but telling stories - and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others - and ourselves - about who we are. (Dennett, 1989, p. 7)

Where Dennett’s view differs from that of Ricoeur and MacIntyre - and how this notion of narrative translates directly into a sense of self - is in the functionalist approach he takes towards his interpretation of the human organism. Dennett’s main thesis revolves around the contention that people are biological machines whose behaviour is controlled by the brain, and that most importantly this brain activity is multifaceted. In addition, to use a computer analogy, he contends that the brain has considerable processing power and analogously to that of software operating systems running multi-processors, the brain has much of its interpretation running in parallel. Therefore to make sense of this cacophony of activity, consciousness depends on a constant “editorial revision” resulting in what could be thought of as a continuous stream of narrative fragments.

He suggests: “At any point in time there are multiple ‘drafts’ of narrative fragments at various stages of editing in various places in the brain” (Dennett, 1991, p. 113). This editorial revision is brought about by the ability of the self to revert to a semblance
of consistency, a self-protection that enables a centre of narrative gravity to be created. In Dennett’s view, the self is defined by means of this centre of narrative gravity. In many ways this proposition is strongly allied to the sense of narrative as an organisational tool, helping create a coherent sense of self as suggested by MacIntyre (1981), Ricoeur (1981) and others; but Dennett (1991) holds that it is the narrative itself, through a “narrative centre of gravity”, that in fact defines our consciousness. And like a physical centre of gravity, our consciousness cannot be seen or touched, or indeed accurately located within our brains; but nevertheless exists as the defining sense of mind.

**Therapeutic memory**

Whilst this study is not directly involved with therapeutic aspects of memory, there is an accepted place for its use as a powerful tool in therapy. Acting as a means of ordering and re-ordering memory to enable an epiphanic understanding to be reached, this aspect was initially proposed by Sigmund Freud, often referred to as the father of psychoanalysis. Freud (1976) was the first to systematically apply determinist principles to mental thought, and at the same time suggest that the broader spectrum of human behaviour is understandable in terms of mental processes that often remain hidden.

The Freudian notion of therapy, to make the unconscious conscious, as he put it, has since been rejected by behaviourists as too simplistic. Many believe that the unconscious is nothing more than that section of memory, or experience, we simply wish to, or actually have forgotten; and although this is in agreement with Freud’s (1975) views, his extra emphasis on the activities of the unconscious mind is now not considered useful by most therapists. However, his belief that episodic memory could be prompted through questioning, and that autobiographical memory could be re-ordered in such a way as to allow a better understanding, or at least a resolution of the event that created the memory; is now firmly entrenched at the core of modern psychiatric therapy.

When the individual is engaged in a therapy-based encounter, that is, engaged in a process of assigning new meanings to stored memory episodes through the telling of autobiographical stories, the very act of telling the episodes is in itself a re-ordering, or re-framing of those stories. In so doing, an epiphany or “turning point” is sometimes reached. “Turning points, in a word, construct emblems of narrative clarity in the teller’s history of Self” says Bruner (1994, p. 50). Freud’s legacy, rooted in the use of narrative and the telling of life stories is bound in the certainty
that the past is both the cause and the recipe for the future. His use of the “talking
cure” came from a conviction that the languages of the psyche, dreams and streams
of consciousness, can be expressed to others in a storied form, and can be inter-
preted, understood, or used to help assign meaning and clarity.

The current use of narrative style therapies have developed from a postmodern
recognition that Freud’s notions of self identity are too static, and that the self
is more likely to be reflexive and dynamically constructed as a narrative flow. A
deconstruction of parts of an internalised story can often reveal where an incorrect
or unsatisfactory interpretation of an experience can reside. Such an interpreta-
tion of a person’s story may simply have been created to bridge the coherence
of narrative the individual uses to validate a consistent self story or identity. The
therapist encourages the individual to re-author their own stories in a way that
acknowledges and affirms their own socially based, and individually constructed
sense of meaning. Such a conversation between therapist and patient, is in many
ways analogous to the everyday conversations between friends and intimates, the
nature of story telling that helps us form the basis of who we are.

Narratives of the visual

Through connections of family, society and culture, the meanings arrived at by our
individual, personal, associations and general social interactions, help form our
sense-making mechanisms. We observe, we feel, we act and we reflect; and in so
doing, in terms of the discourse of this study, we reflexively construct our sense of
who we are. Channelling life experiences and observations of those around us into
creative outcomes can take many forms, however this study takes particular interest
in visual outcomes, since its participants are photographers.

Central to the data gathering of the study is the requirement of the participating
photographers to produce three images. These images were requested as responses
to the following brief: produce three photographic representations that best indicate
aspects of yourself, your family or background, and your photographic practice. As a
photographer, I am able to analyse and treat these images as data, situated together
with the interviews that add further depth to the study. As discussed in more detail
in Chapter Six, the photographic artworks produced by the participants are repre-
sentational and meaningful on two levels. Firstly, they contain embedded narrative
representations chosen to communicate to the viewer the intended meanings attrib-
uted by the photographer. Secondly the images themselves are able to stimulate a
response directly in the viewer as a reaction to their visual content. Through this
process of metaphoric connection, often assisted by the instigation of an emotional response, the viewer is able to make sense of the images and thereby gain further insights into their own situations.

The role that emotion can play in this process is further discussed in Chapter Eleven, however the ability of an image to “resonate” or trigger an emotion from a relevant autobiographical memory, or a pleasing aesthetic in the viewer, heightens the narrative potential of the image. Barthes (1981) asks himself what he “knows” about a photographic image and suggests that “I observed that a photograph can be the object of three practices (or of three emotions, or of three intentions): to do, to undergo, to look” (p. 9).

Barthes goes on to differentiate between the function of the person taking the photograph, who he calls the “operator” and the person viewing the photograph, who he terms the “spectator”. He then analyses the effect a photograph has on the spectator by introducing the notions of “studium” and “punctum”. Through the photograph’s studium the spectator’s interest and response is aroused based on the cultural recognition of the intention of the photographer, whereas through its punctum the spectator goes beyond and confronts a more personal response: “punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (Barthes, 1981, p. 27). Through such responses, be they in Barthes’ terms studium or punctum, a photographic image is able to connect meaning with the viewer, and such meaning can itself be analysed and examined.

Heather’s creative journey was one of searching. She talks about a need for creative expression, but without knowing exactly what form it will take.

One of my girlfriends, Nicki, the octopus hater (laughs), played piano and I wished that I had a creative outlet like that. And I was looking for a creative outlet. I wanted to be good at something that I could express myself with, whether it was painting or drawing or playing a musical instrument. That was one of my reasons why I went back and did T.O.P. Because I was looking for a vehicle, yeah. (Heather)

Her image of self (Figure 8.1) depicts a portrait of a young woman wrapped in the cloak of masquerade. A young woman with an identity that is at once firm and strong, but also questioning and delicately poised with a searching gesture of the hand. Heather has used a revealing theatrical metaphor to represent the malleability of her identity.
Her choice of elements to represent her family and ethnic background (Figure 8.2), resonate with two clear messages. Firstly, the garish coloured tablecloth and patterned plate symbolising the discomfort she felt as a child dealing with the stereotypical, transplanted, aesthetic of the Greek immigrant (see Chapter 10). Secondly, the strong iconic nature of the Australian jam doughnut and “skippy” coffee mug, symbolising a need to belong and identify with the dominant culture of her environment.

As I got older I was quite self-conscious about being Greek, about being a Wog. And ... so like, I hated the floral carpet when I got older and I hated any colour combination that wasn’t low key or complimentary. And I think I’m probably even fussier than most people now that I’m a lot older. Kind of quite aware of: “does that colour clash or does it go?” You know? I think not wanting to stand out or be ostracised, or wanting to be laughed at by other people, that... we had these garish colours. (Heather)
These diverse elements, connected in the image through the missing bite taken from the doughnut, are strong metaphors for the dual nature of her identity. A nature that is in many ways comfortable with the straddling of two cultures, yet at the same time, only too aware of that same duality.

Both images are also able to connect on an emotional level, particularly with those viewers who are able to associate with aspects of either image, through either a similar past experience or perhaps an understanding of Heather’s expressive face or hand gesture.

Yenny perceives her creative directions as originating from her very early years. As a child she relates a very active imagination, filled with fantasy, and even an imaginary friend:

* I would do drawings at every restaurant, as most kids do I guess, ......but it was always very integrated. It was like when I was learning to write, I would have real problems writing things because I would always draw the letters. I wouldn’t write and it would take so long that I would never finish. But things looked very pretty. Now, my writing is shocking, but I think that’s where that whole picture-making, something, seeing...... But then there is this whole
other world, which probably started when I was around four and I had my imaginary friend ... totally illusionary. So it’s totally made up, and again that started to...... visually in ways.... again as any child does, drawing castles and whatever. But always very integrated and very detailed ...... fantasy worlds. And combining those two, I guess is something I still do. It’s my absolute dream and fantasy world. And comparing that, or combining that, with what you have in front of you in an everyday scenario. (Yenny)

The visual aspect of Yenny’s creative expression, erupting from her richly fashioned imaginative constructions, was at first shared with her love of music. However, as she explains it, the aspect of control and performance became important determinants in her choices:

One of the problems that I had with the violin was that I had amazing stage fright. So that posed a big problem. But that’s probably where.... well to be honest that’s probably where the main point came from......that I’m not going to go into music. Because I didn’t want to play in an orchestra forever and I couldn’t perform solo at that point anyway. But I still did like the whole stage thing, because I did theatre for a long time. And I actually really intended for a while to go into that on a serious level. And I think that’s where photography comes in, because photography is a theatrical medium, absolutely. But its a still medium where I guess..... again you have more control in a way. Because as an actor you’re really someone else’s puppet and you’re not, you’re not the one who’s actually creating the story. You’re just acting it out and I really wanted to be the one who was the executor, rather than just a puppet. (Yenny)
The image of self that Yenny has offered (Figure 8.3) is a very symbolic representation of landscape. Embedded in what at first glance appears to be a very controlled and serene image, is a clear disjunction that alerts the viewer to a level of uncertainty and intrigue. The cool, bluish, colour palette and the strong cloud formations provoke a mood of “danger, mystery and change”, as Yenny explains. The constructed nature of the image itself, illustrated by the dual horizons, is also resonant of the control Yenny has talked about in the past. Fashioning the landscape into a representation of her “fantasy world” is an ultimate expression of power, symbolising the journey she has taken.

Yenny’s choice of image to represent her background (Figure 8.4), is also resonant with similar subtexts. In this case the image is of the vineyards of her childhood outside Vienna, her “backyard” as she terms it.

The image has a similar duality, at one point representing a calm, serene and languid environment, yet there also exists a sense of mystery and hidden risk, represented by the twisted angular nature of the vines silhouetted against the barren sky. In addition, as Yenny describes, there is present in the image “a place for solitude, where one can create ones own world”. Even more than that however, the photograph represents a world that is itself constructed in a very overt manner, informed and manipulated by the visions of Yenny’s imagination.

By contrast, James’ photography is often very structured and precise. When reflecting on his photographic approach, James indicates a sense of order and structure that perhaps came from his earliest experiences:

*There may be aspects of my upbringing; there may be aspects of my culture that may determine the way I think. Maybe I'm a bit more guarded, maybe*
I’m not as gun-ho. Maybe I’m a bit more conservative. But very hard to actually grasp and pinpoint - because that’s what makes me different, that’s what makes me who I am.....So maybe there are those little differences. But to accurately grasp an example; very difficult. But then again, going back to that high creative time where.... looking at certain aspects of my upbringing, or the fact that there is that sense of order and not that randomness. Maybe I’m not a very good random.... sort of.....maybe I do like a sense of order. That’s what makes me different, a sense of order as opposed to a sense of just chaos. (James)

Each individual re-acts to their environment and influences in different ways, but James’s outward manifestation of his creativity is informed by his sense of order, a sense of order that perhaps is a response to the cultural demands made upon him as a child. Alongside the precision of his creativity, sits the need for re-assurance:

Obviously feedback is important, I mean I like to think that all my work is good but it’s only really, really good when you get a third party saying this is good.....So getting that feedback and relying on feedback from others is obviously important. And that sort of tends to confirm, yeah that is a good shot... and that was a good time. (James)

Yet, James feels at his best when the structures of creative problem solving still allow him to engage with his imagination, and his “senses”:

Creativity is not always about coming up with something that looks fantastic, but using a lot of your senses. I find when I feel creative is when I am able to solve a problem and use a lot of different ways of solving it. (James)

Examination of the image James offers as representing the self (Figure 8.5), a readily observable duality is depicted; one very strongly defined by structure. In fact, the static nature of the statue is located in the strict confines of an exhibition space, and in direct contrast to the “other” self, standing outside. The manifestation of his duality is as both the observed and the observer and this active self stands looking inwards through the frame of the window, in a representation of James’s creative expression. To complete the structured nature of the image, is the photograph, framed on the wall, of James as a child. Whilst all three aspects of self are represented within structure, the contemporary, current self, is not only looking “at” but also looking beyond.
James has chosen to represent his family background (Figure 8.6) with an image taken in the dining room of his childhood home. In this image he is depicted explaining to his daughter about his family ancestors, whose pictures line the wall alongside
some religious iconography. Although this is a constructed image, it represents for James the transmission of cultural and social identity through the past and present associations of people and place. The multi-generational aspect of the image is made visible through the figures in the foreground, and the memories imbued within the ancestral photographs, on the wall behind. The continuity of family history, inherited traditions, milestones and memory, inform the notions behind the image.

Joe’s journey into creative expression began with a guitar; in spite of, or perhaps even because of his father’s ambivalent views. He saw his early creative journey as a dam waiting to burst. From the time he saved up and bought the guitar, to the period in his life when he was able to move beyond the shy introvert he was at school, Joe constructed a new sense of who he was:

*That thing about creativity….being the loner, as I think I might have been. Being an introvert, a loner, I think had a lot to do with the creativity, because a lot of things are being bottled up. That thing about being bottled up….. then releases itself….. somehow.* (Joe)

The thrill of expressing himself creatively, whether it be through music or photography, is now a key ingredient in his life:

*Oh you feel high, you feel electricity. There are moments that …..oh there are times when you might do a photographic shoot and it’s just come up so wonderful, and people ask you: “how did you come up with that?” “how did you think about it?” and you wonder. Well I didn’t actually give it much thought, it just happened. (Joe)*

*And with music it’s the same thing. There are times when…..last week I couldn’t get to bed, I was up until two, three in the morning, I was on particular tracks of music and I had to play all night because I was on a roll. You achieve something that has a nice melody, nice rhythms and I’m thinking I need to stay up all night, I’m on a roll here, this is fantastic. (Joe)*

Joe defines himself almost entirely through his creative endeavours and as an adult has the confidence to carry his goals forward:

*I’ve gone back to school, doing flamenco, I’ve had this vision of when I’m fifty I’m going to be this really good flamenco player…It’s going to have
passion, have friendship, ..... we love dancing and so that’s what my goal at the moment is. My nails are polished... I’ve just hardened, just polished my nails this morning. A bit embarrassing walking around with polished nails, but it’s the price you pay for wanting to be a flamenco guitarist. (Joe)

The image that Joe has supplied to represent himself (Figure 8.7) is redolent with optimism and the future. He is depicted looking upward, a strong, open, expectant expression on his face. This choice of self image re-enforces the confidence in his creative abilities Joe now feels as an adult, which is also expressed in the narratives he has shared. Unlike his earlier childhood persona, the identity that Joe has now constructed is able to look to his creative future with positive anticipation.

The image representing his background (Figure 8.8) depicts a relative sitting in a street from the Italian village from which his parents originate. It is symbolic and representative of not only place, but also a connection with family. The intimacy of family bonds, and the importance of music as both a symbol of family celebration and also of creative expression. Significantly that the relative is depicted as a musician rather in a more casual activity, but the expression of the relative is relaxed, composed and confident. A secure “ownership” and union with the piano-accordion, along with the village itself, is clearly present in his gaze.

Carolyn, reflecting on her particular creative journey, finds it not dissimilar to her early years of play as a child. Her photographic work draws heavily from her relation-
ship with water, where much of her imagery is based on the sensual, languid, shapes and moods found within the fluidity of liquids. However, the element that appears constantly within Carolyn’s work is the connection with people and the reference to the traces of humanity through place. Whether it be with images constructed from within the ocean, or from abstractions of faces, the work always valorises the human, the personable:

*I did a whole lot of work on the face at one time, and that really caused me to think a lot about memories of people’s faces. And I would say I don’t have a very good memory unfortunately, but I never forget faces. I suppose photography is a way of holding onto memory and recalling something that has passed.* (Carolyn)

*First of all, I have a lot of photographs of my childhood. My family had, I don’t know if he was a friend, but they had somebody who would come and take*
photographs on occasions. So there were periods where I and the family were photographed in quite a beautiful way. Sort of, semi-formally. But not studio photographs... and I always remember when I was on the outside of photography, before I studied photography; looking at photographs and thinking I don't really understand this whole world of representation... that I don't have the code. And I'm aware of that, right from the beginning... I just thought, "I don't understand this". So I suppose I've always wanted to search for that, to understand the language of photography, not so much the exposure and the shutter speeds but the vision. When you connect with someone’s photograph, the vision... you know, you have a greater philosophical connection. (Carolyn)

Carolyn’s intellectually based reflections on her work bring to the fore the sense of purpose she imbeds in her projects. The image Carolyn has chosen to represent herself (Figure 8.9) is a somewhat whimsical and humorous self-portrait of herself as a mermaid. It could even be interpreted as an image of a “watery angel” because of the apparent wings. Both representations have clear associations with Carolyn’s strong connection with water, both literally and metaphorically. The dramatic context of losing a relative to a drowning accident (as described in Chapter Seven), together with a constant fascination with water, as both subject and object; indicate a resonance in Carolyn’s view of self that is clearly reflected in this image.

Figure 8.9 Image of self - Carolyn
The image Carolyn has chosen to represent her background (Figure 8.10) is of her childhood home. This stylised picture of “Pen-y-lan”, the home where she grew up in Wales, depicts the house as a container of childhood dreams and memories. Carolyn has added representations of her water influence as reflections within the windows and walls, and in this way is able to link her past with her present; locating and referencing the influences upon her creative expression within the confines of her childhood memories and experiences.

For Louis, creative expression was bound together with his sense of identity:

I think.....being creative.... to me its one of my most important aspects of being me. That’s one of my major characteristics, so I would like to think that I can be creative as much as possible. (Louis)

When he reflects upon his school years, he connects some difficult times he experienced while growing up, with the frustrations of not having an accepted or recognised creative outlet:
There could have been times during secondary school, where I probably wasn’t that happy, and maybe that was part of the reason why I was that unhappy. Because there weren’t those vehicles there to show and express myself. I was doing a bit of art then but it wasn’t taken that seriously at school. A lot of the projects in those years I would try and solve.....through a creative method. I’d do quite lavish projects, and whether it was making miniature cities, or geography, or doing large scale drawings for some history project. As I see it now, they were the ways...... that was the system that I used to actually be creative. Because there was no other avenue there. (Louis)

Louis speaks strongly about his self-definition in terms of creativity, and relates the pleasures of creative outcomes as a major factor in how he sees himself. He acknowledges the notion of “flow” suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), and affirms that he gains a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure from creative achievement:

Being creative is very enjoyable to me, and producing something that you think is good, is a very enjoyable experience. So I think that’s why..... it’s sort of..... it brings on a really good feeling about what you are, and what you do. And I think that’s why I like it so much. (Louis)

In line with his notions of a creative self, the image Louis has submitted to represent his identity (Figure 8.11) is configured through architectural space. The stylish room, with its highly crafted aesthetic, references both form and substance. The form indicating the strength of Louis’ self definition through his acute sense of design, whilst human substance is made explicit by the chosen props on the table and the sense of motion implied through the rustle of the curtains. Although his metaphorical self has “just left the building”, the shape, colour and motion used to indicate Louis’ self perceptions, indicate his presence within every aspect of the image.

In the image of Louis’s background (Figure 8.12), he has chosen to portray his parents in a moment of intimacy. Although they seem involved in a celebratory event and dressed for an occasion; by being alone on the terrace they seem to be sharing a more intimate, solitary moment. Aware of the camera’s intrusion and gaze, they nonetheless are clearly enjoying this time together, and are comfortable with the observation of their relationship. The observer is perhaps the child gazing upon his parents, or the adult reflecting upon his own future. In either circumstance, the social and cultural continuity felt by Louis, represented through family interactions, is strongly indicated in this image of Louis’ background.
Figure 8.11
Image of self
- Louis

Figure 8.12
Image of family background
- Louis
Bronek’s creativity grew from a sense of freedom he felt when he was able to indulge his creative pursuits as a teenager. Defined by the major event of the death of his father, Bronek was catapulted into a new existence requiring a re-adjustment to his sense of identity. Traumatic as the loss of his parent was, it nevertheless enabled him to choose new directions, behaviours and thinking; contributing to a construction of self very different to the one before. A sense of identity that was able to deal with the new world order he found himself within:

*One of the biggest things was after my father died, we went on a holiday. We went to …… Fiji and I had a SLR. Just with a 50 mm lens on it, and I shot all these pretty, you know, flowers in the garden. I shot them wide open because I don’t think I really knew what the depth of field did or anything. So I just shot them like that and they all came back and they absolutely blew me away. But you know it was just the typical flower, bird of paradise, or whatever with everything out of focus in the background. I still remember that, really, really as a strong sort of thing…. And I think that buzz….sort of made me think this is a good way to go. (Bronek)*

This creative response to the world, is something Bronek reflects has continued in his life ever since:

*Like I even think when I go back to when I was backpacking around, and buming around. I’ve got so many scribbled ideas and drawings you know, little illustrations I’ve done, paintings…. There’s always something that’s happening there. I can’t think of any time when I haven’t done that sort of thing. (Bronek)*

The image Bronek has chosen to represent himself (Figure 8.13) is both literal and metaphoric. In this image he shows himself as a photographer, viewing and recording the world. Additionally however, the image also represents the dualities of his perceived existence, depicted in this instance as that of object and subject. In the duplex of images that make up the whole, he shows himself in the action of taking a photograph, as well as via a subjective representation of photographer as subject. The dualities apparent in the final image in many ways mirror the dualities Bronek recognises in his perceptions of self. Aspects of a multiple culture are here reflected in perceptions of identity and represented in the image that Bronek has chosen. The representation of self indicates the fluidity of identity shaped by people
and place: an identity informed and constructed by the influences indicated in the systems of cultural and social identity (see Chapter Four: Figures 4.5 & 4.6).

In the representation of Bronek’s family background, he once again uses a duplex of images. However this time memory through the inclusion of an old photograph of his grandfather Jozef, plays an important role. Family ancestral associations, together with the contemporary ultrasound image of his daughter are included in the montage; thereby indicating a connection with the past as well as the present.
Dominic’s creative explorations began at school, but were at times a marker for his separation from the prevailing school culture, as well as a general rebelliousness he was feeling towards his father’s influence:

I was quite rebellious. It’s almost like most new immigrants coming to Australia, which I found out much later, you actually rebel from what your parents want. It’s almost like rejecting the past and wanting to find your own way in life. So in some ways it drove me more towards the arts, so that’s probably the main influence on me. (Dominic)

However, Dominic also recently came across some images his father took many years ago. Reflecting on this, Dominic acknowledges that his father’s photographic activity must have impacted upon his own choices and his sense of creativity:

Funny enough I think my father had a lot to do with it, because he was a very keen amateur photographer, you know. And just recently, just last year, I found a picture of myself as a child helping my father with his Roliflex or something like that...it was very pictorial. Going back to some of these images I’ve made a DVD presentation for my mother’s seventieth where I’ve rescanned all these old photographs. Most of them were shot by my father and they were just beautiful. It was a very pictorial, but classical pictorial style; and I had no idea how good a photographer he was until last year, until we started going through his piles of images. (Dominic)

The image Dominic has used to represent himself (Figure 8.15) is at one level very pictorial, but on another becomes rather representational. It possesses a dream like quality, indicated by the restricted colour palette, strong backlighting, and moody softness, derived from movement together with the use of a plastic lens. It locates the viewer in an ambiguous, but enthralling space where the activity of life is presented. A person is waiting, another is travelling, whilst a bus comes around the corner. These aspects are redolent with notions of temporality and the minutia of day to day existence, yet are also somewhat mystical and other-worldly. The fact that Dominic is offering this image as self-referential, indicates the ambiguity of cultural space is purposeful, and perhaps suggests identity in a state of flux.

Dominic’s deep seated pictorialist ideals also show in his ultimate conception of how photography supports his ambitions; his ambitions to know the world:
I think one thing that I like to keep for as long as I can is the curiosity. It’s almost like a child-like naivety….. it’s an exploration through the camera. That’s why I’ve always been fascinated with photo essay work… it’s basically, it’s an excuse to be curious. You can go into places and have a purpose, but basically you just want to have a perve and just see what goes on, and that’s probably what I enjoy most about photography. It allows you to get into places that you would not normally see…. it’s um…. just seeing the world. (Dominic)

The image representing his background (Figure 8.16) is once again superficially quite pictorial, but gains its greatest significance by what is not included in the image. Although it depicts a rest or picnic area where people should be congregating, the landscape is obstinately lacking people. The only sign that humanity has a presence at all is indicated by the small car in the distance.
Interpreting the symbolic nature of the image, leads the viewer to ask many questions – none of which are provided with answers. The deceptively simple pictorial nature of the image, seduces the viewer into questioning the context as well as the content of the photograph. Ultimately, the image only satisfies through its ability to accept multiple narratives, themselves supplied by the viewer rather than the photographer. But such multiple narratives endow the image with a complexity that under-

Figure 8.16 Image of family background - Dominic

scores its purpose; that is, a representation of Dominic’s family background, itself endowed with a complexity derived from multiple narratives.

My own journey to creative expression began from the frustrations I felt through not being able to express myself fully:
All through high school I wanted to paint and I was never a good artist, at all. But I tried to paint and draw and fiddle around, with great lack of success. I just felt I had something to say and I felt I wanted to say it in that way. (Les)

What it was that I was trying to say, was not totally clear to me, however at times I felt a need to sit to one side and simply become an observer. Change and upheaval was a constant in my early teens, and at times I was determined to release the cultural and social tensions surrounding my family, and simply interpret what I saw and what I was feeling:

Painting seemed to be it, because it just seemed to be accessible. You didn’t need much technology to paint or draw and I was reasonably good at it. When I say I was a reasonably good at it, I could draw reasonably well and I had a bit of success with drawing at school. My work was picked out and on the walls at primary school and that gave me great confidence, so I wanted to paint. But there was a lot of pressure in my family to have a very straightforward education. Both my parents were university educated and it was just assumed that I would go to university and become something like a scientist or an engineer or a doctor…. or something like that. (Les)

The buffer to these demands was my older brother, who became a central figure for me, as my parents were busy trying to build a new and secure life:

I know it also had the effect of making me rely on my brother a lot more as a surrogate parent, because there’s nine years difference between us. So he was significantly more advanced in age, maturity and life experience than me, so in many ways he was the one who used to spend more time with me. But I guess I did have time on my hands as well. (Les)

Eventually I was given a camera and then I started to play around a little bit more, but it was at University where I really started to explore photography. Then, I got into it in a big way and I became what you would call a keen amateur. I started to buy magazines and was actually self-taught and started to develop my own film and work in the B&W genre. (Les)
The image I have chosen to represent myself (Figure 8.17), has a number of quite distinct symbolic references. There is an unmistakable duality to identity, represented by the two hands fitting together in the flowing stream. This could also be interpreted more literally as one hand being mine and the other belonging to my brother. Whether this is an overt representation or not, a symbolic duality of identity is clearly shown. A further symbolic reference within the image is in the cascading water, indicating the movement of life. The hands are neither consumed nor oblivious to the surrounding flow, and they ambiguously can be interpreted at many levels of interaction with the water stream. This open-ended interpretive aspect of the image was deliberately chosen to represent identity and selfhood in a multitude of versions, all of which may at any time be accurate.

![Image of self - Les](image)

Figure 8.17 Image of self - Les

Similarly, the image representing my background (Figure 8.18) is once again a multi-layered construction, in which aspects of one culture are overlaid upon another. Symbols from each, such as a landmark bridge and cultural musical icon represent-
ing the Hungarian side are blended with a luxurious, expansive, ocean representing
the Australian side of the culture. The image indicates a blending as well as a sepa-
ration of these two cultures; each is at one time distinct, yet also merging together
to form the whole. The image reflects this attitude of dichotomy in the way the
individual elements combine to form a holistic, but nonetheless surreal landscape.

Figure 8.18  Image of family background - Les

Throughout this chapter, narrative and its link to consciousness has been examined
through connections with the participants of the study and theoretical frameworks
represented within the “Model of Reflexive Selfhood”. The following chapter will
deal more closely with narrative as a form of communication and its connection to
lived experience.
Chapter Nine: Communication and the Meaning beyond

A fundamental facet of our existence is that we tell stories. From the effusive young child happily relating a joyful event, to the yarns passed around beside the soft glow of a remote campfire; it is a function of the nature of our being, and demonstrated in our earliest attempts at communication. Through our stories we not only maintain and nurture a sense of who we are, but through those same stories we enrich, codify and interpret our interactions with the world. Our stories, or narratives, can take many forms and serve many different purposes. They can be told in an attempt to recreate a past event or possible future scenario, they can be told simply for the social joy gained from the telling, or they can be expressed as public representation of our inner selves (Bennett, 1986).

Notions of lived experience lie at the heart of this research. This study uses the lived experience of its participants, through narrative and phenomenological enquiry, to reveal the life-world that its participants inhabit. In addition, the constructed "Model of Reflexive Selfhood" (see Figure 4.12) is interrogated with reference to this lived experience. Through the life-world of others, this study seeks to not only reveal meanings formed by those within the study, but it seeks to offer new meanings of significance beyond the particular examined life. Studying one life, revealed through the rich phenomenological questioning of lived experience, empowers a greater understanding of what it means to be human.

The use of language, formulating the narratives of the participants, is more than a vehicle for this process; it is the process. The individual stories of the participants become the "poetizing activity" as suggested by Van Manen (1990), thereby offering a means of further understanding and contextualising our own individual experiences.

Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the world. We must engage language in a primal incan-
oration or poetizing which hearkens back to the silence from which the words emanate. What we must do is discover what lies at the ontological core of our being. So that in the words, or perhaps better, in spite of the words, we find ‘memories’ that paradoxically we never thought or felt before. (p. 13)

All lived experience is truly unique, and it is through the phenomenological study of a particular lived experience that we gain further insights into our own. This is not because we can necessarily see direct similarities or make generalisations, but because the nature of our lives is made more meaningful through the examination and explication of the lives of others. The meanings we construct to make sense of our world are informed by the lives of others, and these rich narratives supply the tools for a better understanding our own life. In this manner, the phenomenology of the studied lives of those within this research, become a rich vein of meaning to be consumed and digested, enabling a further understanding of ourselves and others.

As Van Manen (1990) suggests:

.... phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life. (p. 32)

By doing so, it sheds light upon the opaque meanings and uncertainties of lived experience.

To return to the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, we see that narrative as a means of communication and experience is activated mainly in the right hand quadrants. That is, communication and experience are evidenced as a result of “cultural action” and “social action”, whilst consciousness and identity are played out in the left quadrants of the model; in “cultural identity” and “social identity”. Both “cultural identity” and “social identity” however also inform our actions, as discussed further within this chapter. Hence the need for a dynamic, reflexive system, where every change in one section results in a re-balancing throughout the system as a whole.

Narrative form, revealing both lived experience and consciousness is fundamental to this study. Not only by the examination of the lives of the participants in the study, but through the key proposition tested in this research. That is, that a significant alteration to the parameters of lived experience can create conditions that heighten creativity.
The interplay between the right side of the model representing experience and action, and the left side representing identity, is at the core of this research. The proposed increase in creativity, or heightened creative expression, derives from changes to quadrants on the right side of the model, in turn informing change to factors within the left quadrants; mediated by the agentic action of creative haecceity. The suggested mechanisms of this change are illustrated visually through the interactions and linkages prevalent within the model.

To complete the underpinnings of the study, an explication of the narrative form and how it engages with identity construction, lived experience, and ultimately how it sits within the workings of the model is therefore required. The following sections will address this need through the voices of the participants in tandem with the contextualising aspects of current scholarly debates on narrative and the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood.

The communication paradigm

Lived experience is told through stories and these stories are used by humans to help codify and organise experience in an endeavour to make sense of their lives. But, how is lived experience to be interpreted within the framework of autobiographical research? Clearly narratives may take multiple forms and may have various goals that relate in some way to the regime of meaning making.

One of the most fundamental and ubiquitous is of narrative as a means of communication. Bruner (1986), Dennett (1989) and Fisher (1987) amongst many, put the view that all communication is a form of storytelling. Fisher, in fact, suggests a narrative paradigm which asserts people are essentially storytelling animals, with understanding and communication occurring through these stories. He further suggests all forms of human communication which appeal to reason are stories, and that worthwhile communication is never purely descriptive or informative. To support this line of argument, he supplies a very broad definition of what constitutes narrative, namely: “symbolic actions - words and/or deeds - that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them.” (Fisher, 1987, p. 325)

In postulating a narrative paradigm as the foundation of communication, Fisher argues that human communication must be considered in terms broader than the logical, rational forms of Aristotelian analysis. He contends, that together with cultural and historical aspects, values are equally, if not even more important. He contrasts the traditional, rationally based paradigm of communication which contends: (a)
people are essentially rational (b) we make decisions on the basis of arguments (c) the type of speaking situation determines the course of our argument (d) rationality is determined by what we know and how well we argue (e) the world is a set of logical puzzles that can be solved; in contrast to a broader narrative foundation for communication. Fisher’s (1987) narrative paradigm contends: (a) people are essentially storytellers (b) we make decisions on the basis of good reasons (c) history, biography, culture, and character determine what we consider good reasons (d) narrative rationality is determined by the coherence and fidelity of our stories and (e) the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create, our lives.

Fisher is suggesting that all communication is narrative in form. Implying that we communicate simply to tell stories, or report an event, those who receive these communications, judge validity not on rational arguments and logic alone, but in the overall narrative coherence of the story, and whether it fits within the boundaries of their own belief systems. To test whether a story is good or not, that is whether it has fidelity and coherence, the listener needs to apply certain criteria. Narrative coherence requires that the story hangs together, that is, the characters and events are consistent and the story has structural integrity.

By way of illustration, here are two examples from the interviews of the participants, where in answer to the question “who made the decision to come to Australia?” they responded in terms of episodes from their parent’s lives, rich in characterisations, atmosphere, story and emplotment.

Mum and dad weren't married they were neighbours so there was obviously a bit of romance going on but no engagement nothing, nothing formal at all. They came out separately so there was some interest there and um you know... dad had been caught kissing mum under the pear tree one night (laughs) but that’s about all. There was no formal courting coz in those days, you know, you told the parents and it was done formally. And dad was from what was considered to be a well off family in those days, from where they were from. They had a lot of farming land, a lot of sheep, wheat, that sort of thing but um... he... dad was quite a strong personality and he... the farms were owned by his father and his father’s brother, so his uncle, and um... he couldn’t cope with the pressure of being told what to do by his uncle any more so he um... he had a few arguments. But they were very strict in those days and his sister had migrated to Australia, my father’s sister, and she sent him some money to come over. So he flew half the way and took a ship the other half
which was unusual, most people only had enough money to migrate by ship. And um, they met... dad was here first, mum... he came and met her and she was being picked up by relatives and he kissed her and that was kind of like "Ha!" You know, "How dare John kiss you!" and there was a bit of a... but it wasn't long afterwards obviously they started and they ended up getting married quite quickly I think. I don't know after how long but I'd estimate within two years, yeah. (Heather)

Oh it was, it was a big traumatic move because my father... because his qualifications were in China and Hong Kong and they weren't recognised here even though he was a teaching lecturer. He had to come here and spend twelve months doing a Dip Ed. His degree was recognised, the one he did in Hong Kong, but his teaching qualification wasn't so he spent twelve months here while we were at home. But I was like four or five at the time I didn't remember much, but all we knew was that it was cold and you know we had no... it was the first long plane trip that we took um... a lot of the travelling throughout South East Asia was still on ships then. But because we were from a British colony I remember mum and dad used to go to parties on a Saturday night with white dinner suits and things, it was just another time. It was almost... you know it was almost like the forties to fifties era which is the colonial era... (Dominic)

According to Fisher, the ultimate test for this coherence is often whether the characters in the story can be relied upon to act in a consistent manner. Logic is only one factor that will affect this coherence and a comparison between other thematically similar stories is often extremely important in this judgement. Cultural and social issues will therefore also have a direct bearing. To examine whether a story has narrative fidelity, it must be determined whether the story makes sense; that is, it must have veracity and strike a chord in the life of the listener. It is deemed to have fidelity if the listener's experience suggests that such a story could be told about themselves, and it contains logic that may affect the listener's own future actions. Taken together, these two aspects: coherence and fidelity, produce a story's narrative rationality.

The rich possibilities of personal reflection and empathetic coherence invited by the following response from Joe, to a question about his relationship with his parents; is an example where a story has strong narrative fidelity. Personal experience of
the love of a parent is framed through the act of demonstrating that love, expressed through the act of kissing. The familiarity of this act, enables the individual to identify and relate to the story:

I think it’s typical of that generation, where we’re a lot closer to our kids than what our parents were to us, you know. I assume that’s the case with you and most people of that generation. There was just something,… I mean dad came out here, worked hard, they didn’t have time to look at my homework,… well they didn’t understand it anyway. They had no interaction with my teachers. They just worked basically, got home you know went to bed, went to work again the next day. So there wasn’t really interaction. My mum, you know there was a lot of love, there’s always a lot of love…… there’s always a lot. I could always ask mum and dad for anything, I could you know. They didn’t love us any less than we love our kids, just there wasn’t, I suppose it wasn’t shown, it wasn’t. I didn’t use to kiss my mother,… I only started kissing my mother in the last eight or nine years, and I started kissing her because our kids kiss us. And it was very strange when I started kissing her….(Joe)

A humanistic theory of action based on Fisher’s (1987) narrative paradigm, is a clear departure from theories of action based purely on rhetorical discourse. Fisher is not actually predicting how humans act, he is rather suggesting how individuals take information and create stories from it to communicate this information to others. This is then judged by those receiving it against defined criteria.

That such a paradigm is clearly value laden, is integral to this approach, in that the listener takes into account their own beliefs and experiences when evaluating a story’s credibility. Therein lies some of the most strident criticisms of the Fisher narrative paradigm, namely that the notion of storyteller as expert overthrows the concept of the expert witness; that the standard of narrative fidelity privileges the reinforcement rather than the challenge of audience values, and that stories promoting the status quo may have undue influence.

Nevertheless, concepts such as narrative rationality do elucidate many, although perhaps not all, communicative acts, and profoundly re-enforce the notion that we are in fact, story-telling animals.
Transmission of cultural messages

Another form of narrative, that is of relevance to this study is narrative as transmission of cultural messages and traditions. MacIntyre (1981) is one of many philosophers who believe that overarching stories, or histories, are necessary to not only make sense of the world, but also our own life. “The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships” says MacIntyre (1981, p. 205). Further, he makes the point that without the transmission of a contextual history, the individual does not have an intellectual or social basis through which to define action:

The individual’s search for his or her good is generally and characteristically conducted within a context defined by those traditions of which the individual’s life is a part...the histories of each of our lives is generally and characteristically embedded in and made intelligible in terms of the larger and longer histories of a number of traditions. (p. 207)

In MacIntyre’s view, the nature of individual narrative is bound within narratives of the society to which the individual belongs. In fact, the nature of individual narratives is embedded within the stories and traditions of the prevailing culture, or as Czarniawska (2004) termed it “a history of narratives”. Through this process of embedded individual narratives, within the greater narrative history of society or culture as a whole, enculturation is privileged. Such enculturation enables the flow of social and moral principles, against which the individual is able to frame and legitimise their own stories and experiences.

This notion is critical to the study, as the suggested hypothesis of cultural dislocation leading to a heightened creative expression, depends on a perceived sense of separation from the prevailing culture. The actual mechanism that has the potential to trigger this perception of dislocation in the first place, is firmly related to the enculturation of Czarniawska’s “history of narratives”.

Take for example this comment from Bronek about the traditions he observes from his past:

There’s the typical you know the Christmas, very much ritual based there. We go to midnight mass, we have a big feast on Christmas Eve,... Christmas day was always just looked on as being something a little bit second rate.
Easter was always a big thing, like Easter we’d do the big Polish breakfast, you know Vodka, the whole bit, that was always very important and fun and lots of painting of eggs before hand so yeah we really got into those rituals. And... although now,.. I um... I don’t really like routine on a day to day basis; (but) I do quite like ritual. (Bronek)

These established patterns of behaviour are repurposed in a more contemporary re-enculturation, as he describes in the following:

I think there’s a real difference between that,... you know I like going to the same places, I like having the same coffee. I like having two coffees as I walk into RMIT on a Saturday morning, I like finding a good restaurant and going back to that place, you know, I like that sort of repetition that becomes ritual. I think that’s going to start to continue more and more. Like having a family, you know, having a bit of a connection to an extended family, those things are becoming more and more important again. Like you know, Dan and I, it’s a little ritual and it’s only been going for about four or five years now but the Collingwood Melbourne game, every year we go. We go to the MCG, he’s a member, we go to the members, if the long room’s functioning we go and have lunch in the long room and now the girls are coming along and it’s turned into a bit more of an event now. So that’s turning into quite an important ritual. (Bronek)

White (1999) has referred to narrative as a metacode for making sense of our very existence. As he put it: “The truth is - and I speak only figuratively rather than literally - that all images of the past are ‘dialectical’, filled with the aporias and paradoxes of representation. And that they can only be fulfilled by narrativization: as stories” (White, 1999, p. 7). As a scholar who was concerned with the broader aspects of historicity, White compared the discourse implicit in historical and literary narratives. He makes the point that representation of an historical event, can be seen in terms of both the event itself as well as in its representation, thereby giving rise to a possible critical evaluation of one representation of the past against another such representation. For example, how James reflects on his Greek nationalist traditions through a narrative segment of his childhood, is clearly bound together with his Uncle’s disappearance during war.

We’d all go along to the school, we were all part of the marches, although as my brothers got older, they sort of detached themselves a lot from that. But
while I was at school and my sisters were at Greek school, we had to observe that because that was obviously something that my parents... you know it was a great thing, the Greek Independence Day and also the 28th of October which sort of marks our involvement in the Second World War. And you know, the Greeks regard those two days as public holidays in Greece, of course... And you know, my father had lost his brother in the Civil War, which came after World War Two, but um... therefore it was always a pretty soft spot for my father, who lost his brother at a very young age..... He’s missing in action actually. (James)

The notion that one such representation can be privileged assumes that the past can in some sense be validated, and its status as a contribution to our knowledge be empirically governed. But our knowledge, or the memories we have of past events, is interpreted through the expressions of narrative - whether they be literary, visual or oral in form; or whether they be individual or collective in origin.

This interpretation by Carolyn, of her aunt making use of her natural beauty to obtain work in the theatre, is represented from the point of view of her mother. This story, in all likelihood has been originally told by her mother, made real by her mother’s narratives and understood by Carolyn through those representations.

My mother was the third child but her eldest brother kind of got all the family wealth and the goodies and the middle child, my auntie Lorna got all the beauty. She was beautiful, according to my mother (laughs). She was the beautiful one and I have a photograph of her, and she was. And my mother was kind of the runt of the family (laughs) and was small, and ah... kind of got dragged around by the others. So there were lots of stories about dad, who also had this kind of photographic memory which he didn’t pass it on to me. But there were stories about my auntie Lorna being, you know, in some kind of theatre production, because she was so beautiful. She was the leading lady, but not remembering her lines and my mother would be kind of in the wings saying them all for her. So there was a lot of theatre in the family, amateur theatre, and my mother should have really been on stage. (Carolyn)

A contemporary example that may be used to illustrate the resonance of one representation of past events against another, pertains to Islamic suicide bombers and their dramatic role in the confrontation between Western Christian/Judeo ideology and its associated political hegemony. Or on one hand, Western historical narratives,
and on the other Middle Eastern, Islamic, historical narratives. From the historically encultured viewpoint that has informed Western narratives over hundreds of years, many find it challenging to adequately understand how individuals can make a clear choice to behave as human explosives, with the apparent objective of creating as much bloodshed and slaughter as possible. Prevailing Western notions regarding the sanctity of human life, and indeed the sanctity of the individual’s right to free ideological determination, together with the idea that the end has always to be accountable to the means by which it is achieved, create problems in this regard.

Side by side with the notion of individual innocence, and the legitimate segregation of non-participants in any ideological struggle, sits the difficulty of comprehending the actions of those who offer themselves up for annihilation in such a dramatic and destructive manner. Especially so, when these events are framed within the concepts of good versus evil, as defined by the moral rules and values passed down through the interpretations of Western histories. Indeed, these histories have not equipped us with the means to readily interpret these actions in any way but to simply dismiss them as barbaric. Western historical narratives have not dealt with the use of this type of ideologically-based weapon; certainly not in such a sustained or effective manner. The discourse within the narratives that inform Western histories, give rise to the cultural base from which we try to make new understandings of these contemporary realities. So to interpret these events, we must use the lens of experience, both individual and collective.

However, these same events can also be seen from another perspective. That is, they can be represented through an Eastern, Islamic collective experience, giving rise to a different historical narrative; one that provides a vastly different interpretation. In fact, so divergent can this interpretation be that it may even appear to be of a wholly different event. An event that has a radically different set of characters, a different set of heroes, a radically different temporal construct, and a vastly different plot. Indeed, this particular narrative may barely intersect with other narrative interpretations of the very same past event. But can any single representation of the world hold any form of primacy over another? Especially when it can be argued, that all such representations are views of an event that is now a historical artefact, a collection of factual remains, a record of the past having no other meaning except as a fragment of the plot or characters within a specific narrative.

White (1999) suggests, historical agents and events require a twofold process to enable narrative meaning.
First, they must be imagined as the kinds of characters, events, scenes, and processes met with in stories - fables, myths, rituals, epics, romances, novels, and plays. And secondly they must be troped as bearing relationships to one another of the kind met with in the plot structures of generic story types, such as epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, and farce. (p. 5)

So long as individual episodic narratives conform to these descriptions, they can be seen to be a part of our own personal stories, and they can also constitute the fulfilment of historical trajectories through temporal, geographical and social planes. As Winch (1963) explains: “Historical explanation is not the application of generalisations and theories to particular instances, it is the tracing of internal relations” (p. 133). The transition from personal narrative to historical narrative can of course be often difficult to ascertain, indeed it must be asked how in fact individual narratives are able to be related to societal ones? Or, how does an individual narrative become collected within the repertoire of legitimate stories that in turn form collective histories?

The clues to the answer to this question lie within the bounds of family narratives. Stories originating with individuals in a family are told and re-told by members of the social unit, until they become part of the cumulative history and overall collective narrative. Take for example this story told by Joe of his grandfather:

My mum and her brothers and sisters all lived in the one room with donkeys, chickens, geese. In the one room and if a donkey shit in the room well you had to put up with it. Basically that’s how they grew up in the one room..... it was very rustic, with the wine barrels in there. During World War Two, my grandad, again.... feeling safe. My mum, she said.... no, people die in the villages, dead bodies in the streets sometimes, but they felt safe. They felt that they wouldn’t starve because my grandfather would always make some wine. He was always hard working, he would always find a way. He could sell some wine to get some eggs or something, so they felt safe during World War Two.....being bombed by Americans, you know. (Joe)

This story of his grandfather as a heroic character looking out for the rest of the family, and creating a feeling of safety, easily becomes representational to others outside the family. The character takes on a more generalised status that becomes part of a collective history of the village, of the region, of the country, even a national psyche. Represented within the “system of cultural identity” by the history node, individual and group histories are in dynamic balance. Individual stories morph over
time into generalised form and suffuse group narratives, which in turn create the cultural grounding that informs new individual stories. Therefore, “cultural identity” impacts upon and changes the dynamic balance of “cultural action” within the model, which in turn then influences the narrative communication of the individual.

Validating individual stories

One of the most influential embodiments of how narrative can be construed, is as a mode of comparing and validating individual stories with the stories of others. A contemporary example where this is evident is in feminist theory. Whilst not wishing to take this study directly into the issues and debates of feminist theory, as it has little direct bearing on the study hypothesis, of relevance however is the broader notion of self story validation. It is worth therefore to examine how feminist theory intersects with this notion.

To free themselves of male-defined gender roles and define for themselves what it means to be a woman, feminist philosophers rebelling against previous male dominated ideologies, used the notions of relativism, made famous by Neitzche, extolling the lack of any absolute truth. The often quoted statement espoused by Simone de Beauvoir: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1972), has at times been the mast upon which the flag of feminists thinking is raised. With this statement, de Beauvoir rejects the relationship between biological and cultural evolution, thus implying that biological make-up has little connection with social roles and behaviours. For a period after its publication, de Beauvoir’s remark was interpreted as meaning that rather than being born into the female-gender, cultural and social norms shape the child into a female being. In postmodern feminist thinking, this has since been qualified by the acceptance that much does exist that is biologically constructed or defined through gender. As feminist philosopher Toril Moi (2001) argues: if you are born into a female body, there is little doubt you will become a woman. The question is what kind of woman?

While some feminists reject the body and the concept of sex completely, and either consciously or unconsciously deny the existence of a biology that separates man and woman, de Beauvoir (1972) is completely aware of both body and sex. According to her, “the body is a situation”, sex is not pervasive and biology can never justify social norms. In fact de Beauvoir goes on to suggest: “Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself” (p. 734).
Consider the views expressed by Heather, in reference to her feelings of acceptance about her relationship with her partner.

I love children but I don’t know that I will have children, so some of the family values are there. I am interested in doing that… um, my partner’s a woman. For them that’s like another paradigm, that doesn’t live in their way of thinking at all, you know. There’s no room for that, yeah. I do a lot of personal development work. I do, … I’ve done a lot of workshops and ongoing weekly classes and I think that’s actually assisted me, um… in being more at peace with just enjoying my life and how it is and not being so hard on myself, because I don’t fit into these expectations, yeah. (Heather)

The story of Heather’s life shapes the person she is, which in turn is shaped by her relationship with other characters alongside her self narrative, or in de Beauvoir’s terms the “action of others than herself”.

These views are entirely consistent with poststructuralist theories that indicate meaning as contextual and historical; and identity is socially, and linguistically, constructed. These ideas link with the concept that identity is based on narrative representations, together with the acceptance and valorising of non-male gendered stories, thus enabling women to validate their own experience. As individual stories are located in terms of gender, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; … identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.” (Butler, 1990, p. 25) and, as all stories are gendered in nature it becomes crucial for women to be able to affirm their own, heroically, representational stories.

This is not the same as women’s stories simply duplicating or replicating those of men, as often times these are nothing more than imitations of male gender roles encased in female form. Or as Moi (1985) succinctly notes, “Sometimes, a woman imitating male discourse is just a woman speaking like a man” (p. 143). Therefore current feminist theory relies in significant part, on women being able to define themselves through their own stories. Different stories, but in no way any less significant than those of men. In answer to the question “What is a woman?” Moi (2001) uses de Beauvoir’s answer: “a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or in other words, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her” (p. 72).
Chapter Nine

The narratives of women need to exist in the world against which other women can interpret and associate their own sense of self. Cognitive and phenomenological functioning within the world is part of this experience, but the assimilation of narratives from significant others is also an important factor. Even though these narratives in the past have existed purely as male gendered chapters, or episodes, the acceptance that women also need stories of significance, other than purely in roles subordinate or supplicant to males, is now also recognised.

Feminist representations are only one aspect that demonstrates the need for narratives of significant others to manifest acknowledgement of self stories. Milestones of past lives connected with our own through stories, form strong linkages to our cultural and self identity. Joe shares a strong such linkage in the following passage:

There are just things that... My dad for example, my dad and my dad’s brother, (my brother John is named after my dad’s brother) he was blown up in the next village during World War Two. And they found his body bits and it’s kind of strange to think that, you know, his own arm and that, bits of his body pieces have just been buried in mass graves, you know, in the next village. It’s kind of weird to think that actually happened to my dad’s brother. (Joe)

Such a major significant event, affecting Joe’s personal family narrative forms a major anchor in his cultural identity.

Bronek, gives an example from his family history where this validation of an entire people’s history and the personal connection to his family, were in fact denied:

My grandmother was, she was a little bit older than my grandfather, and it turns out she was actually married before. Her husband had died, they’d had a child and they were Jewish and she fell in love with my grandfather, and converted to Catholicism. That was all totally hidden away, it was never even mentioned until after my father died and then it all came out of the woodwork.....the whole family history gets really interesting when you then think about, you know, my father working in textiles,...... a lot of Jews in textiles. He didn’t have a great love for a lot of people he worked with to put it in the nicest terms.... so really quite interesting when you find out that you’ve got a whole part of your family...... And that’s the whole reason why I did the Auschwitz exhibition, going back a few years now. It was totally motivated by that, you know, thing
that you discover. And then also going back to Poland and seeing where the family was and where Auschwitz was and how close it all was you know it sort of crystallises that whole thing. (Bronek)

Such clouded histories often create in the individual the need for an understanding of the missing connections to help define their self identity in terms of the missing stories. As Fisher (1987) suggested, the coherence of the self narrative requires narrative fidelity, and Bronek’s need to return to Auschwitz was a way for him to establish that coherence. The validation of his own story, through the coherence of his own personal history, enables Bronek to then manifest deeper meaning through comparisons of his story to those of others.

Knowledge transmission and power

Two further aspects of narrative, discussed only briefly as they have merely a peripheral relevance within the context of this study, are narrative as the transmission of modes of knowing, and narrative as an expression of the dominant ideology. A view expressed at length by Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1998), in essence centres upon the comparisons between the scientific, paradigmatic mode of knowing, and the potential meaning derived through narratives. This view also has resonance with Fisher’s (1987) narrative paradigm, discussed earlier.

Bruner (1986) suggests that “There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another” (p. 11). Although not suggesting the supremacy of one over the other, Bruner (1986) does take great pains to differentiate their respective paradigms:

They function differently,...and the structure of a well-formed argument differs radically from that of a well wrought story. Each perhaps, is a specialization or transformation of a simple exposition, by which statements of fact are converted into statements of causality. But the types of causality implied in the two modes are palpably different. (p. 11)

Narrative knowing is unlike science, where a provable reality lies at the heart of its validity. Narrative knowing depends on its contextuality and ability to negotiate meaning. In the narrative sense, an event is made sense of by attributing intention through the context of character and story. A true story or a fictional story are simply both merely extremes of genre, and insofar as either can define meaning,
they have equal validity as ways of extending human knowledge. As Ricoeur (1981) says: “The ultimate problem is thus to show in what way history and fiction contribute, in virtue of the common narrative structure, to the description and redescriptions of our historical condition” (p. 274). Meaning can therefore, through narrative interpretation, be continuously renegotiated and this renegotiation is governed by the contextual nature of the narrative, a contextual nature that is often re-examined in light of historical, social, cultural and personal experience.

Not only is this interpretation of narrative meaning fundamentally different from the more rigidly defined understandings we acquire through scientific paradigms, but the nature and characterization of this meaning is intrinsically unlike those acquired through formal, scientific, discourse. Scientific knowing deals with provable abstractions that are valid when demonstrated logically and of value when they can be applied to the known world to produce or support an end result; narrative knowing is based entirely on the human condition. It is based on lived experience, either actual or fictitious, and draws its validity on the quality of its story and the connectedness to its described lives.

As Bruner (1986) suggests:

The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place.....The paradigmatic mode, by contrast, seeks to transcend the particular by higher and higher reaching for abstraction, and in the end disclaims in principle any explanatory value at all where the particular is concerned. (p. 13)

Narrative knowing thrives on the nature of the human condition, and has at its core the ability to assign validity to an event through the application of intention, motive and context; scientific knowing is bound within the recognition of a particular event as an instance of a general law or category. The strength of narrative knowing lies in this very ability, which is so fundamentally relevant to describing and making meaning of the lived experience.
Bakhtin (1981) suggests that everyday events and the complex forms of social life are at the heart of meaning, and that they link together through the socially mediated fabric of language.

No living word relates to an object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape. (p. 276)

Further, Bakhtin suggests that analysis of the nature of linguistic production, according to which any discourse operates, is always on several simultaneous planes at once. We learn language, according to Bakhtin by listening and assimilating other voices and absorbing narratives. We then re-tell those stories in the context of our own experience and social system. Any knowledge and understandings we may possess are a product of the mediations between ourselves as author, and the listener as active participant, within the framework of our own narratives.

An extension of this form of narrative is as the instrument of a dominant ideology. The connection between political power, society’s instruments of that power, its institutions, and the dominance and general acquiescence to a political ideology, relies in great part on the accumulated narratives encapsulated by that society. MacIntyre’s (1981) notion of “characters” plays a significant role in this regard. He postulates the notion that significant personages or characters act as signposts or beacons against whose stories the individual can make comparisons in their own lives. It is through reference to these instruments of society, their power endowed roles of significance and accumulated stories, that the individual is shaped and moulded into being a member of that society.

At one very important level, it can be said that individual narratives are defined by those in society who have preceded them, as suggested by Foucault (1982), and these narratives are shaped by society’s culturally significant characters and their accumulated stories, as suggested by MacIntyre (1981). Following that proposition, a further aspect of how society marshals power over the individual is more aligned to the historical nature of society’s institutions, handed down to the individual through stories, rather than any form of corporeal control.
Individual sanctions will always exist to some degree in any society, but the notion that it is the collective, historical, narrative encapsulated within a society, that bestows this power; is one that Foucault firmly held. McHoul & Grace (1997) summarise this notion in the following way:

Power is not to be read, therefore in terms of one individual’s domination over another or others; or even as that of one class over another or others; for the subject which power has constituted becomes part of the mechanisms of power. It becomes the vehicle of that power which in turn, has constituted it as that type of vehicle. Power is both reflexive, then, and impersonal. It acts in a relatively autonomous way and produces subjects just as much as, or even more than, subjects reproduce it. (p. 22)

The forms of narrative, based on communication and reflected in the voice of the participants in this chapter, can be seen within the model in all four dynamic systems. That is, communication is embedded within linkages contained in the systems of cultural and social identity and cultural and social action. Whilst communication is not explicitly identified in the model, it energises the dynamic interactions that make up the nodes within each system. This is most clearly evident by examination of the upper sections of each system.
Situated at the top of “cultural identity”, is the node of “History”, which becomes “Memory” in “social identity”, “Customs” in “cultural action” and “Values” in “social action”. Each of these nodes is based on interactions made real through communication, both on an individual and a communal basis. Each is an integral part of the transmission of lived experience, whether it is through the transmission of customs, a common history, shared beliefs or the personal reflections of the individual through self talk.

Similarly, communication understood in terms of the nodes of: “Milestones” and “Relationships” is also fundamental to their dynamic interactions. For example, the validation of the stories of significant others, as per the tenets of feminist discourse, can be seen to occur through the “Milestones” node contained by “significant events” and “significant others” within the “system of cultural action”. Or the transmission of a dominant ideology is made real through the “system of cultural identity” and the “system of social identity” by the interaction of “ancestors” and “nation” through the node of “Milestones”, and through “friends” and “family” in the node of “Relationships”.

In the following chapter, using an interpretive phenomenological approach, the experiences of the participants of the study will be further considered in light of the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, and the implications it holds for understanding creative expression.
Chapter Ten: The Phenomenology of Identity and Action

In this chapter, the key components of the Model of Reflexive Selfhood are examined in light of phenomenological moments of experience felt by the participants. The richly layered aspects of a perceived life, together with the embedded essence of lived experience are viewed through the characteristics of the model. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology as discussed in Chapter Five, the themes brought forward through the nodes of the model are used to examine the accounts of the participants as they reflectively discuss their lives. Although a key characteristic of the model is its dynamic Hegelian dialectic inherent in the illuminations it offers, individual lived experience cannot simply be transposed and deposited neatly within its framework. The themes brought forward in the interviews however, situated within the nodes of the four component systems of the model are fertile sources of phenomenological interpretation. With this in mind, in this chapter each of the four components will be considered in turn.

Cultural identity

[Diagram of cultural identity system]
Our lives are not independent of the culture to which we belong. Cultural systems and our social and cultural life do not exist independently of each other (Archer, 1996); rather they are intricately interwoven with our thoughts and our actions. The construction of identity, informed by culturally based lived experience, is influenced not only by the multitudes of living in the world (Bruner, 1986; Ricoeur, 1991; Rosaldo, 1993), but also by the history and traditions generated specifically within the ethnic group itself (Rorty, 1991). As suggested by Markus & Kitayama (1991) “Some understanding and some representation of the private, inner aspects of the self may well be universal, but many other aspects of the self may be specific to particular cultures” (p. 225).

Inherited traditions associated with Greek ethnicity such as language are mentioned by Heather, as she muses about her own identification with her background:

*I think in some ways, as I get older I get more surprised at how much my upbringing is still there. It’s quite present in my thinking, and I always thought that my parents, who were from a European background, that wasn’t a great influence on me. Like my Greek isn’t really great, I don’t speak it very often, you know. I can speak it, I can read and write it, but it’s not impressive. In many ways, I thought it didn’t matter that I had a Greek background, but as I get older I realise how there’s a lot of things about the Greek background that really resonate with me. Like, I love cooking. And the family being important, things like that are coming out stronger and stronger which is quite weird.* (Heather)

This identification is not always simple. In the following passage Heather reflects upon the ambivalence and uncertainties she has felt, as she considers her Greek background and its situatedness within an Australian culture:

*In later years I’ve had more pride in my background. When I was in my teens and sometimes when I was younger I was embarrassed by it, but I know I enjoyed my background as a kid. So it was like, when I kind of got a little bit older and there was a bit of teasing and I got awareness, I wasn’t happy about it. But as an adult, like my early twenties, my pride started to kick in about my background. We do have a culture and we do have traditions and we do have great food and that we are um, there’s a word in Greek called “υποδοχή”, we are a welcoming people. Like even as I talk about it, all of a sudden it’s “we” whereas sometimes I kind of see it as “the Greeks” you*
The cultural ambiguity in Heather’s mind is a clear reflection of the straddling of two cultures. Further, it demonstrates an on-going process of identity formation in an effort to not only achieve a coherence, but also to resolve apparent contradictions. The cultural dislocation in place during adolescence is replaced with a newly constructed identity that encompasses all aspects of Heather’s story. Her life narrative has gained a level of coherence as suggested in the hypothesis outlined in Figure 1.1, Chapter One and the creative outcomes she has moved into as a career are an example of her heightened creative expression. The influences behind this process are discussed further in the following Chapters.

James’ experience as a child, although on balance overwhelmingly positive, also had similar occurrences where he felt the tension of dual cultures:

That was the good thing about growing up in the inner city, growing up in the city of Melbourne like Carlton. The fact that there was never.... I was never ashamed to be Greek. There were only a few little times where certain things that I probably didn't want other Australian kids to know about me. I can’t really recall specific instances but I do remember probably feeling a little bit of a cultural embarrassment, like oh, I wish I was Australian sort of thing. But they were very far and few because um I mean going to church and everything was something I did. And no one ever.... I never really felt embarrassed saying that to any kid at school, as a kid having to go to church, because a lot of my friends went to church too. (James)

However, the awareness of ethnic background situates the individual in an historical connection and lineage that in significant ways informs who they are. Even if those connections are not recognised overtly until perhaps later in life, as was the case with my own experience:

As I’ve got older.....certainly for me... it’s part of growing up. You become more in tune with your parents as people, rather than as some function they have. As you reach milestones in your life that are analogous to the milestones that they’ve had, I believe you start to identify more closely with what they did and the difficulties they must have had..... I’ve thought more about my background in past years. In my 20s I was certainly quite oblivious to any
of that... I didn’t see it as hugely important to me. Now, I think it is; because I think it’s had more of an effect on me than I’ve been willing to admit. And I also find it more interesting than I used to, so it is something that I probably would like to explore. It’s one of those areas that percolate away in the back of my mind. (Les)

Many ethnic groupings are readily recognised by their physical features, which immediately associate them with a particular history, and an association with those of the same group resulting from a shared history.

Oh look it’s um... it’s a funny thing. I would probably be one of the older Chinese kids in our high school, definitely the only Chinese family besides the family that was left over from the gold rush that was at our Primary School. But then again you sort of .....the school which I was with probably like most schools now; how you blend in is you play sports. You know, as soon as you play sports you get accepted. But you know it’s even obvious sometimes today. Like I was at the Casino on Saturday night. Funny it’s usually an Asian place but (laughs) I was with the Melbourne Football player’s dinner and I was the only Chinese in the whole audience, in the whole room. There was a lady in another big room there, but you know that it didn’t even occur to me because I was just getting drunk and bonding with my football player mates. It didn’t even occur to me until the next morning thinking back, "Oh yeah, I was the only Asian there". (Dominic)

If a broad understanding of that historical connectedness is not offered to the individual as they grow and develop, they can often feel the need to gain that knowledge as they go through life. Dominic, who is from an ethnic Chinese background, reflects on his intended approach regarding this issue with his young daughter:

I think if you understand where you’re from it empowers you to either accept it, or you don’t if you want to. I think if you know where you come from and know where you are, it’s easier to predict where you’re going........ It will be a part of her although it mightn’t mean anything to her, but then again it might. I’ll leave that choice up to her. But if I empower her with the knowledge, you know... it’s up to her whether she wants to have anything to do with it. (Dominic)
Ethnic groups who do not have such clear physical differentiating characteristics are nonetheless still affected in the same way. The difference is that this association is not as obvious to the external observer. Such circumstances do not however necessarily diminish the extent of that association.

Yeah.... but then again my wife’s Irish, of Irish decent, I don’t know how many generations. And you know, they... once in a blue moon... you know one member of the family goes back to Ireland and traces the roots and goes back to the old town and things like that. They’ve been out here for generations, so I don’t think you ever lose that. (Dominic)

As ethnic groupings move to new nation states and thrive within other dominant cultures, the need to retain direct social connections to groups from their direct ethnic background diminishes:

There are a lot of Greek clubs that are set up in Melbourne that are associated with parts and regions of Greece that our parents came from. So therefore they’re like social clubs. Like you know, just like there’s in the Italian realm, the Veneto Club and the Abruzzo Club, they’re all based on the regions of Italy the descendents come from. And the same thing here, there are the Macedonian clubs, the Nafpaktos Club, which is where my parents come from. You see, I don’t have anything to do with them, I don’t associate with them at all, I don’t go to any of their dances. Those things were established for people of my parent’s generation to be able to get together and celebrate their roots and have parties and stuff. And there were social clubs obviously for them to catch up and reminisce about, you know, so and so from the village and how are they going and all that sort of thing. (James)

But, even without these type of connections, the shared history remains and reminds the individual of their background, as Bronek relates with his memory of the “Solidarity” period of Polish history:

There was a sense then you know, the whole “Solidarity” thing was you know, really, really...... because my family were really into that as well. That was really.... that was probably the only sort of post-world war two passionate Polish moment I remember. Because everyone was so into it, it was very exciting. Yeah, so there was a real sense of pride and excitement and you know, it was really screwing the communists basically, so it was really exciting. And it didn’t end up with Russian tanks rolling in and killing everyone! (Bronेक)
Or, as James relates in the following:

As a kid watching films that were based on Greek history or things that I learnt in Greek school about Greek history or democracy, those things made me proud to be Greek. Yes, they did actually. Even though I was very much an Australian born kid, growing up in Australia with Greek parents; but my ethnicity made me very proud actually, which is an interesting thing. (James)

The fractured and multiple nature of Western postmodern society (Lacan, 1977), (Baudrillard, 1990), leads individuals to constantly re-shape and re-assess their cultural identity (Rosaldo, 1993), in response to the shifting sands of contemporary society and its implications for historical, ethnic connections. As Elliot (2001) points out:

There is an increasing and constructive emphasis in contemporary social research on analysing the changing dispositions, attitudes, feelings and desires that people are experiencing in relation to themselves, other people and the wider world (p. 135)

Attention is being placed upon these changes in people’s dispositions, in response to the magnitude of the social effects of the postmodern, global adjustments being felt by many. Not only are cultures adapting and changing at a pace not before seen, but identity is necessarily being re-fashioned and re-constructed in an ongoing response to change. A cultural dislocation felt as a result of the struggle by the individual to deal with these movements, is the core premise at the heart of this study. Its potential outcomes, in terms of creative expression, relate to the hypothesis under discussion and are represented through the Model of Reflexive Selfhood (Chapter Four).

The reconfigurations of cultural identity resulting from social and cultural change can be seen in the dynamic linkages in the nodes of “History” and “Inherited Traditions” within the System of Cultural Identity. In particular, these can often be visible in the interplay between communal and ethnic histories, which can be observed through the locus of language and cuisine.

Heather connects with the traditions and celebrations of cooking as practised by her family, even though her mother is now too ill to take an active role:
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

My mum’s been ill, quite seriously ill for about three years now….. she’s the real matriarch of the family, in a loving way. And the way she nurtures everyone is through some amazing food that she cooks. At the moment she can’t cook and one of the ways that those Greek festivals were really reinforced in our household was because mum would go: “well you know it’s Greek Easter”, “Oh it is, okay”. “Well you’re coming aren’t you?” “Oh yeah, okay I’ll see you on Sunday”. (Heather)

Family traditions, handed down through the generations not only perpetuate cultural identity, but are also the site for culturally generated cohesion in the community. The use of cooking methods based on time-honoured family recipes are examples of traditions represented by characteristics which enable socially situated, cultural behaviour.

I’ve been thinking that I would like to go over some of the Greek recipes with mum because traditionally in our family she would cook all the really Greek meals, you know the “spinakofita” with real filo pastry and this huge tray in the oven, and that sort of thing. I used to make those when I was a little girl but I would make them with her and she’d say OK now do this, now add that, whereas I haven’t actually…..I was the helper and as an adult we have made it a few times but it has been quite some time. So if someone said: “can you make that dish?”, without my mum I don’t think I can. So I was thinking about actually sitting down with mum and writing out the recipes. (Heather)

Heather talks about taking over the role once played by her mother by “learning the recipes”. However, this has much deeper symbolic meaning than simply cooking in the manner the family prefers. Bound up within this representation of food, is the essence of family mutuality, and the relationships held and nurtured within this primal, social group. The passing of the “knowledge” in this fashion also represents the generational passage of time:

Yeah, in fact you don’t think about these things until you are confronted with the possibility that life will change. You always think your parents will be around, and so will key people in your life. That you’ll be doing what you’re doing now when you get older, but you know, I’m not probably going to be a commercial photographer in twenty years; I might be shooting but not in this capacity. So there’s something really important and sentimental to me about learning the recipes and occasionally cooking them for get togethers…… and
it would really bring a sense of, a strong sense of family when we all get together, that special thing that we share. (Heather)

A further key influence on cultural identity, aside from the social environment, is the physical environment. The nature of the physical space upon which daily lives are played out, can also have an effect on acculturation. Dominic, mentions being aware of differences when he moved to Australia as a child:

Yep, um... first thing was that it was cold. And then it was just.... it was just the amount of clothes that everybody wore. Yeah, just the amount of clothes that everybody wore. (Dominic)

He elaborates on his impressions of suburban Melbourne:

We moved straight to Balwyn, like you know moving straight into the centre of “The Sullivans”. (laughs) Oh it was literally like the Sullivans in the seventies... oh yeah it would have been the early seventies. You know, Balwyn back then - well it still is - is a really old fashioned, big house sort of an area. A lot of old families had been there for years ...... and I used to really crave the old pork stalls and the food, you know. We didn’t have that for years, until the restaurants started opening up.... and the groceries and things. (Dominic)

But it was a deep-seated cultural connection from his childhood that resonated with Dominic, a connection which re-surfaced in adulthood:

Yeah, yeah. It’s quite funny, because I was so young, I’d forgotten that I’d missed them until I went back ..... started working back in Malaysia and Singapore. And I’m thinking, “wow I remember that” or “I remember this smell.” It’s more the smells, you know. Walking down the street you think, “shit that’s a Durian stall!” or whatever. And you’ve actually forgotten that you’ve remembered them until you smell it, or you see it, or you hear it. (Dominic)

Heather talks about the emotional investment she has in the environment of her childhood:
It’s not that long ago that I’ve actually walked by the family house and I’m a bit sentimental towards it. It’s... it was a brick home, um... had a large backyard, a front yard with rose bushes and flowers, coz my mother would always look after the flowers. (Heather)

A particular cherished space, sometimes from childhood, can have an impact upon many aspects of self:

And so I remember at one stage, the corridor was like a green colour and one of the bedrooms was pink and um... I think the colours got toned down a bit later on. And they were more toned down earlier, but there was a particular era that I remember in my head where the colours were quite garish (laughs). Um... they had floral carpet and um... my mum.... Greeks are really big on having like little crochet lacy pieces that you’d then put ornaments on top of ..... doilies, and things like that. So... it was quite cute, it was a good family home. (Heather)

However, as Heather explains, this much loved family environment symbolised a point of difference she felt self-conscious about, particularly in her teenage years. A self-consciousness that has to this day, led to a particular aesthetic dominating her thinking:

It didn’t stand out from the area, but as I got older I was quite self-conscious about being Greek, about being a Wog. And um... so, like... I hated the floral carpet when I got older and I hated any colour combination that wasn’t low key or complimentary. And I think I’m probably even fussier than most people now that I’m a lot older. Kind of quite aware of, “does that colour clash or does it go?” I think not wanting to stand out or be ostracised, or wanting to be laughed at by other people. (Heather)

However, Heather also describes, almost nostalgically, a long gone era of innocence:

We had a lot of freedom too as children, because they were.... my parents were quite busy with the shop, and we were only around the corner. Sometimes we would be left alone when we were a bit older. And we could go skateboarding or... we probably didn’t have as tight a curfew as some kids did, because my
parents were working, which was... you know we thought that was pretty cool. We were happy with that (laughs). (Heather)

The environment upon which actors stage such social action, is not a fixed domain. It not only changes and influences those who are part of it, as they are drawn in and moulded by the space; it also in turn is changed and altered by their interactions with it. As Joe describes in relation to his parent’s early years in Australia:

When my dad was here, he found a house for the family and for about eight months a family came and lived with us. But back then...... like any time of post-war, social upheaval......I mean it’s like what happened just recently in Beaconsfield, Tasmania; the miners, where you find as a community they start talking to neighbours in the town. Well back then, everybody was poor and in the same boat, so everyone just helped out each other. So my cousin came out; our family lived in one room. My father, and it was a very common thing people helping other people, families just lived in one room. That was good.... that you had a roof over your head you know. Put two or three kids in there. Like the Vietnamese, when they came out here. And I have heard Italians: "Oh the Vietnamese came out here and they just put twenty in a room". Well hang on, that sounds like Italians when they came out here! (Joe)

Yenny observed a difference in the environment, she found after her move to Melbourne from her native Austria. Both at a social and physical level, this difference required a significant re-adjustment for Yenny’s approach to social relations:

Yeah, just a different way of life; so totally a different attitude towards life and values, different values. Things that are important, starting from the whole culture aspects to yeah, just your way of not talking to people. And the context of what you talk to people about. (Yenny)

This new environment, impacted upon her confidence in being able project a social identity that was in keeping with her past sense of self:

Just different ways of doing things, you’ve got different mannerisms. The way people think is different so um... starting, say... your immediate surroundings. I guess, like I said to you; when I went to the airport you know, you realise everyone is friendly and everyone is smiling and happy like that. And that was something I really appreciate from here, because Vienna is very grubby
and quite negative in many ways. But it can also make it very hard, and it did make it very hard for me at the very start. I think probably for the first two or three years, really to understand when is that friendliness just friendliness, and when is it actually more sincere. (Yenny)

Looking at the notion of cultural identity represented by the participants of this study, it is clear that culturally framed identity is informed through interactions mediated by a common history. Shared common backgrounds, in association with both ethnic and communally shared history, enables a sense of belonging and connection to a particular group. This interaction is indicated visually in the Model of Reflexive Selfhood within the quadrant labelled the System of Cultural Identity, and is represented through the four nodes of “History”, “Milestones”, “Inherited Tradition” and “Environment”.

Social identity

Identity, in the constructivist model, is formed not merely through the interplay of culture. Intrinsic to the formulation of selfhood, is the engagement of the individual at a social level. Informed by relationships, articulated by memory and played out in an emotional and spiritual environment through family and friends; social identity is the version of the self we project to others. By reflecting this sense of self through social settings and validating who we are through our interactions with others, a constantly “updated” self is able to be constructed.
Heather for example, found the negativity of some of those around her became an impetus to initiate and follow through with a particular course of action. She was able to define her self-image in terms of achievement and successful accomplishment of her goals, thereby constructing a new socially mediated self, which in turn, informed her newly constructed identity:

\[
\text{I actually found some of my friends and their parents, some of their feedback to be quite unsupportive, because I left high school at the end of year 11 and I started doing a year 12....and I dropped out. I worked for a couple of years as a sales-girl in a craft gallery. And it was after that, that I went back and did my year 12 in a fine arts stream. And when I told people how much I loved photography and everything; I had quite a reaction from one of the mums saying: "well that will never amount to anything". And when I dropped out - I guess she was a bit of a negative person - when I dropped out she also said that I'd never go back to school..... so some of those comments really stuck in my mind, and I think there was a bit of: "well, I'll show you!", that came up for me. (Heather)}
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Louis, similarly found, that the group of friends he was playing with in a band, were not committed to achieve in the same way as he, nor did they seem to share his aspirations. As a result, his social group was simply ‘not in sync’ with his view of who he was, or indeed wished to be:

\[
\text{I was playing in a band at that time as well; I was a guitarist in a band. A lot of the guys that I actually mixed with were artistically inclined, so we sort of shared ideas and stuff. Unfortunately they didn't have the motivation I had, you know. I found them a little bit slow in what... in where they wanted to go, and what they wanted to achieve. So, I sort of started drifting away from them and started making a new group of friends at RMIT. .....it was interesting, they just didn't move fast enough. (Louis)}
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Not only do we tend to choose friends and associates who often share ideas and values with ourselves, but this social group in turn supports and modifies our own ideas and ways of thinking. In this reflexive, constructionist, social view of self, our identity is influenced by those around us; as a result of the relationships we have with our family and our social group. Heather comments on this aspect in the following passage:
Well my current circle of friends, it’s more my outlook, my spiritual background that seems to determine a lot of my friendships. Creatively, we get along because we have that commonality to do with art and photography, and that sensibility. Or, they’re into metaphysics and new age thinking, you know; that sort of background. So they either come from those two pools of friends, and sometimes they even cross over as well; where they’ve sort of got a foot in both camps….. as I do. (Heather)

Often, it is our social group that reflects and nurtures our sense of who we feel we are, even if we require an array of different friends to completely fulfil that need, as Bronek suggests:

*I didn’t want to conform, I didn’t feel I had to conform. I didn’t want to start to go off to footy on the weekend or anything, and then especially when I got into art, that sort of non-conformist view sort of fitted in as well; because everyone in art school was like that, so it just sort of felt quite natural. I was always happy being a little bit on the outer. It meant that at school I was really good friends with a very high achieving little group who…. they were really into work, you know. But I was also friends with some of the people who were not that at all. I was probably never friends with the really sporting people, but I did sort of move between groups fairly smoothly and yeah, probably closest to the sort of smarter kids, even though I wasn’t really one of them. (Bronek)*

Our social self is dependent on the people we come into contact with, and although our chosen social group is partially selected to satisfy our need for reflecting our values back to us; at times it is the stimulus that difference and intellectual conflict can offer that draws us to people. In this way, we can justify our positions, test the coherence of our social identity and in the process, validate to ourselves our sense of who we are:

They all have…. the way they see things is so different. Each have different….. like the person who I’m talking about who’s a doctor, he runs, he’s a doctor who teaches other doctors at Monash and he is very……. he struggles to understand sometimes what I’m on about. Just like things that are important to me, he may regard as not being anywhere close to high on his priorities. Superficial things that I find are important, aesthetics and stuff, they’re not important to him. He’s got more of a large picture of the world...........he’s
If the tension of opposing ideas is not at the heart of the choices we make within our friendship group, it can sometimes be to supplement a perceived gap in an aspect of personal self perception. A choice along those lines, was possibly made by me, as shown by the response I gave to a question about my attitude to creativity:

*I have immensely admired people who I see as being particularly creative in maybe non-traditional ways. A friend of mine back in my student days....we used to be impoverished and we used to always work on our cars because they were never going properly. He was one of these guys that had a very good mechanical grounding, as his dad was so mechanical. I wasn’t; my father certainly wasn’t, so I never had his background - but I used to bumble along. But what I used to really admire about my friend R, was that he used to be able to solve problems. Trying to battle certain bolts and undo certain bits of the car that weren’t functioning.... and you couldn’t get off because you wouldn’t have the right tool for it or whatever. He would always find a way of doing it.... and whether it was a really big whack with a hammer in the right spot, or whether it was something more sophisticated, he’d find a way to do it. I used to think that was incredibly creative, because he wouldn’t follow the manuals. Because we didn’t have the money to buy all the right tools and all the rest of it. But he would always find a way of doing it - I used to think it was very creative. (Les)*

Social identity is not only reflected by the friends we have, but also through our family influences and relationships. And although it can be said that culture influences families and family dynamics, there is as much in common with any two families as there are differences. Or as Tolstoy (1972) has suggested in Anna Karenina: “Happy families are all alike, but unhappy families are each unhappy in their own way” (p. 1). James makes the following point:
Family unity is very important, although you know it’s very hard to tell, I think. I mean, I look at other families that are non-Greek families; I don’t often see a big difference. I mean they still have their dysfunctions and they have their strengths and weaknesses. And you know, some families........I don’t actually believe that your background, your culture, sort of.... I suppose your ethnicity; makes your family more bonded or not. Because, I’ve seen a lot failures, and as I said, a lot of successes in Greek families; just as much as I’ve seen in other families, you know. (James)

The particular interactions within the family are influenced by a myriad of factors, many culturally based, but many not so. However, the relationships we form with family members become a foundation for our social identity and our constructed selves, and informs all other relationships. Louis describes this aspect as he reflects upon his relationship with his sister:

Not particularly close. Um... I would love to make it close. I think she would love to make it close, but I think there is... there is... there are a whole lot of things. There, there are a lot of barriers. I think maybe um... my sister was deprived of being too......not too disciplined, but my parents were quite strict for the female, but maybe not quite so strict for the male. This is a very common thing for people from Southern Italy... the same, same problem. So my sister has a few problems that she probably hasn’t come to terms with as yet, even at her late age. Um... if they were resolved I think we’d be probably closer, but um... she’s... she’s not a very loose... she’s too tight. She’s been restricted when she was a young child and um it reflects on how she is now. The relationship is good, but it’s not... I wouldn’t confide in her that much, you know. I’d have other people that I’d confide in, you know. Number one, my wife first and then other friends. (Louis)

Or, as James suggests when comparing the interactions within his family to that of T’s:

It’s interesting because sometimes it takes an outsider to see how you react with your family. Like for example T and her sister and her brother-in-law. Coz T only has one sister, so she comes from a very small family. And the... bonding of those two molecules of T and her sister is incredibly strong, and it’s like trying to split two oxygen atoms, right? But when there’s six of us, we’re connected but the connection is not as tight. We’re a big molecule, and
we all have our own lives and ... we can go without talking to each other for a few weeks, so our relationship is very different. We all have our own friends and our own lives, whereas T and her sister are very bonded, they speak to each other every day. (James)

In this manner, family interactions are integral in helping us to construct the type of person we project to others; our projected social identity. As Bronek reflects upon his early years, he describes what he feels as the reason he related so well to friends who could converse and had opinions, even through school:

I think because we were a fairly small family, it was very close, very tight. I’m an only child as well, so it was also a very adult, you know, up-bringing. When they’d go out to restaurants, I’d go out to restaurants. I was very much included in what they did as adults, and that included like on weekends when my uncle would come over. And you know, that sort of family and extended friends. There would be a lot of sitting out talking and drinking. And you know, I was very much involved in that as well, because there weren’t a heap of kids around that sort of environment. (Bronek)

Also, inherent in the construction of identity, are felt associations of the individual belonging to a group and sharing an emotional or spiritual environment. Rituals embedded in religious practice, often experienced within a culture from a very young age, commonly define a sense of connection and association. This connection or identification is situated in past and present events and associations, as well as presently perceived emotions. As demonstrated by James, at times these connections somehow just seem right, even though they do not have any direct clear relevance to a lifestyle full of the day to day minutiae of contemporary life:

It’s funny... I hardly go to church now. Of course I hardly have time now with a young family, a young daughter; but probably I don’t even make the time, more accurately speaking. But it’s interesting that I don’t go to church....as often. But I did go this year at Easter time. I actually, for whatever reason, chose to do my week’s fast, like in the holy week leading up to Easter Sunday. I did a fast and then I went to communion...... not that I’m a practising religious type person. I just sort of feel that, that is a connection that I like to maintain. And it’s a weird thing, I don’t know why; but I just like to do it. (James)
Although James professes uncertainty to why he remains drawn to religious rituals experienced as a child, he nonetheless is much clearer on the impact of those rituals:

_I mean I've never been ashamed to say to anybody that I was an altar boy. And we used to get up to a lot of trouble, you know; we used to eat the bread and drink the sherry and (laughs) get in trouble. The priest used to pull our ears all the time... but it was interesting that besides all of that, and the occasional cringe that you may feel from all of that, it still does leave a bearing in your... I mean, I sort of absorbed a lot of stuff from the ritual of the religion._

(James)

Bandara (2002) describes three types of agentic human functioning, as part of his Social Cognitive Theory. That is: direct, proxy and collective agency. Whilst the first two types involve bringing influence to bear upon the physical and social environment either directly or through other better placed individuals in the socio-cultural network; collective agency involves working together with others to achieve desired goals. This may include functional goal attainment over long periods of time, or over shorter timeframes but with readily changing defined outcomes. In this way, collective agency situates action over a continuum, with a broad cast of actors that the individual is made aware of through cultural transmission. Such cultural identification is often situated and expressed through associated actions, such as artworks. The messages and goals of religion, facilitated through related artwork, can be a powerful centre for individual identification.

_I’m also very fascinated by the art of the religion. Religion has given the world a lot of art... you know if you look back into ancient times and there’s evidence of it there either on the pyramid walls or cathedral walls, in terms of icons or statues or anything. You know, some of the greatest statues are carved... they’re from a religious base. So, I’ve always been fascinated by Byzantine because I come from a Byzantine background. You know, the orthodox background essentially is from the Byzantine era which obviously was a beautiful era in it’s time, when it flourished. And great art emanated from that era, and great music emanated from that era. And even to this day I actually buy CDs with Byzantine choral music......and I actually get quite moved when I hear a beautiful piece of orthodox music. And, also iconography... and so on. I’ve always been fascinated by the art aspect of my religion, and other religions._
Like, I have a lot of choral music you know, Russian Orthodox music, that I listen to. (James)

If as suggested at the beginning of this section, our social identity is the view of self we project to others; as demonstrated through the participants in this study, it is also that aspect of who we are that interacts with and reflects our social world. In the constructed model, these aspects are represented in the System of Social Identity, which sits in a quadrant of the System of Reflexive Selfhood, (see Chapter Four) through the nodes of “Memory”, “Relationships”, “Environment” and “Inherited Characteristics”.

Social action

Just as our lives are not independent of the cultural system in which we operate, lived experience is also deeply intertwined within social systems. Social relationships both public and private, and the environment in which this agency is realized, all contribute to mediating social activity. Beliefs and goals passed on through family, often have a strong bearing upon behaviour, an example of which, Heather indicates as she discusses home ownership:
I bought a house a couple of years ago and I love it. And I guess most people would love to own their own home, but I think it’s something to do with my background that I must love it. You know, it’s obviously a very important thing for me......it’s a wonderful thing to have your own home. It’s great to be.... I had a veggie patch this year. I haven’t had a veggie patch in my life you know, my dad had veggie patches so there’s something coming up there. (Heather)

Louis also recognises the family as the environment where values are given meaning, and reflects on its importance, especially in terms of the perceived differences between Italian and Australian families:

I’m talking broadly; I think basically the family connection, the family values, what Italians hold important in the family may be emphasised.....Australians don’t actually hold that important. We have a ritual seeing each other every Friday night. I mean it gets to be a little bit difficult sometimes, because life’s pretty busy now but um... no, it’s the family side of it. That’s the strongest thing I think that we’ve adopted, and that’s the major difference between the two. Even though my wife is Australian, she has a very, very strong family. It’s like it’s a rarity more than a common thing in Australian families. (Louis)

Whereas James expresses his need for achieving a greater understanding of his parent’s lives in order to help validate his own. Such private relationships, progressively evolving over time, as children naturally move into adulthood, are significant in the construction of identity:

Oh I think it’s an age thing. I think as you get older you realise, you know, we’re not here forever. And so it’s.... I mean my dad died about six, seven years ago and I think I started talking to him, started getting close to him as I, you know, were in my thirties. When I actually would sit down and have a conversation with him. (James)

The continuum of social action, originating within the family, evolves and resonates from private to public and returns to the private, completing a never-ending circle. The essences of relationships, constantly changing and evolving within the family unit, are more determined by these changes than other intimate but external relationships. Although we may grow old together with our friends or partners, and
change the patina and nature of our bonds through time, it is in the family unit that relationships must by definition change, as children grow into adulthood:

*I mean I don’t think I had a conversation with him in my twenties, I wasn’t just mature enough even for that. I mean, maybe having the kids and maybe having been burnt a few times, you know, maybe feeling like an adult; maybe you start talking to parents. And I see that with a lot of my friends as well. Okay I’m generalising here, very generalising, but I think I find that’s, you know, with my friends, relatives; I find that sort of thing. When you get to a certain age, thirties or forties, we start getting close and asking a few more questions. (James)*

Although this change is informed by the private connections of familial bonds, it is represented through social action demonstrated and performed within the family unit.

*The thing about our generation, this generation, is that we want to know everything about our kids now. We want to know, you know, who their friends are, where are they going with education, we want to know. We want to know a lot anyway, we ask a lot more questions, you know. We demand a lot more.... information from our kids......expectations. (Joe)*

Expectations may alter over time, patterns of behaviour may evolve to adjust to society’s demands; but it is the private nature of the relationship within the family environment that defines the public face of the resulting action.

*At the age of six, seven years old I'd leave the house on Saturday morning and not come back until the afternoon and as a seven year old. So there was no..... they’d just be doing their thing, and us kids used to do our thing, and there were less expectations. (Joe)*

Or as Heather relates:

*When I was a child and my dad had his... we lived in Coat Street and my dad ... had a shop ... our street T-intersected into the street where his shop was, so it was a very short walk even for a child to go say, “Hi” to dad working, you know? Um... and it was a nice shopping centre, you know. You could go up to the hardware store and Mr C knew who you were so you could, you know, take*
some nails and dad would pay him later. And you could go down to the corner store and get some milk and everyone would say hello to you. There was a small supermarket and we knew those people well too, so it had a really, um... a little bit of a country feel, that was why we all knew each other. It doesn’t have that so much now, yeah. (Heather)

Influenced by values nurtured in the family, the relationship defines, for both parent and child, individual social activity and interaction. As Joe relates in the following example:

My son A, at fourteen; his friends were going to clubs dancing, and I didn’t want him to go at fourteen. I thought fourteen, enjoy being fourteen, don’t be getting into the scene where you’re expected to be cool and have the right moves. And I didn’t let him go and he said: “Why don’t you want me to go?” and I said: “At a certain age I will stand back and won’t worry as much and just trust in him.” But A said to me, you know, he actually... he’s told me; he surprised me one day when he said: “Dad, I feel safe in this family, I feel safe”. The rules, the discipline feels safe and it’s something that’s interesting, the discipline that you have and not giving them everything. (Joe)

Parental expectations are amongst the most important influences on not only the pathways chosen in life, but also in helping to shape action and identity in general. Within the system of Social Action in the model, through the node of “Relationships”, such private interactions are critical. Conway (1996) tells us that autobiographical memories are constructed and retrieved on the basis of self relevant “themes” that assist in creating consistency in the self concept. Themes are closely tied to emotions and life goals and are significant in the way our autobiographical memories are expressed to others. Important issues such as parental expectations and the subsequent relationship to life journeys are examples of where themes are often referred to in the construction of identity. In the following examples, life experiences related through autobiographical rememberings, are structured through thematic connections arrived at through the private interplay with family. Heather describes the following situation:

My father’s not the kind of man that would actually sit down and say to you, “Okay you’re of an age where you need to do this”. He’s more um... he’s kind of... I don’t know. I don’t want to put him down, but he doesn’t communicate very strongly. So he does say things, but they’re usually a little bit more gruff
you know? Um, so he’ll say things like, “When are you getting married?” You
know, that’s his way of putting the expectation out there…. which he doesn’t
do much any more. And I think it has to do with…. we’ve had some of his
friends who’ve had children and did the right thing by Greek terms and a few
of them are divorced now. So I think that really slugged him when he saw
some of the divorces happening, and the pressure’s definitely been off since
he’s seen that. And he’s decided that he’d rather we be happy. (Heather)

Carolyn, talks about her father’s expectations in a very similar vein, even though her
own Welsh background is very far from Heather’s Greek origins:

I think that even though my family said that my father wanted me to be a
scientist, he never told me that my father wanted me to be a scientist. He
didn’t tell me that. My mother told me many years later that he wanted me to,
because he was interested in science and he would talk about physics and so
on, and things like that see, .....buy the chemistry sets and things like that. I
thought basically my parents wanted me to be happy. And I think they wanted
me to be happy in whatever I did, and if I was happy in whatever I did, they
would be happy. (Carolyn)

The situation in my own upbringing was also similar:

My parents were very interested in art, but that was always something that
others did......and they admired. They were highly, for want of a better word,
‘cultured’ people. They loved fine music and art, they would go to galleries,
they would go to theatre and they would go to concerts.....they certainly
didn’t play any musical instruments, they didn’t paint, they weren’t the doing
side, they were more the watching side. So, whatever fiddling around that I
did painting, was my own. And it wasn’t greeted with huge support, if I could
put it that way.....they sort of saw it, it was.... it was just a stage. “Don’t spend
too much time on it - the main game is in maths and science”. And I sort
of believed them too, because it wasn’t as if I was against the idea of doing
the traditional thing. I believed that they were right. And in some ways they
probably were. That was the path that I took. So, I did a science degree, and
by the time I finished University I felt there must be more to life then where
I seemed to be heading. I was getting more and more frustrated with my
choices and I was getting older and getting to the point where I started to
feel that my parents weren’t always right. So I went into teaching and whilst
teaching I started to explore photography in a greater way. I did photography as a way of dealing with some of the issues that I tried to deal with as a painter, using a little bit of technology to help me. (Les)

Relationships are not only significant when anchored in the family through private interactions. At times they reflect public engagement with officialdom and bureaucratic policies, which nonetheless can have far-reaching impacts on socially-based actions. Carolyn describes this in reference to her coming to Australia as part of her broader travels:

Eventually, when we were in India, we discovered that Gough Whitlam, who I’d never heard of before, had ah... decided that he was going to close the borders, in a sense. And if you were of British extraction you couldn’t just come in, you had to get a visa. And a special visa to try and get a job. And so we went to the Embassy, the Australian Embassy in India, and they said that if we got to Australia by a certain time we could just walk in and not pay any of those fees. So we cut our stay a bit shorter and got in by the end of 1974, and arrived and you know, got permanent residency stamped in our passport, which I still have. (Carolyn)

At times, shared social activity, can lead to pursuits that later become the basis for a career. In James’ case, he describes how he first began to be interested in photography:

Well at the time, actually a lot of my friends were also doing it as a hobby, you know. We were all actively, as a group of guys.... we all actually had cameras and we all used to go and take pictures. And you know, we all had an actual interest in it, because we sort of all started doing it as a hobby together in year 7 and we worked our way up. (James)

Or, in Carolyn’s case, she was influenced by her partner and the travelling they undertook together:

I suppose my interest in photography grew when I travelled around the world and took a camera with me; and I took a lot of snaps I suppose, travel snaps. That was an interest I had with my partner, we both travelled together and then when I came to Australia I actually started to study photography. And by chance, I happen to live in Prahran and I happened to discover that Prahran
College of Advanced Education was the place to study photography. So that was the connection. And that’s where I suppose, you know, my discovery of Australia as a sort of light filled paradise really was a boost to my photography. But then Athol Smith said to me, because he was one of my teachers; he used to say: "Oh the light in Wales it’s so soft and beautiful". And I think the light in Australia really opened my eyes to the possibilities. (Carolyn)

The scope of socially mediated action ranges through the discourse of relationships both public and private. Interactions as demonstrated in the lived experienced of the participants in this study are influenced by factors such as beliefs and goals, and the community and family environment. Social action referred to in this manner, is represented in the System of Social Action as one quadrant within the Model of Reflexive Selfhood (see Chapter Four).

Cultural action

In context with cultural forms that are brought to bear, as Barthes (1991) has suggested, meaning itself requires agency and the active involvement of the individual. As a result, the social knowledge and cultural repertoire used to interpret meaning can vary greatly, ensuring that meaning itself is built upon an almost limitless array of experiential prompts or "signifiers" (Barthes, 1975). Indeed, for Rorty (1991) meanings can never be fixed, as they depend on a constantly changing landscape of ideas and thoughts, rendering them inherently unstable and constantly
sliding beyond our grasp. However, action and agency can be viewed contextually to the culture; and meaning can be generated, at least for the individual at any one particular moment in time, through interpretation bound within the parameters of the cultural system. That this cultural system varies and alters both through time and space, is one of the key considerations influencing this study.

This notion, of the changing landscape of culture, is acutely felt by Yenny, as she describes her perceptions of how culture is reflected through the arts in Australian society, compared to the more traditional underpinnings of Europe:

You don’t have the appreciation of culture here that you do in Europe. And in the arts that makes a big hole. There is just not the same appreciation, not the same. I think it’s also the education system here, you just don’t learn as much about it as we do…… but I guess when you go back to your history the major things that you people would have thought of here is to settle and to build something. Not to build a culture but to build a life. That was the main priority I guess, and that would have surrounded them. (Yenny)

And further, when she describes the Australian lifestyle itself:

But I think we are quite influenced by our surroundings and if you go to Europe……., you do have that history there in front you, in front of your eyes you are surrounded by it full stop. Here you are surrounded by beautiful outsides, Australians are very outside orientated people, you know. They like to be outside, they like to eat outside, do sports outside. So, you know, they don’t spend so much time at home; also I think that’s a big difference too. (Yenny)

In Yenny’s elaborations can be felt a clear identification, indicated by her use of language, in the way she thinks of herself as belonging. She talks of “you” and “we” and “home” in a way that suggests her located Australian culture as “the other”:

So that’s where in a very small sense I think a lot of the private stuff happens, because I find people here much more inclined to spend money for things that are outside. So whether it’s a car or clothes or food or drink, anything like that, whereas back home people would spend money on something for the wall. You know there are just pictures everywhere in the houses there. (Yenny)
These types of indicators, the outcomes of which can be influenced by the traditional, or the modern nature of the environment (or even simply by choice); have a clear relationship to the outcomes of culturally mediated action. Indeed, as suggested by Yenny, such effects can permeate any type of activity, from a very young age:

*Because we have the culture and the history, and the culture as in the art culture, for so long; we appreciate it so much more. You know we’ve had some great composers for so much longer than Australia. Great composers, and so on and so forth; and the same with architecture and everything else. So for us it’s just in-bred. You know that my first opera I went to when I was five or six, I think…. whereas here I don’t think you would even go to the opera as a five or six year old. It wouldn’t be offered because no one would even think about it.* (Yenny)

Religion plays a major role in the formulation of cultural action, through both its direct influence upon the individual, and through it’s often more pervasive political and social impact upon the community. As suggested by Louis, social life itself can even be seen as revolving around religious rituals and settings:

*I think it was more a ritual than anything else, I mean that was just routine. I don’t regard my parents as being that religious, but they did it out of routine. Or the fear…..the way the Catholics do, you know, they indoctrinate you at a young age and they basically instil a fear of doing something wrong…especially for them. Because in the small township where they came from, they probably would have had six or seven churches, you know. It was just… no pubs, they’re all churches…yeah… church on every corner! (laughs) And I think a lot of township life centred around religious rituals. Saints days, and… it was an excuse to get together and you know, have a good time.* (Louis)

For Bronzek, the social influence of religion is felt through the associated rituals:

*I don’t really like the Catholic Church, but I love all the trappings of it. I don’t like conservatism but I love the trappings of conservatism and it’s the same with ritual, I think there’s something nice about going through a ritual almost for the way it sets the tone. Sometimes it doesn’t really matter the details and they can change over the years of what the ritual is, but it just sets a tone. It makes a time, sort of, different from general you know.* (Bronzek)
The Tyranny of the Lamington: Cultural influences on creativity

The connections of belonging made visible by ritual and inherited traditions, have gained even further importance to Bronek since the birth of his daughter:

*Right now probably less so…. but I think that that will change. You know, the whole thing of having a daughter and the family, and... like father’s day.... and..... like at Christmas. Christmas will be more of a Christmas, because I want to start bringing back some of those traditions that you know, sort of slipped a bit. I think I mentioned that we used to do quite a few things at Christmas and Christmas Eve was very important. That’s sort of slipped a little and I think that will start creeping back.* (Bronek)

As James suggests, the influence of religious customs, made apparent as cultural action, is often transmitted to the children through the family:

*Oh, I occasionally go to Church. I think I go to Church more because it’s very hard to break away from your influences, like just totally cut the shackles. I don’t physically observe the religious aspect that much, I don’t physically go to Church like I used to, but you’ve got to remember that I grew up in a family where I was an altar boy for about five-six years. So from the age eight, to sort of thirteen, fourteen; I was an alter boy and my brothers were as well. So every Sunday that was my thing, go to Church and be an altar boy you know?* (James).

The strength of religious celebrations and the sharing of religious rituals can be profound enough to transcend ethnic differences, even though history tells us that many of the most bitter disputes and wars have originated over religious conflicts within the same ethnic grouping:

*All my friends at school knew that, so there was nothing to hide from people, you didn’t have to disguise where you were on weekends because half my mates were alter boys as well. The group of friends I hung around with... even the Italian boys and Yugoslavian boys, they all came from religious backgrounds so they understood all that too. Australians... I never really discussed it much with the Australian kids, but even the Australian kids to a certain extent, they understood that. So there was never really anything to hide or be ashamed of.* (James)

The bond of a common religion is however not always enough to prevent a sense of differentiation imposed from one culture to another. At times, this disjunction is
nourished by emotional perceptions but sometimes it is fed through experienced behaviour:

*I think that sometimes as kids, we found that we were too embarrassed...... there was always a certain amount of embarrassment of our culture to the Australian culture. We wanted to be like the Australian culture you know? That was always one of the main emotions, of feeling embarrassed, or sometimes feeling ashamed; which I think is ridiculous now looking back. (James)*

The intersection between religious and ethnic enculturation can create a site of consistency for families who emigrate and are immersed in a foreign cultural setting. At times, the boundaries between the two can even become quite blurred; however the collective agency with which the individual associates and identifies (Halbwachs, 1992), is often a major consistent strand in an otherwise shifting and often confusing cultural milieu. Collective frameworks as Halbwachs suggests are “the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past, which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of society” (p. 40). In this manner, James’s parents used the collective framework of religion to maintain a consistency across their traversed cultures:

*My parents, they used, not in a bad way, but they used the fact of coming from another land. The religious aspect of trying to keep the family together, maintain the values of church you know, and doing the Greek thing or whatever. You know the understanding, going to dances and ... that whole infrastructure. Whereas, they’ve always used that religious thing to draw back on, as a key, as a core sort of thing, you know. This is in my family in particular. (James)*

As James reflects on growing up in that environment, he points to a perceived difference in the role that religion has played in his upbringing:

*But then if you look at an Australian family, they could do the same thing, they could be religious. I mean there are religious families, but they may not be... the religion aspect may not be as strong. Families grow up differently, but the core thing in my family I think is the religion thing. Coming back to the religion and using that as part of the glue to keep, to maintain the family, community. (James)*

As acculturation progresses over time within the family setting, the need to establish this point of identification is not as necessary. The children become further immersed
in the prevailing culture and the need for religion to be “the glue” to “maintain the family, community” together is not so essential:

> But you know that changes, because then all my brothers and sisters, we’re all not really that religious. (James)

Progressing even to a stage where such overt ritual is actually resented can be easily reached, as children become older and question the value of those rituals:

> It’s funny, I rebelled against it because I felt I shouldn’t have to go after being an alter boy for a number of years, I got sick of having to go to Church every week you know. I thought, “I’ve had enough of it, I believe it, God; I have my religion as a personal thing, but I don’t always have to bloody go and show it.” You know I don’t have to rock up to Church and show it all the time, you know. As much as I respect the Church and everything, it’s my choice; I shouldn’t have to have that choice made for me all the time. (James)

Part of the natural growth and development within the family unit, influenced by changing times and world events; religion and its associated rituals, can take on other meanings. At times, more closely associated with the foundations of making a “good” person:

> I think religion is still, you know... it’s still a very major part of our lives for certain families. ... and people believe that from religion comes, you know, you become a good person. Well with religious wars raging around the world, it doesn’t always necessarily seem like religion is a very good thing! (laughs). I think that some people take it to a bit of an extreme you know? But at the same time, I think sometimes religion can hopefully teach tolerance and a bit of love and, as I said it gets a bit misconstrued in some areas of the world, but I think it’s important to a certain extent. (James)

The basis for promulgating those values within the family unit and facilitating identification are usually nurtured at an early age, and become part of the overall enculturation of the child, as James explains as he discusses introducing religion and the church to his young daughter:

> I certainly would never push it on them as my parents did, that’s the one lesson you learn, I think my parents probably put too much on the accel-
erator with religion. I think they made it sometimes a bit unpleasant, when they’d force it on us, and they sometimes caused a lot of grief in the family. (James)

However, James readily acknowledges that he sees this process as very different to the way he was brought up:

I did take her to church last year and she did enjoy the idea of taking wine from the priest because, she loves wine, like any four year old. So she said: “Oh this is a good idea” and she openly took that and wanted more of course, wanted to go back for another spoonful. But it’s fascinating; I suppose having to explain to them, you know taking them to a church. And they look around and can hear people singing hymns, they don’t understand the concept. And I suppose the way we were taught as children, and the way we are teaching our children, is very different. (James)

Louis, likewise suggests similar reasons for introducing religion to his children:

We want our kids to be Catholic I suppose, but more than just Catholic, to be just good people. I suppose, to adopt those things, those parts of the Catholic religion that really basically talk about ethical... so, if they can adopt some of those beliefs, great. (Louis)

The function of religion as a determinant of cultural action, can vary over time; depending on the nature of the environment, the psychological circumstances of the individual, and their particular motivations. Religion is only one example of cultural action, but because of its readily identifiable forms and commonly held patterns of behaviour, it is more clearly observable than other aspects of culturally based action. However, other patterns of behaviour are no less important in helping to define the self. Influences derived from significant events and significant others; shared customs; as well as the nature of the modern world, juxtaposed against the alternative of a more traditional environment; all contribute to help define the culturally mediated action taken by the individual. These dynamically positioned elements are depicted as nodes within the System of Cultural Action, which sits in a quadrant of the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, (see Figure 4.12, Chapter Four).

Throughout this chapter, using a phenomenological approach to analyse the lived experience of the participants in this study, the themes that help define identity
have been examined. In turn, these themes have been compared to the Model of Reflexive Selfhood and the role that identity and action play in forming the self. The IPA methodology used (see Chapter Three) has enabled interpretation of the lived experience under review, through the lens of my own experience (Schwandt, 1994), which itself has run parallel to that of the participants.

In the following chapter, a further analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of this discussion will be undertaken, with a view to explicating more clearly the notions of imagination and emotion and their influence upon creative expression, and how they are intrinsically linked to the creative self.
Chapter Eleven: The Making of Meaning

In recent times, the importance of the imagination has achieved renewed attention within scholarly debates (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Greene, 1995; Johnson, 1987). With the rise of psychology as a distinct discipline, severed from the apron strings of philosophy in the late nineteenth century, new avenues of scholarship and research opened up, with specific focus on genuine lived experience. Rather than examining ontological and epistemological arguments from the perspective of rationalism, empiricism, idealism, pragmatism, or existentialist viewpoints; psychology qualitatively examines the actual lived experience of individuals. Not only is it concerned with describing human experience and behaviour as it occurs in real life, but this new discipline also explores the nature and function of the human brain, through the emerging fields of neuro-psychology, neuro-biology, and cognitive neuroscience.

That is not to say that philosophical traditions, past and present, have not helped to deliver a greater understanding of many deep issues that have been of intrinsic importance, but the development of these new disciplines has allowed exploration of these same issues from different perspectives. Clearly, much of our current scientific and humanistic understanding had been foreshadowed and explicated through philosophical traditions. Ontological questions can now be also examined by probing the mind and its working through scientific-medical means, or through the questioning and investigation of lived experience and the stories behind peoples’ lives.

Dislocation, creativity and imagination

In combination with what became known as the Linguistic turn in philosophy, following the writings of philosophers such as Wittgenstein and the Behaviourist turn in psychology; imagery and imagination were temporarily marginalised in importance. It was not until approximately forty years ago, when doubts emerged regarding the idea that spoken language is best learned as a representational system, specifically brought to focus in relation to how infants learn to read; that the role of images was once again given due credence. The use of the visual gained renewed prominence in learning processes, and as a result, the role of imagination in mental representations was again brought to the fore.
My interest with regard to these issues, and its relevance to this thesis, is in being able to elaborate and further understand the workings of the mind, in an attempt to answer fundamental questions about how we learn. In particular, the questions of how the mind organises perception and understanding, how this is influenced by our subjective selves, and how we define who we are as a consequence. This leads to an examination of how creative expression is influenced, and further, how these issues can be examined through the Model of Reflexive Selfhood discussed previously. Of particular interest are the views expressed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and their work with regard to conceptual metaphor. I will discuss this in detail in subsequent sections, but it is Johnson’s (1987) examination of imagination that is of prime relevance to this thesis.

In the opening words of his preface, Johnson (1987) is unequivocal about the importance of imagination in formulating our understanding of the world. “Without imagination, nothing in the world could be meaningful. Without imagination, we could never make sense of our experience. Without imagination, we could never reason towards knowledge of reality” (p. ix). Johnson accepts the Kantian position on knowledge formation; that is, knowledge is the result of judgements made as our perceptions are organised against base concepts; but he differs from Kant in exactly how this occurs.

Kant’s view is that imagination plays a pivotal role in this process, but it is still secondary to the “understanding”, and the reasoned logic of the mind. In this way, Kant still sets up a duality between the mind of imagination and the mind of reason. It is a duality that is far less dogmatic and less delineated than the Cartesian principle of unembodied reason, but nonetheless, it is still a significant schism. This schism has been addressed by scholars previously (Habermas, 1985; Heidegger, 1962; Makkreel, 1990; Sellars, 1962), but the exact outcome of this debate is still very much open to further conjecture. Imagination plays a significant and major role in the formulation of reason itself, and Johnson (1987) observes that significantly the two are not mutually exclusive. He tells us that:

All knowledge involves judgements in which representations (sense percepts, images, or even concepts) are unified and ordered under more general representations. For Kant, imagination is the faculty for achieving this synthesis, defined as “the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one act of “knowledge” (A77, B103). To understand imagination is to understand the nature of its synthesizing or unifying activity. (p.148)…..As productive, imagination gives us the very structure of objectiv-
As reproductive, it supplies all of the connections by means of which we have a coherent, unified, and meaningful experience and understanding. We are talking here about operations of the imagination so pervasive, automatic, and indispensable that we are ordinarily not aware of them. Nevertheless, our ordered world, and the possibility of understanding any part of it, depends on the existence of this synthesizing activity. (p. 151)

Thus, Johnson takes the importance of imagination even further than the already lofty heights to which it is raised by Kant. He goes so far as to say “....all meaningful experience and all understanding involves the activity of imagination” (p. 157), and it is this proposition that is pivotal to this thesis.

Building upon Johnson’s contention, I suggest that imagination is the fulcrum of cognition and the basis for a coherent view of the world. Imagination is the grounding of our self narrative and the basis of the story that we tell of our lived experience, to both ourselves and to others. Further, I contend that if we are in a situation where the narrative of our lives comes under stress or loses coherence, then in an effort to rectify this situation and re-establish a former equilibrium, the imaginative aspects of mind function at a heightened level. Imagination then, is an integral aspect of the essence of our humanity, the “creative haecceity” that sits at the core of our being, and is fundamental to our free will.

This contention is significant when seen in reference to the research hypothesis posed in Chapter One: “That the experience of cultural dislocation or cultural stress has an effect on self perception, and this effect can act as a lens, amplifying creative output”. It would suggest that the loss of narrative coherence is the frame through which self perception is affected and further, that the heightened imaginative aspects of mind may indeed create the potential for an amplified creative output. This contention requires further examination with reference to issues of metaphor and emotion, considered in the coming chapters. Significantly, the original research question posited in Chapter One, namely: “How does cultural dislocation and the influence of cultural background, affect the nature of the creative output of arts practitioners within a photographic domain?”, can now be isolated into a more clearly defined notion. The proposition can be summed up by the partial answer that the “nature of the creative output” under consideration through the research question is amplified, and this amplification is a result of a heightened imaginative functioning.
Importantly the research question thereby is now shaped through the lens of imagination and its role in cognition. The imaginative portion of cognition is of relevance for the following two reasons:

• Firstly, acceptance of the Kantian position extended by Johnson (1987) that imagination is the function of mind behind all understanding, implies that if in response to a disruptive environment the mind creates activity to re-establish balance and predictability, then it follows that it must be the imagination that plays a large part in this process. This is a general position that must exist if we accept the initial premise.

• Secondly, the connection between heightened imaginative cognition and creative expression is central to the issue at the heart of this thesis.

Let me at this point expand on the proposition that I suggest is the mechanism behind cultural change impacting on creative output. My contention can be summarised in the following argument:

1. Through engagement with or incorporation into a social, or cultural environment that is unfamiliar, marginalised, or not the dominant paradigm in the host society, the likelihood of giving rise to a dislocated cultural experience is amplified.
2. The potential for a disjointed, apprehensive or faltering, social or environmental condition is magnified through this dislocated cultural experience.
3. A heightened and stimulated level of cognitive functioning results, as the mind attempts to reassert coherence in the self narrative, in response to a situation where the social or cultural environment is not supportive.
4. A corresponding heightened level of imaginative activity is a result of the generally heightened level of cognitive functioning, as imagination is a primary aspect of mind.
5. A heightened level of sensory awareness occurs as a result of an increased level of imaginative activity.
6. Creativity, articulated through the objectification of creative essence or creative haecceity, is often an end result (for those individuals inclined to express themselves in this way) of this increased awareness and imaginative functioning.
In other words, expressing the proposition without the intermediate steps: cultural dislocation contains the necessary and sufficient elements, for it to be a catalyst that generates heightened creative expression.

The circumstance of cultural dislocation will not necessarily result in an outcome that involves creative expression. Different people respond in different ways, some more extreme than others (Kleinman & Cohen, 1997; Khan & Watson, 2005). The extent of the dislocation, or the magnitude of the perception, will always have a bearing on the individual’s final behaviour. However, for example the following passage from Carolyn, where she discusses her work in relation to her perceptions of the bush, or wilderness in Australia, is a case where the dislocation is clearly reflected in her creative expression:

> I grew up on a little island of nature - even though it was a kind of farm it wasn't wilderness. It was a farm on top of a hill. And it looked out...since the time my grandfather bought the land, the urban sprawl kind of wrapped itself around us and when I grew up there we were surrounded by development. And I feel that I come to Australia and I kind of... I did do some bushwalking, a bit in the UK, and I certainly did quite a bit of walking when I travelled around the world; but that was kind of as a tourist. When I came to Australia I did a lot of bushwalking and I discovered a wilderness, and it was very different to the kind of more manicured farming community - although I didn’t live in a farming community, but you know - only then to become aware of the urban sprawl again you know, and the loss. And that this isn’t just happening here, it’s happening everywhere and that really stirs me, it’s a profound stirredness that I feel compelled to speak out about. That’s more important than other aspects of my art that are more about my self expression. (Carolyn)

In this instance, Carolyn’s creativity is being channelled into an expression reflecting her sense of loss, sparked by her response to a landscape quite different from the familiar patterns of rural Wales where she grew up.

Heather mentions a quite different creative trigger – that of the controlling aspect of her father’s parenting style. A parenting style reflecting control; and as mentioned in earlier chapters, a parenting style set in a more restrictive cultural frame, with regard to attitudes towards teenage behaviour, than was the norm for the Australian community.
And a few times people have commented on the images I’ve taken and they’ve said that it’s got that sensitivity and a sensuousness to it. So I think that sensitive part of me does come through my work quite often you know. But one of the reactions to my background, in that my dad was very controlling and sometimes I’d feel unsafe around it, is that I became sometimes a little more removed, to feel safe. And I became a greater observer. So I think that has come through in my work.  (Heather)

Of course, there may be dislocation circumstances so extreme, that mere survival is of paramount importance and therefore the possibilities of any creative expression are non-existent. On the other hand, it may also lead to other types of outcomes, ranging in severity from extremes of psychosis and depression (Flach, 1989), (Menzies & Davidson, 2002), to the occurrence of vivid dreams (Watson, & Watson-Franke, 1977), musical representations (Rubenstein, 1998), or to simply enhancing the perceptions of our immediate environment.

For example, many people would be familiar with the joys and euphoria of viewing for the first time a foreign, unfamiliar landscape, in a far off land. How often has a change of environment, to give a lower level example of what I believe to be the same phenomena, been the cause for a renewed level of creative energy? Or even this example: operating intricate equipment under harsh and unforgiving circumstances resulting in an innovative, creative solution formulated to address a problem. Innovation, such as the use of a paper clip to hold together a broken flange on a car motor, when stranded on a remote road, can arise from that very same process.

Louis, sums up this notion in the following way:

I think being creative is really your key to seeing things differently and resolving problems. I think that is what the creative process allows you to do. Photography basically to me... photography is basically a problem and a solution situation. The problem is there, the solution is there and you do that all the time. Whether it’s a visual thing or a logistical thing, or a technical thing you know. So, the creative mind allows you to resolve a problem, resolve a visual problem, resolve a logistical problem, resolve an organisational problem. (Louis)

As Johnson (1987) suggests: "Our new ideas and connections do come from somewhere. They come from the imaginative structures that make up our present understanding, from the schemata that organize our experience and serve as the
basis for imaginative projections in our network of meanings” (p. 170). By postulating that cultural dislocation is a significant factor in this process, I am extending Johnson’s proposition by suggesting that as an outcome of lived experience, cultural dislocation can stimulate the activity of imaginative construction.

I am not suggesting this mechanism is the only catalyst for creativity. Much is at work in our consciousness and environment that may or may not influence creativity. As Carolyn suggests reflecting on a personal satisfaction:

Photography is really the medium through which concepts are played out and I think it’s the larger concepts that satisfy me. I get satisfied by you know, finding the right expression which may be through photography. Or the photographic aspect of something is interesting because it’s an area of expertise. But I suppose my engagement is with the kind of broader concept. .....and realisation is the quest really. And you often don’t know what it’s going to be like until you do it. (Carolyn)

However, I suggest there is a relationship between a particularly defined set of events and how they may affect a particularly defined subset of the population; in this case, people who engage in or have an inclination for creative activity as a function of their lives. It is the link between creativity and dislocation that is of interest to this research, as well as the link between imagination and making our live meaningful. The privileged notion of imagination that Johnson presents, building upon ontological discourse of the last 250 years, underpins my proposition. Johnson (1987) states:

Imagination is central to human meaning and rationality for the simple reason that what we can experience and cognize as meaningful, and how we can reason about it, are both dependent upon structures of imagination that make our experience what it is. On this view, meaning is not situated solely on propositions; instead, it permeates our embodied, spatial, temporal, culturally formed, and value-laden understanding. The structures of imagination are part of what is shared when we understand one another and are able to communicate within a community. (p. 172)

Johnson’s positioning of imagination as central to our understanding of the world, coalesces with the other key tenet of this research; that is, the use of the narrative form to give cohesion to our sense of self. Together they form the duplex of conditions that can result in an intensity of creative expression. Embedded in this study
is an examination, voiced through the narratives of people’s stories, of how their creative outputs may have been affected by cultural circumstances that may in turn have given rise to a sense of cultural dislocation.

After considering the nature of imagination in terms of its role in formulating the self, a further aspect of human existence, namely emotion, is of primary importance and warrants discussion. The following section engages this issue.

The role of emotion

Emotion separates us, at least in degree and complexity, from most other creatures. In fact, it could be said that no part of life is more important to the quality and meaning of our existence than emotion; in many ways emotion is the aspect of life that makes it worth living. As noted by Lupton (1998) “emotional states serve to bring together nature and culture in a seamless intermingling in which it is difficult to argue where one ends and the other begins” (p. 4).

Current research on the neural circuitry of emotion suggests that emotion makes up an essential part of human decision-making, including long term planning and goal orientation. Damasio (1994) suggests that simple cognitive models of the mind are inadequate because without the guidance of emotions, judgment and reasoning would not be possible. His hypothesis proposes that people attach emotional significance to stimuli they encounter in their environment, and they then re-experience that emotion when they encounter those same or similar stimuli on subsequent occasions. He suggests that the neural basis of this emotion is the registering in the brain of the internal states of the body, mapped against past experiences. Or as he puts it: “feelings offer us a glimpse of what goes on in our flesh” (p. 159).

Damasio (1994) further underscores the importance of emotions when he argues that without this essential level of emotional function, we may impair our ability for rational thought and decision making. He observes that a “reduction in emotion may constitute an equally important source of irrational behaviour” and that therefore a “connection between absent emotion and warped behavior may tell us something about the biological machinery of reason” (p. 53). Therefore, not only are emotions a response to our lived experience, they manifestly colour our perceptions of the world regulating our beliefs and desires. Or as Damasio puts it “feelings have a say on how the rest of the brain and cognition go about their business. Their influence is immense” (p. 160).
Like imagination however, emotion has also had a chequered past in the eyes of scholars, and like imagination, it has often been interpreted as an aspect of existence that is problematic and unreliable. The great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, incorporated recognisable theories of emotion, however, more recent philosophers and psychologists have tended to neglect this area. Perhaps this is in response to views such as those propounded by Plato, who felt emotions are potentially dangerous as they can obstruct reason; or the distinction made by Descartes between reason and emotion, where he identified reason as the core foundation of human identity.

In recent years, emotions have once again become the focus of renewed interest. The key question of whether emotions are cultural constructions, or whether they have their origin within internal aspects of the social self, is fiercely debated. As Lyon (1995) suggests “from the constructionist point of view, almost any aspect of being may be conceived of as a cultural production” (p. 245) and adhering to this position, the view of emotion advanced by Rosaldo (1984), Lutz (1988) and others, takes its cue from the cultural constructionist standpoint. Following the general resurgence of emotion as a worthy aspect of study in the early 1980s, anthropologists Rosaldo and Lutz declared that all aspects of emotion are purely cultural constructions. Others such as (Levy (1973), and Abu-Lughod (1986) also supported this position.

Rosaldo (1984), is recognised as creating the term “anthropology of self and feeling” to describe her pragmatically constructionist stance towards discourse and meaning making. She posits the cultural discourse of emotion as deriving meaning solely through its entrenchment in cultural life. “Emotions – including feelings, sentiment, motivation, expression, and their representations – are seen from this perspective to be the product of cultural construction through an individual’s socialization and his or her continuing experience in a particular socio-cultural context.” (Lyon, 1995, p. 245) Put simply, emotion is a socio-cultural system of meaning, mediated through experience.

The contrary position taken by psychologists such as Chodorow (1999) reveals more of an individual and personal experience of emotion. Emotion, while certainly shaped by culture, ”is a person’s creation“ and therefore does not exclude subjective aspects of meaning in its construction. In a compelling elaboration of her position, Chodorow (1999) explains that even emotional concepts must have individual personal meaning:
Anger, shame, hope, fear, envy, love and hate may be evoked in particular ways in different cultures and in reaction to culturally typical experiences, but these emotions are also evoked differently by different members of the culture and differently for the same member in different internal and external contexts. (p. 165)

As suggested by Lyon (1995), if we are restricted to purely cultural accounts of emotion we have difficulty in addressing the private meanings attributed to emotion via the inner self. In other words, the subjectively mediated emotion that occurs in response to a particular socio-cultural environment, may in fact, be at odds with culturally constructed versions of that emotion. Our subjective experience of a culture, amplified through our emotional interpretations, may not be consistent with other externally situated views of that culture. Lyon suggests that even accepting that cultural dimensions of emotion are an important subject of inquiry:

Wholly constructionist approaches can obscure our view of the phenomenon of emotion in the larger sense, that is, the understanding of the importance of emotion not only in culturally produced and mediated experience, but in social agency as conceived in terms of its foundation in social structures. (p. 248)

This suggests therefore that emotion is not simply a product of culture, although neither is it a totally subjective, symbolic construction. Rather, it is best seen as a psycho-cultural construction of both our inner and outer worlds. But, just as the cultural frame of our existence has a determining effect on our perceptions of emotion, the reflexive nature of emotion imposes its own effect on meanings we ascertain through a specific cultural and social domain. Seen this way, emotions play an intrinsic role in the meanings we build through our phenomenological experience. Reddy (1997) views emotion, as being a critical factor in our casual, agentic relationship with the world. “Emotions cannot be regarded ....as a residual, somatic, antirational domain of conscious life whose turbulence is a constant threat to the formulation of clear intentions. Instead....they must be regarded as the very location of the capacity to embrace, revise, or reject cultural or discursive structures of whatever kind” (p. 331).

It follows then, that if we have a relationship between emotion on the one hand, influenced by an amalgam of cultural and personal meanings, and on the other hand, we have emotion itself affecting our perceptions of the cultural relationships that define experience, the reflexive nature and importance of emotions in defining this
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lived experience, becomes evident. Chodorow (1999) is quite clear when discussing this defining aspect of emotion:

If cultural meanings matter, they matter personally. They are projectively construed, animated, and created. Reciprocally, selves and emotions, however culturally labelled, are, like gender, introjectively reshaped partially through unconscious fantasy, through the unconscious inner world that develops from birth onward. Emotions may be culturally recognized or unrecognized, but they are also directly felt and become implicated in unconscious aspects of self and world. Psychological force drives the experience of culturally recognized emotions just as cultures help to shape emotional life. (p. 171)

Emotions have been closely allied to language formation as representational systems. But emotions themselves have a duality that is quite unique. Firstly, emotions can engender heightened meaning to the symbols of language, or they can be elicited directly through the language. For example, the word “anger” represents a felt emotion that has its origins in experience. The word itself can also be used to generate that emotion, especially in the hands of accomplished actors, with the outward manifestation being for all intents and purposes the same as the authentic feeling. Ekman (1993) has not only demonstrated that “voluntarily making one of the universal facial expressions can generate the physiology and some of the subjective experience of emotion” (p. 385), but in further studies he has undertaken, Ekman has also observed “how convincingly people can misrepresent in their speech the emotions they are feeling” (p. 386). These scenarios give rise to the issue of authenticity of emotion, and just how emotion is manifest and represented to the non-subjective other.

It is worth at this point, spending a little time examining how emotions have been perceived by scholars over the recent past. The ability of science to examine the physical, neurological changes in the brain associated with emotions, has led the study of emotions and their impact on behaviour into new directions. Somewhat earlier, the pioneering American philosopher William James (1884), was drawn to the study of the human mind at precisely the time when psychology was attempting to constitute itself as a science and separate itself from Philosophy. The James-Lange Theory of emotion, formulated independently with Carl Lange, states that actions precede emotions, and the brain interprets actions as emotions. This was a complete reversal of the position that held sway prior to this theory.
Our natural way of thinking about these standard emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. *My thesis on the contrary, is that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.* (James, 1884, p. 189)

In studying the source of emotions, James claimed that the brain interprets a particular perception and causes a physical response. The response may include such physical aspects as an elevated heart rate, increased perspiration, altered facial expressions, or specific gestures. These responses occur before the person is aware that an emotion is being experienced. “….we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be” (p. 190). Only once the brain cognitively assesses the physical response, does the individual become aware of the experienced emotion.

The James-Lange Theory is no longer considered adequate, but it did become the catalyst for subsequent examinations of what was until then a largely ignored area of research. In 1929, Walter Cannon, a Harvard physiologist, questioned the James-Lange theory on the basis of his observation that physical changes can be eliminated without eliminating emotion; and that the physical changes associated with many quite different emotional states are in fact similar. He advanced an alternative theory, modified by associate Phillip Bard, which became known as the Cannon-Bard theory.

According to this position (Cannon, 1927), physical reactions and emotional experiences occur simultaneously. That is, when an individual perceives an event, the stimulus triggers a nervous impulse which travels straight to the brain where the message divides. One part goes to the cerebral cortex to originate subjective emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness, or fear; the other goes to the body’s autonomic nervous system (which controls the muscular system) thereby giving rise to physical symptoms. The event is therefore perceived at both a physiological, as well as a subjective level.

Some years later, psychologist Stanley Schachter proposed a theory of emotion, based on an experiment conducted with Jerome Singer. Believing that the James-Lange cognitive labelling approach is not enough to explain the more subtle differences in how an individual perceives various emotions, they developed a so called
two-factor theory of emotion which suggested that different emotions, are determined by physical changes in the body plus how the individual makes sense of those changes. Their theory (Schachter & Singer, 1962) suggests that emotion comes from a combination of a state of arousal and a cognition that gives the best reason for the specific situation the individual is encountering. In other words, emotions result from a subjective interpretation of a stimulation, and information gained from that situation is used to label the sensation. So that, when people become emotionally aroused they look for cues as to why they feel the way they do, which reflexively informs their emotional feeling.

Further variants and adaptations in pursuit of a general Theory of Emotion have been posited since, many questioning the Schachter and Singer proposition that the significant factor that distinguishes one emotion from another is cognition of the social setting. Nevertheless they arrive at consensus in relation to a number of propositions: firstly, emotion involves a far higher level of pervasive bodily activity than do other states of conscious perception.

Secondly, emotions occur as a complex sequence of events initiated by a response to an important event, real, imagined or remembered, which is then interpreted thereby determining the feelings likely to follow. Each feeling is followed by a series of physical changes and/or impulses to action, which are responses to the event that started the sequence. Thirdly, they vary subjectively in intensity, type and range, both through individual variation and through variation over time, under different circumstances, within the same individual. And finally, perhaps even most significantly, emotions play a crucial role in the regulation of social and cultural life.

In its most general definition, emotion, can be seen as a neural impulse that moves an individual to arousal, prompting an automatic physical reaction based on behaviour that has evolved as a means of adapting to the requirements of survival. The aspect of real interest to this study however, is the manner by which lived emotion reflexively engages our actions. This engagement is in a more subtle and less discernable manner than those resulting from more obvious emotions of fear, rage or the like. I would suggest, that emotions aroused through a sense of dislocation, while less easily identified, are nonetheless important, and influence the nature of our lived experience.

Emotions often have corresponding physical manifestations that are viewed as representing emotion to the observer, and although these manifestations are sometimes culturally based, they are often common to many. Ekman (1993) has shown that at...
least some facial expressions and their corresponding emotions are universal across human cultures and are not culturally determined, “different aspects of expression are both universal and culture specific” (p. 391). These universal emotions include the broad families of anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness and surprise. For example, anger is often demonstrated by facial expression, increased vocal levels and body language. Love can be accompanied by longing looks, caressing touches and sexual invitation through body language; happiness through smiles and sadness by tears.

But many other emotions, or those same emotions at other times, are only viewed or understood publicly through the actions they might generate in the individual. The socio-cultural representation of emotion is not through laying “bare” the emotion itself for others to view, but more often through telling “I am hurt that you could say that to me”, or through action “I will not drive you to the shop” (because I am hurt you could say that to me). For example, the emotion of jealousy does not usually figure bodily, but rather through an action that is precipitated by the emotion itself. It is often difficult to determine if someone is jealous by simply looking at them. For this reason, the subjective and inner aspects of emotions are often thought to be primal, as emotions have a subjective voracity; a voracity only known to the individual. Most often accompanied by a physiological effect, for example stomach churning and nausea because of the loss of a loved one; they are not publicly recognised until physical or embodied action represents the emotion outwardly. Since emotions are felt subjectively, it is difficult to “know” when an emotion is genuine. Only the individual can know for sure whether an emotion is felt or not, as only an individual can represent the emotion to themselves. Thereby, in terms of social discourse, emotion is essentially inner in form.

With that in mind, let me return to the proposition I have outlined in the previous section. In the discussion regarding identity and imagination, I suggested that cultural dislocation contains the necessary and sufficient elements for it to be the catalyst resulting in a heightened creative expression. If one is to accept that proposition, the question to be asked, is just how is this achieved. My contention is that emotion plays a significant role in this process; because if emotions, can be considered as the “real world anchor of signs” (Reddy, 1997, p. 331), it is not too difficult to concede that emotion must figure actively in our worldly interactions.

Further, I suggest there are three distinct aspects to this participation. Firstly, emotion heightens general awareness, thereby enabling the individual to be more receptive to perception (Lubart, 1997). As Joe describes in relation to his early years
as a teenager, an emotional time which he feels set the pattern for his creative expression:

Oh well... I've always felt different, I always felt being introverted. I always felt a bit special being introverted. Being introverted again everything is the opposite and being introverted, being alone, being a bit of a.... out of the mainstream, I thought it was almost unique. This kind of gives me a chance to actually think and being the underdog..... I don’t know, just not having...... no one was opening doors for me, no one to educate me, no one to show me the way you know. I had none of that. I always felt that I was going to succeed at something; I always had that feeling in my head. (Joe)

Or as Yenny describes on coming back to Australia after an earlier brief visit, where emotional expectations upon arriving in Brisbane heightened her perceptions of the new environment she suddenly found herself part of:

Oh the people, the different way they dress and everything like that. But it wasn’t so much my impression anymore, because I had already been in Australia so I already knew. I’d just been there the year before so it was very vivid in my head, still. I think airports are very interesting places because you get there and you remember who you saw, what the people were like when you left. And then you get somewhere totally different, particularly if you go to a different climate. And then all of a sudden, you know, Australians are really casual and surfy-clothing. Particularly up in Brisbane you know, because I was coming from the deep winter of Vienna where I was all rugged up, and a very smoky airport and a totally different feeling. (Yenny)

Secondly, emotion plays a key role in memory construction, which populates the richness and depth of lived experience belonging to the individual. When Heather was asked to reflect on how an photograph of her as a teenager might look, emotion was her frame of reference:

I think probably what would come across is the insecurity and the shyness that I felt at that age and wanting desperately to fit in. So I've looked at a couple of photos of myself at that age, where I look a bit sad, kind of unsure of myself. So I think that would come across. Like my fringe was that little bit too long, so I was kind of hiding behind it. (Heather)
Similarly, Dominic’s memory of those years is framed in the emotional confusion of adolescence:

Yeah. it was just a real confusing time. I think we were getting into the late seventies-early eighties and um… yeah it was um… I think going through teenage-hood and everything else wouldn’t have helped it. And you go through a rebellious period. But I think one of the best things… I didn’t pick photography, I think that photography picked me. And one of the best things I found was photography; and I had a reason to leave the suburbs, you know. (Dominic)

Bronek, whilst also contextualising his childhood in terms of emotion, had a very different experience. However, the emotional frame still infuses his memory of those times:

It was very fun, my life as a child. You know it was sort of, oh you know, lots of drunken grown ups enjoying themselves and just lots of, yeah lots of entertaining. And lots of fun, lots of silliness in that sense. But you know, that really vibrant…… I mean everyone back then used to drink and drive and do all sorts of stupid things. I just remember so many parties with people dancing on the tables and dancing in the street and then they’d all jump in their cars, and driving off home! And you know it sort of makes you feel so buttoned down and straight now, that “oh I’ve had two beers now I better not have any more”. (Bronek)

And finally, emotion induces creative potential through its ability to create “flow” states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), which in turn, through its relationship to metaphor generation, can lead to an increase in creative output. Carolyn describes her feelings when she is working on creative pursuits, very clearly in terms of her emotions:

Happy teamed with you know, an edge. Because it fits into…. what you’ve created fits into a greater whole, yeah. You feel good I suppose, yeah…..but you also feel terrible when it doesn’t work. That would be when things don’t work the way you want them to work, and you’ve just wasted all this time, effort and energy and it hasn’t turned out. You feel despair, so again, both. But when it’s worked it’s wonderful, you feel fulfilled. (Carolyn)

Similarly James describes the emotion connected to his favourite images:
I look back at all my favourite images and there’s a sense of order and design about the ones that are my favourite and creating a sense of order with these bits of steel made me feel really, you know... I felt good about what I was creating. (James)

But even more acutely, he pinpoints those moments when it all comes together for him, when “the creative juices are flowing” or he is in a Csikszentmihalyi “flow”:

And then they’ve been other times where I’ve done a shoot and everything just clicks really nicely, and you find that the creative juices are flowing. And you’re thinking and you’re seeing a lot more things, and you’re correcting things,... things like lighting, and it all clicks. It’s like a game of golf sometimes. Sometimes your golf swing’s perfect and you’re in the zone and other days you’re... you can’t swing to save yourself. And photography’s very much like that too, it’s very much like that. Its how you feel on the day, how you’re thinking you know? (James)

In James’ terms, emotion is the determining factor with regard to his creativity - his creative expression is about “how you feel on the day”.

To examine how emotion and its affects are represented in the model, it is necessary to look at a number of the dynamic levels it contains. At its most obvious is the “Memory” node in the “system of social identity”. It is here that emotion can be seen to populate the construction of lived experience through the narrative and reflective aspects of memory construction. However, the emotional role in heightening awareness and perception is most clearly indicated in the central pillar of “Creative Haecceity”. It is here that perception and free will intersect, where awareness and agentic behaviour enable the constructs of creative expression.

Further, the notion of “flow”, which Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has indicated is a fundamental aspect of creative expression, and I have proposed is heightened by emotion; is represented in the dynamic interchange of the three pillars of selfhood: “Identity”, “Action” and “Creative Haecceity”. It is the dynamic energy oscillating between the three pillars, resulting in an increase in “Creative Haecceity” leading to an increase in creative expression, that I suggest is the feeling of “flow” that Csikszentmihalyi has described. In this way, emotion plays an integral role in the ultimate outcome of increasing creative expression, and therefore is extremely important in terms of this study.
Summary of emerging themes

The ability to form a sense of cohesion within one’s own life story is at the heart of self-narrative. Whether it be the continual ordering or re-ordering of experience as suggested by MacIntyre (1981), the concept of the narrative “centre of gravity” as suggested by Dennett (1991), or the telling of stories to others as a means of arriving at meaning, as nominated by Bruner (1991) and Taylor (1989); the self is intrinsically connected to the meanings and coherence derived through narratives. The tools and mechanisms used by the individual, whether conscious or subconscious, to chart their experience into on-going, meaningful narratives, are where creative practice and creative expression may well play a part.

Giddens (1991) maintains that self identity is a reflexive understanding of life narratives. Through a constant reflection and revision upon life experiences, actions and influences, the individual modulates a continuously evolving but essentially stable self.

Self identity, then, is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person’s own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self-identity has continuity - that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will - but that continuity is only a product of the person’s reflexive beliefs about their own biography. (p. 53)

Giddens goes on to suggest the notion of “fateful moments” as those occasions when particularly significant experiences occur that lead the individual to take stock and assess their life. He suggests that these moments are highly consequential, significant, transitional points, that have major implications upon not just the future conduct of the individual, but also upon the individual’s self-identity. “For consequential decisions, once taken, will re-shape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue” (Giddens, 1991, p. 142).

The relevance for artistic and critical practice is that these significant moments or plot lines in our narratives are very often grist for the creative mill. The act of constructing a coherent self narrative is readily punctuated with the creative signposts that reference the many significant (or to use Giddens’ term, ‘fateful’) moments in our lives. It is in the expressions of those moments through creative practice that artists often gain further meaning and are able to better make sense of their own sense of self, in the reflexive manner suggested by Giddens.
The familiar process of telling a story to others through the rich schema of artistic practice, enhances meaning for the artist. It also enables the artist to be empowered with the clarity, subtlety and discourse offered by that expression, thus even further helping to define the artist’s self identity. Further, these artistic expressions often resonate with the viewer in a connection with their own similarly significant ‘fateful moments’.

In this way, the creative expression gains extra meaning and significance for the viewer as well as the artist. Globalisation and the complexities of our post-modern society can create risk and uncertainty for the individual, but the genuine possibility exists for the construction of self through appropriation and absorption of life experiences. As MacIntyre (1981) says “Man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” (p. 216), but to be able to express or gain insight into our own stories above the level of noise, can be difficult in this complex, multi-layered, global society. The telling and re-telling of stories within artistic practice is one of the ways that this challenge is met.

Of relevance to this research is how human experience, informed by narrative in the ways just described, sits within the structures of the proposed model, outlined in Chapter Four. That is, how the contention that cultural displacement can lead to an enhancement of the imaginative process; is able to be understood in terms of narrative. As already stated, this research undertakes to explore those elements that contribute to the understanding of how we perceive ourselves, how we project our sense of who we are, and how stories of people are told; not only through words, but also through images.

In addition the research sought to examine the connections that can be made between culture, identity and creativity. In particular, how the influence of cultural change may have an impact upon visual expression, or how cultural displacement may play a role in the development of visual awareness. Indeed, how culture and cultural stress, may affect the voice of creative vision. In the proposed model, cultural expression is fostered through the dynamic interaction of identity and action, mediated by creative haecceity. Further, the model contends that identity construction is influenced by both perceptions of social identity, and cultural identity. As has previously been suggested, the self is a reflexive construct determined at any one time by a plethora of multiple influences. These influences are elaborated within the systems of “social identity”, “cultural identity”, “social action” and “cultural action”. Currently accepted notions of self, as well as the historical frameworks that have
led to those understandings, have already been examined at length. The use of narrative as a vehicle for self awareness has been also considered. Cultural identity is firmly entwined in the stories we hold dear, in the stories we tell others and the stories inherited through our history. Feelings of belonging are firmly embedded in the connections we have to our cultural history, to the stories of our ancestors and to the identification gained through the engagement of stories by significant others, past and present.

Tribalism, as often evidenced in the fan support base of sporting associations, is an example where the exploits and stories of others within the “tribe” are identified with very strongly. The cultural connection of the individual to the sporting tribe is magnified through the sharing and valorisation of the stories of victory, dominance and success. Often, these stories move from the realm of actual events into that of myth, gaining further strength and impact in the process. The role of the “Milestones” node through the dynamic interchange of influence from “significant others” and “significant events”, as indicated in the cultural action system in the model, is fundamental to this process. The transference of cultural ideologies and religion, become significant orthodoxies to be either assimilated or disrupted, through the transference and propagation of the stories of the culture. As indicated in the model, narratives of social and cultural history clearly shape the actions of a cultural system.

Ricoeur (1990) suggests that the plurality of a group of individuals is transformed into the commonly held notions of a culture, through the role of collective identity mediated through narrative. Actions, decisions, attitudes and beliefs of both individuals and the group to which they identify, are dependant upon the concepts of selfhood shaped by traditions and a common history. The mediating framework for this mechanism is the narrative. Similarly, social action is predicated on the interaction of relationships, environment and customs, extended into the realm of shared meaning made significant by narrative. Utilizing these well defined links, from the model which indicates the mechanisms, to the narrative form which lays bare the voice of the individual and their stories; it is the human, lived experience of creative practitioners, that has been examined in this research.

Throughout the discussions contained in this study thus far, the theoretical discourse has been concerned with establishing a frame around which the analyses contained in the forthcoming chapters can be assessed. To this end, the research has been guided by consideration and examination of current theoretical debates regarding the core aspects of identity, culture and memory. Rather than investigating in detail
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the generative origins and basis of the creative process itself, the issue of creativity has been examined in relation to these facets. This study is not concerned directly with the exact modalities of creative expression; rather, it is interested in the role that culture may have in affecting creative expression, amongst individuals already pre-disposed to creative activity.

The following important observations have emerged from the discussion undertaken to date:
1. Current theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of the self, the role that the self plays in mediating lived experience and the impact of cultural and social influences upon identity have been shown. Previous sections have outlined current research regarding memory as both an agent of self actualisation and of generating cultural meaning. Culture as a framing device for specifying ways of knowing, has been highlighted in the process of identity formation, and its importance has been examined.

2. Through the formulation of a theoretical model describing the influence upon creative expression, a heuristic tool has been established to enable further analysis. The constructed model enables further testing of some of the broad linkages proposed as a mechanism for heightening creative output.

3. The impact of ontological mechanisms on how the self translates into a creative being, have been examined. The embodied nature of the mind and the importance of emotion and imagination to the creative process have been highlighted.

4. The narrative mode has been examined as a means of conveying and elucidating the richness of lived experience. Identity creation through the construction of self-stories was examined, as a means by which individuals give meaning to their lives. The role of narrative within the context of a qualitative enquiry was also discussed.

These major considerations reveal important outcomes in view of the research questions postulated earlier in the thesis. They have raised issues that question:

*How and by what mechanism does cultural experience and the influence of cultural background, affect the nature of the creative output of photographic practitioners?*

In conjunction with the following hypothesis:

*That the experience of cultural dislocation or cultural stress has an effect on self perception, and this effect can act as a lens, amplifying creative output.*

The following section of this research now moves to the presentation and analysis of the outcomes from the empirical data gained from the participants, including analysis of the images produced for the project.
Chapter Twelve: Themes and visions

I will now further consider the issues raised and examined so far in the study, in context to their relevance towards furthering an understanding of the triggers of creative expression. Through the dual aspects of an examination of lived experience, together with the theoretical and ontological considerations of selfhood; key issues have been identified. In this chapter I will discuss and contextualise those key issues, by first examining their overall significance and then forming them together into a stated position.

Substance and context

The investigation of self, the exploration of the ontology of who we are, has occupied the efforts of scholars for centuries. This has not been an empty theoretical pursuit in search of understandings voiced through scholarly but nevertheless meaningless, niceties which ultimately serve little or no useful purpose. Rather, an understanding of selfhood, identity and the triggers behind individual behaviour reach to the most profound depths of human conception, and therefore human behaviour. A means of furthering our understanding of our behaviour and capacity for action is to investigate the fundamental influences that contribute to our sense of self and identity. This study has sought to achieve this outcome by combining the trajectories of two complementary mechanisms of investigation.

In the first instance, a Model of Reflexive Selfhood has been constructed, through which a representation of the elements, the manner, and the pathways that contribute to the make-up of the self, are delineated. This model represents the multiple dynamic social and cultural influences that impact upon individual experience, and thereby in terms of this research, construct who we are as individuals. Central to this model is the notion of Creative Haecceity, which I have termed as the mediating factor behind identity and action. Within the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, the function of Creative Haecceity is to broker identity into action and vice versa. This is because Creative Haecceity can be viewed as the aspect of selfhood which consolidates agency, free will, imagination and metaphor; and thereby enables the individual to function as a unique embodiment of the myriad influences that are brought to bear upon the self.
Secondly, the significance of this study lies not only in the construction of the model, but through an examination of specific lived experience. By considering the stories of photographic practitioners, the study enables an insight into those influences, and in this way, helps build a more complete picture of the characteristics that foster creative expression. Through that understanding, the study offers the opportunity to galvanize these characteristics into our learning environment, and fosters the potential to shape learning outcomes.

Since the interplay between identity and culture is often visibly at the root of behaviour, it is also often demonstrated through representations of creative expression. An example of this intersection, is the notion referred to earlier in this study as the “gaze of the outsider”. The view or gaze from outside the prevailing culture, is recognised as often giving birth to prominent insights and observations, which are at times brought forward through creative expression. A core element of this research is the investigation of possible linkages between cultural upheaval and associated uncertainties resulting from social displacement, and how this may relate to creative expression. Through the reflective interaction between lived experience, considered in light of current critical theory, and its subsequent interrelationship to the proposed model; the hypothesis of this research is brought forward and examined. Namely, that the experience of cultural dislocation or cultural stress, has an effect upon self perception which can act as a lens, amplifying creative output in those individuals who are attuned towards creative expression as part of their normal functioning. In other words, the proposition implicit in the study is not that all people will become creative as a result of a cultural dislocation, but rather, that creatively attuned individuals may have their creative expression further intensified as a consequence of a cultural displacement.

The chosen means of undertaking this analysis is the drawing together of common threads of experience within a clearly defined population, and qualitatively examining and contextualising those experiences. Educational practice is informed through these narrative perceptions of self-identity and their relationship to creative output. As a result of the hypothesis that cultural displacement is instrumental in heightening awareness and thereby creative expression, the study situates the pedagogic potential offered to the educator seeking the means of enabling a heightening of creative output.

The key issue relevant to this study, is how cultural dislocation can become transformed into a magnification of creative output. This involves how creativity or the
resultant creative expression, can become influenced by cultural ambiguity or disharmony. Of great relevance is the role that life stories play in revealing insights of self to assist in this understanding, and it is through the qualitative examination of life stories that this research has sought to find those answers.

That the nature of life experience is qualitative is now broadly accepted. The knowledge offered by qualitative research is descriptive in nature and it is the rich tonality and substance of this descriptive information, which allows us to learn from the experiences of the social actors in our narratives. In Eisner’s (1998) terms, not all learning is founded upon experience; much can be learned through the interactions of discourse and the engagement of narratives. The telling of stories and the analysis of texts in concert with the need to define the self and explain our existence to others, contribute to the richness and complexity of individual lives and to the culture within which we are situated. In turn, this cultural history informs identity. The resulting Hermeneutic Circle of lived experience, represented in the dynamic nature of the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood, results in a newly constructed self; which is then repositioned to tell new stories, engage in new discourse and interact anew with individuals and the culture at large.

**Emergent arguments and issues**

An understanding of the underlying issues and factors that heighten creative expression informs the nature of learning, and the nature of awareness and functioning, not only within an educational domain, but also in our daily lives. The questions posed in this study are bound together within the nature of creativity itself. In Chapter One the proposition that creativity was either (a) a learned process (b) part of a fundamental cognition of mind (c) a cultural construct, was posited. Through the discourse of the subsequent chapters, it has become clear that the proposition is actually best answered by the observation that creativity is actually a combination of all three of those possibilities.

If the constructed model is used to inform this contention, then it can be readily observed that Creative Haecceity is in fact the fundamental aspect of cognition that completes selfhood and as a consequence is intrinsically associated with creative outcomes. However, culture as seen in the model through the systems of both Identity and Action, is an integral determinant of the self. As a result the notion that creativity, expressed through creative outputs, is also a cultural construct can be readily supported. Embedded in the linkages of the model are the notions that Identity, Action and Creative Haecceity together make up selfhood, in a dynamic
relationship constantly altering, adapting and responding to a myriad of internal and external influences. In this sense, creativity is then not only culturally constructed, but it is also a learned process, one that combines with our creative essence or “creative haecceity” to complete the picture of who we are.

If we can say creativity, as measured by creative outputs and creative expression is mediated by culture, it is essential that we understand how culture affects the nature of that creativity. To address this issue, the study considered the following research question:

*How does the construct of identity and the impact of cultural experience, affect both the outcomes and the perceptions of the creative self? And how does cultural dislocation and the influence of cultural background, impact upon the creative output of arts practitioners within a photographic domain?*

Together with these questions, the following hypothesis was proposed and examined through the stories and lived experience of the participants in the study:

*That the experience of cultural stress or a cultural dislocation has an effect on self perception, which in turn can act as a lens, amplifying creative output.*

Whilst the narratives of the participants are framed by the study’s synthesis of key prevailing ideas of self and identity, it is the voice of the participants themselves that is contextualised through these ontological considerations. In order to use the narrative form, a wider, critical, philosophical reflection was necessary, to frame the study and explicate its outcomes. Therefore the twin strands of narrative enquiry and theoretical investigation are the complementary pathways of this research and indicate its dual tracks of exploration. The model, in this context, is the point of intersection; and the visual representation of the underlying processes, connections, and linkages, that enable who we are.

This study reveals how individuals develop their sense of self. According to many, the ability to form a sense of cohesion within one’s own life story, is at the heart of self narrative (Dennett, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981; Taylor, 1989). Bruner (1994) suggests that at its core, the self has a narrative structure, in that it relies on the telling of stories to explain itself to others, whilst Giddens (1991) maintains that self identity is a reflexive understanding of life narratives. MacIntyre (1981) puts forward the argument that narrative is the organising principle of human action, and personal identity is resolved by a unity of life given form in ongoing personal narratives.
The narrative form is the process through which we continually order and re-order experience, which then becomes a more coherent personal story. That is, through a constant reflection and revision upon life experiences, actions and influences, we modulate a continuously evolving but essentially stable self. It is precisely this coherence or unity that makes us who we are; that is, the self is in effect a construct of this ongoing narrative.

Amongst the numerous theories of selfhood and personality development, of particular relevance to this study is the concept of Positive Disintegration (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1970). This notion postulates that an individual's development of self moves from an initial low level stage to a higher level, autonomous, idealised self, consciously constructed by the individual through cognitive and emotional interactions of perception, and influenced by a series of deep and often painful internalised conflicts. These may be precipitated by environment, socialization, heredity as well as a general questioning and re-evaluation of the existing psychological structure of the individual.

The net outcome of this constructionist view of selfhood has two important implications. Firstly, there is a need to better understand, contextualise and generally make sense of the society and culture that the individual finds themselves within to facilitate the construction of this “idealised self”. Secondly, this changing, reflexive self must actively strive for a level of coherence as an integral part of the process. To achieve this outcome, the ongoing narrative of the self is able to attain coherence through adherence to accepted norms of story (Bakhtin, 1981). Consistent characterisations, a beginning, middle and end, as well as conformity to culturally accepted dramatic syntax is crucial in this pursuit. To the extent that the self narrative does not conform to this pattern, the individual tries to reconcile the differences and incorporate them into a revised plot, with adapted characters, and if necessary even a revised “ending”.

As has been previously suggested, the relevance for artistic and critical practice is that these plot lines in our narratives are very often grist for the creative mill. The construction of a coherent self narrative is punctuated with the creative references that indicate the many significant moments in our lives, and it is in the expressions of those moments, through creative practice, that artists are often able to further extend meaning for others. The process of telling a story via the rich schema of artistic practice, enables the artist to be empowered to help define not only their own self identity, but also those of others. Their artistic expressions often resonate
significantly with an audience through connections with the audience’s own “fateful moments” (Giddens, 1991), thereby often striking a chord.

By examining these notions, this study extends the cultural, social and environmental elements that inform the Positive Disintegration process, into a reflexive, constructionist view of selfhood; given coherence through an on-going narrative, and depicted in the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood. The creative outcomes expressed by the individual are mediated by the influence of Creative Haecceity, which together with Identity and Action, in terms of the constructed model, form the three “pillars” of selfhood. As a result of the proposition that cultural dislocation is able to act as a catalyst in the process of Positive Disintegration, the study’s purpose has been to reveal, through the use of life stories, links that can be drawn between cultural dislocation and creative expression. How the stories of the participants integrate their experiences with external influences impacting upon their lives, is in fact the key issue investigated throughout the interviews. The constructed model is able to assist in this process, as it can illuminate those elements effecting identity and action, thereby indicating how selfhood is transformed by identity, action and creative haecceity.

A necessary condition supporting this notion is that behaviours, beliefs, values and morals are often passed on by communication from one generation to the next; and the mode of this communication, language and art, is symbolic in nature. Further, the symbolic nature of culture, expressed visually through metaphor as well as language, has a role in stimulating change and the resultant re-interpretation of self by the individual. In particular, underpinning the research is the stated position that imagination is the fulcrum of cognition (Johnson, 1987) and is thereby the basis for a coherent grounding of self. Johnson’s positioning of imagination as central to our understanding of the world, coalesces with the other key tenet of this research, that is, the use of the narrative form to maintain and give cohesion to our sense of self. Together, they form the duplex of conditions, that when precipitated by cultural dislocation, can result in an intensity of creative expression.

To elaborate this mechanism, my contention is that if we are in a situation where the narrative of our lives comes under stress or loses coherence, then in an effort to rectify this situation and re-establish equilibrium, the imaginative aspects of mind function at a heightened level. This proposition, when seen in reference to the research hypothesis, leads logically to the position that the frame through which self perception is affected, heightening the imaginative aspects of mind, is the loss of narrative coherence. Importantly the research question thereby is now shaped
through the lens of imagination and its role in cognition. By postulating that cultural dislocation can be a significant factor in this process, I am therefore extending Johnson’s proposition and suggesting that as an outcome of lived experience, cultural dislocation can stimulate the activity of imaginative construction.

In addition, as has been elaborated in Chapter Eleven, my contention is that emotion is critically involved in this process. I suggest there are three distinct aspects to this involvement: firstly, emotion heightens general awareness, thereby enabling the individual to be more receptive to perception (Lubart, 1997). Secondly, emotion plays a key role in memory construction, which populates the richness and depth of lived experience belonging to the individual. And finally, emotion induces creative potential through its ability to create “flow” states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), which in turn, through its relationship to metaphor generation, can lead to an increase in creative output.

Having now provided a brief summary of the emergent themes in the study, the role of metaphor as a key link in the formation of creative expression, requires further examination. The proposition I am forwarding is that cultural dislocation has a catalytic effect on creative output, as a result of an amplification of awareness and the re-assessment of self identity. However to further clarify this contention, I need to return to the discussion of selfhood in Chapter Eleven. In that chapter, I examined Kant’s ground-breaking Critique, where he suggests we understand the world through our perceptions and sense experiences, measured against stable and known “a priori” concepts. For Kant, the bases of these “a priori” concepts are space, time and causality, with all other concepts built from these basic understandings.

How we actually arrive at these understandings, without having any prior sense perception of them on which to base our understanding, is an area that Kant does not seem to adequately resolve. In fact, at one point in his Critique, he even laments:

This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze. (Kant, 1929/1781, A141, B180, p. 183).

In spite of this, he does follow that rather forlorn statement with the subsequent elaboration:
This much only we can assert: the image is a product of the empirical faculty of reproductive imagination; the schema of sensible concepts, such as of figures in space, is a product and, as it were, a monogram, of pure a priori imagination, through which, and in accordance with which, images themselves first become possible. These images can be connected with the concept only by means of the schema to which they belong. In themselves they are never completely congruent with the concept....... It is a transcendental product of imagination, a product which concerns the determination of inner sense in general according to conditions of its form (time), in respect of all representations, so far as these representations are to be connected a priori in one concept in conformity with the unity of apperception. (A142, B181, p. 183)

Notwithstanding the issues that emerge concerning the completeness of Kant’s argument, the notion that our understanding of the world is based on some type of comparison to known concepts, delivered to us through our sense perception, is now widely accepted. Phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sellars and others have declared that this position is not entirely satisfactory, since we clearly exist in the world and our perception is created by the phenomenon of this existence through our contact with people, places and objects. This line of argument would suggest that it is our bodily basis of existence that is the means for our perception, and therefore our knowledge of the world.

For example when asked whether she feels as if she belongs, since coming to Australia, Yenny replied:

Yeah I do, I do. No, I don’t feel Australian, I have said that. But I do feel like I belong here, so I do feel like I’m integrated and I do understand the people now. So I understand the way things work but I still... I think there are certain appreciations I feel I’ve got which are Austrian based or European I should say. Even more, that make me probably different, or taking things from a different point of view, gives me a different view. (Yenny)

Yenny’s response clearly indicates that her knowledge base or perception of Australia is framed and interpreted through her previous lived experience in Europe. This example indicates a comparison of known experience against the unknown, in order to make sense of the experience of the new.

Following the Phenomenologist position is a school of thought espoused by Johnson (1987) that privileges the importance of the imagination as the core ingredient
mediating this understanding. Together with Lakoff (1999), he suggests the body itself is the “a priori” through which all other conceptual understanding is based, and it is through imagination that it is rendered. Further, relevant to the imagination’s role as the aspect of consciousness which enables conceptual referencing and facilitates understanding, is emotion.

The influence of emotion in governing social agency (Chodorow, 1999; Reddy, 1997) has already been discussed in Chapter Eleven; where emotion is seen as a major factor in determining how we actually engage with the world. This is achieved by heightening our awareness, mediating memory construction, and assisting in our construction of metaphor. But the role of metaphor as the confederation of all the essential ingredients that combine to produce our agentic engagement with the world, does require some further elaboration. In the following section I will discuss metaphoric construction, leading to an examination of how metaphor sits within the argument and its place in the epistemology of the constructed self.

**Metaphoric meaning**

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by comparison or analogy. Or as Lakoff & Johnson (2003) suggest: metaphor is a process by which we conceive “one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding” (p. 36). Metaphor belongs to our daily language and is an essential part of it. In linguistics, a metaphor usually consists of the use of language in a way other than what is considered literal, thereby making a comparison directly between two or more seemingly unrelated subject matter. In cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 1993), a conceptual metaphor is often defined as an understanding of one domain in terms of another domain, where a domain can be any concept or coherent organization of experience.

When we use metaphors in our language, we are most frequently ascribing new and profound meaning to an utterance. In many instances of metaphoric usage, we are also making clear an understanding that would otherwise be difficult, or indeed impossible to communicate using any other method. For example, the phrase “time flies” in its most basic sense, suggests the passing of time. Underlying that suggestion is the notion of rapid airborne movement, a passing that is free, perhaps equivalent to an escape, and a passing that cannot be re-captured. More deeply it also reinforces the temporal nature of the concept of time by visually representing it as an object; an object capable of movement through the air. This concept, which we cannot see or feel or smell and cannot be determined through our senses, is
through the use of metaphor given substance that can be visualised, imagined and understood. Hausman (1983) through his definition of metaphor, elaborates on this power:

A metaphorical expression functions so that it is creative of its significance, thus providing new insight, through designating a unique, extra-linguistic and extra-conceptual referent that had no place in the intelligible world before the metaphor was articulated. (p. 186)

The capacity to extend meaning through metaphor is recognised as being of great significance, with regard to the development of language. Linguists (Kittay, 1987), (Lakoff, 1993) have even posited the view that metaphor serves as the essential underpinning structure of language. Cognitive scientists (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), (Coulson, 2001), (Turner, 2002) have suggested that metaphor, through a process known as “conceptual blending”, determines how we frame new information. This is compellingly demonstrated via the ability of metaphor to shape itself through creation of new metaphors from an existing metaphor, thereby extending meaning into new domains. For example, “time’s winged chariot” builds upon the “time flies” metaphor, but adds to it the fantasy of a chariot in flight. The metaphor links to Greek and Roman mythology with reference to Apollo’s flying chariot that drove towards the sun, thereby suggesting the winged chariot as a metaphor for both the power and the speed of time. As Hausman (1983) suggests, the new metaphor is related to the original but is an extension of it:

Thus it might be said that in a growing language, conceptual references concern referents relevant to one another in a kind of family resemblance that controls the changing senses needed to designate the referents. New referents enter the world of references as new children enter their families. Each takes on characters from, and contributes to, its family context. But each does so because it has its own integrity, its own uniqueness. (p. 190)

The linguist Michael Reddy coined the term “conduit metaphor”, to illustrate the idea that the mind contains thoughts which could be viewed as objects (Reddy, 1993). He metaphorically represented linguistic expression as objects travelling along a conduit, extending from the speaker to the listener. Justification for this metaphor, Reddy claims, is in the everyday use of the English language itself, as we often talk about “making our point”, “putting things into words”, “transmitting the idea” or “getting the message across”.

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His views have since been widely criticised by linguists as too simplistic a representation of language construction. However, one outcome of his writings which has endured is the notion that language is largely metaphorical. As explained by Lakoff (1993), since Reddy first proposed his ideas, many scholars involved with language and cognitive science have accepted the notions that the “locus of metaphor is thought, not language, that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behaviour reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience” (p. 203).

In fact, George Lakoff together with cognitive scientists Mark Turner, Mark Johnson and Rafael E. Núñez, embrace a position labelled “Experientialist Philosophy”, and have emphasised the fundamental role of metaphor as the basis of cognition. In a proposition that moves the function of metaphor sideways, away from that of language, Lakoff (1993) suggests “the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (p. 204). He argues that it is the conceptual domain itself that allows us to formulate linguistic metaphors, not the other way around, stating that: “Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person’s conceptual system” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 6).

If we take as an example the metaphoric phrase mentioned earlier, that of “time flies”; the underlying conceptual metaphor suggested by Lakoff & Johnson (2003) is that of time as a moving object. This is reflected in such phrases as “the time for action has arrived”, “I can’t wait till my birthday is here”, or “the time to leave is approaching”. In these examples, the observer is fixed and experiencing, or viewing, the motion of time. However, we also sometimes refer to time as being stationary, with the observer moving towards it. For example, “we are approaching the summer”, “he is racing towards the future” or “when he reaches his fifties”. In either case, the notion of time is understood metaphorically through the motion of a body – either time represented as the body, or the observer as the body. This apparent contradiction is however conceptually coherent, as both metaphoric systems relate to the same underlying metaphor, it is just that their specific mapping varies from one domain to the other.

The underpinning for the metaphor, the basis through which we are able to determine its meaning, is grounded in our biologically-oriented understandings of the world. As Lakoff (1993) suggests “we have detectors for motion and detectors for objects/locations” both available to us through our stereoscopic vision, but “we do not have detectors for time” (p. 217), thereby making it impossible for us to sense time in
any way other than mediated through metaphor and our perceptions of space and motion.

It follows then, if we accept that time is metaphorically understood in this fashion, that time cannot correspond to an “a priori” concept as suggested by Kant. At the very least, it would suggest motion as a more justifiable “a priori” concept than time, since the understanding of time is based on our understanding of motion. Motion through space is itself a sense perception, that is, we observe objects outside of our bodies and we observe some of these objects in motion. Therefore in terms of “a priori” understandings a defensible position would be that our bodies are the fundamental around which all our other understandings are built. From the moment of our birth we measure, compare and comprehend the outer world in terms of its relationship to our body, an observation that sits in harmony with that proposition.

The embodied basis of experiential knowledge, resonant with the Phenomenologist traditions of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and others, is thereby built through metaphorically based understandings of the world around us, using the subjective frame of embodied existence as its reference. Lakoff & Johnson (1999) state their position even more boldly, by proposing that:

Cognitive science and neuroscience suggest that the world as we know it contains no primary qualities in Locke’s sense, because the qualities of things as we can experience and comprehend them depend crucially on our neural makeup, our bodily interactions with them, and our purpose and interests. For real human beings, the only realism is an embodied realism. (p. 26)

We all have bodies that are essentially similar and share most significant characteristics and functions, so we can understand the world in a consistent manner. As a result, understanding of the world is shareable. Put another way, cultural understanding built upon embodied existence within a defined domain, is shareable within that cultural domain. Therefore, according to the proposition offered by Lakoff & Johnson (1999) meaning is sharable and communicable:

The mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such a way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in. The result is that much of a person’s conceptual system is either universal or widespread across languages and cultures. (p. 6)
To support this contention, I’d like to offer an example of metaphoric understanding that illustrates its embodied nature. When we talk of warmth, we often use certain colours to assist in its representation. Colours such as orange and yellow are even known as “warm” colours, whereas the blue end of the spectrum, is often termed “cold”. Phrases such as “the yellow glow of the setting sun” have a conspicuously different connotation to that of “the sun rose through the blue haze of morning”. The observable physical basis for this analogy is clearly quite pervasive and is consistent with sense perceptions of our world; the glow of a fire is orange, whereas ice and frost appear bluish.

Paradoxically, examination of the colour temperature model of light, used to define and measure the colour of light, gives a result quite contrary to what might be expected. In scientific terms, the colour temperature of light is determined by comparing its hue (colour) with a heated, black object, or theoretical “black body radiator”. Colour temperature therefore refers to the temperature to which one would have to heat such a theoretical “black body” to produce light of the same visual colour. The temperature, measured in degrees Kelvin, or ° K, at which the heated black body matches the hue of the light, is the temperature attributed to that colour. Some examples of experimentally determined values ascribed to different light sources through this process are: a candle, 1200° K; an ordinary incandescent household bulb, 2800° K; sunset, 3000° K; bright sunshine, 6000° K; blue skylight 12,000° K.

From observation of this sequence, it becomes clear that blue is actually the hotter colour, while red is the cooler colour. Astonishingly, this is the exact opposite of the associations we have of both colours, and at first glance, appears to suggest an inconsistency in the argument regarding the embodied nature of our perceptions. To answer this apparent dilemma, let me return to the earliest stages of our existence, when as young children we first learn about hot and cold. If we live in an environment where snow exists, we quickly perceive through our direct experience that snow and ice are cold, whereas in contrast, a fire supplies heat and warmth. The fire is orange/red and snow is blue/white. Even if we are in an environment where snow does not exist, the heat from a fire is demonstrably greater than the blue/white of water or the ocean. These earliest perceptions, figure profoundly in our conceptualisation of hot and cold. We associate those colours with the understandings we develop, and they are so strong that even scientific evidence to the contrary, understood many years after childhood, is not enough to change our embodied metaphoric associations.
Further, as babies and young children, we also quickly learn to associate warmth with food (the warmth of breast milk), cooking, satisfaction, and comfort; and cold is associated with hunger, wetness, and discomfort. These associations lead to the metaphoric understanding of emotion based around the colours we have associated with temperature. “She radiated warmth towards the baby”, “the warmth of his smile was inviting” or “she looked at him with cold disdain”, “he turned a cold shoulder”; are examples of the type of language commonly used to associate these emotions.

In photography and cinematography, colour hues created through the use of filters and selective lighting, are also often used to suggest emotion to the viewer, and we readily associate an inviting ambience as having an orange/yellow colouring. (Not too many restaurants go out of their way to create a bluish lighting aura as a way of enticing customers). The metaphor of inviting and nurturing emotion as warmth; and stark, rejecting emotion as cold, is powerfully entrenched in our understanding, and assists us to make sense of emotion. “The conceptual structure is grounded in physical and cultural experience, as are the conventional metaphors. Meaning, therefore, is never disembodied or objective and is always grounded in the acquisition and use of a conceptual system” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 197).

If we are to accept the embodied nature of metaphor as the guiding epistemological conceptual frame, then this school of thought has significant ramifications for how we view identity. As has already been discussed, coherence of mind is accepted as being intrinsic to any conceptualisation of self. However, a coherent narrative as suggested by MacIntyre (1981), Bruner (1994) and Barclay (1994) is seemingly fundamental to the self construction that underlies the coherence of a multi-faceted, constantly changing and adapting identity. Because if our forms of understanding or reasoning, based upon our metaphoric conceptualisations are incoherent, our ability to function in the world is compromised. As Lakoff & Johnson (1999) tells us:

> Our categories of things in the world determine what we take to be real…. Our concepts determine how we reason about those categories. In order to function realistically in the world, our categories and our forms of reason must “work” very well together; our concepts must characterize the structure of our categories sufficiently well for us to function. (p. 21)

As we have seen, if we are to subscribe to the Experientialist Philosophical position, meaning is created through our embodied perceptions conceptualised through metaphor. And fundamental metaphors are based on experience and sense perception from the moment of birth. Therefore our rich and varied existence, based on
our phenomenological progress through the world, is culturally and socially enacted influencing our perceptions and thereby our meaning making. Returning to the metaphoric content of the Lamington found in the title of this research, this simple, and somewhat iconic Australian cake, had for me taken on a representation of my lack of connectedness and familiarity with Australian culture. In fact, its associations were resonant with my emotionally charged feelings of disconnection to that culture. My desire for sameness was embodied in the simple, coconut sprinkled cubed form, but its metaphoric representation was of difference, a lack of belonging and ultimately of a cultural dislocation.

Our understandings are mediated through culture, and “this mediation is via individual choices played out in action and in interpretation in the context of culture” (Lyon, 1995, p. 253). When an individual transfers from one culture to another, shared meaning often becomes more problematic. Lakoff & Johnson (2003) tell us that “When people who are talking don’t share the same culture, knowledge, values, and assumptions, mutual understanding can be especially difficult” (p. 231). In fact, if we consider what are the elements that are necessary for individuals to successfully interact with a new culture, Lakoff & Johnson (2003) suggest:

You need enough diversity of cultural and personal experience to be aware that divergent world views exist and what they might be like. You also need patience, a certain flexibility in world view, and a generous tolerance for mistakes, as well as a talent for finding the right metaphor to communicate the relevant parts of unshared experiences or to highlight the shared experiences while de-emphasizing the others. Metaphorical imagination is a crucial skill in creating rapport and in communicating the nature of unshared experience. This skill consists, in large measure, of the ability to bend your world view and adjust the way you categorize your experience. (p. 231)

And further, they explain that our capacity for self-understanding is predicated on our ability to mutually understanding others:

Just as in mutual understanding we constantly search out commonalities of experience when we speak with other people, so in self-understanding we are always searching for what unifies our own diverse experiences in order to give coherence to our lives. Just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in common with someone else, so we seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. (p. 232)
Several researchers have also proposed that emotionally based associations can lead to metaphor generation. For example Ortony & Fainsilber (1987) demonstrated that a “significantly greater proportion of metaphors occurred in descriptions of feeling states” and that this was evidenced by “results showing the predominance of metaphorical language during descriptions of feeling states as opposed to actions, especially when those states are intense” (p. 183). Lubart (1997) has also shown that “an individual’s emotional state could influence the aspects of image that are highlighted in metaphor” (p. 293), and that this may be a contributor to what he has termed “resonance” which he postulates is the mechanism that allows a link between two conceptually remote concepts or images being established.

It is early days for this line of research, but there is a growing body of evidence that seems to indicate a heightened emotional engagement, leads to a greater possibility of metaphor generation. My earlier childhood connection with lamingtons, brought forward as a representation of my yearning for conformity and acceptance, can be seen as a metaphoric projection in exactly this manner.

These two aspects, taken together with the search for coherence of the self, set in train the parameters for a heightened creative potential. I suggest, this creative potential, exhibited through creative expression, is an outcome evidenced by the experiences of the participants in this study. Lakoff & Johnson (2003) expand on the privileging of metaphor within this interaction, by re-enforcing that:

...metaphor is not merely a matter of language. It is a matter of conceptual structure. And conceptual structure is not merely a matter of the intellect – it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: colour, shape, texture, sound etc. These dimensions structure not only mundane experience but aesthetic experience as well. Each art medium picks out certain dimensions of our experience and excludes others. Artworks provide new ways of structuring our experience in terms of these natural dimensions. Works of art provide new experientialist gestalts and, therefore, new coherences. From the experientialist point of view, art is, in general, a matter of imaginative rationality and a means of creating new realities. (p. 235)

I have earlier proposed that cultural dislocation can lead to a heightened creative expression. I suggested the main factor in this process was the heightened level of
cognitive functioning that resulted from an attempt to reassert coherence in the self narrative. Following the Experiential Philosophy of Lakoff & Johnson, I suggest the mechanism for this reassertion of coherence, is based on metaphor, and metaphoric imagination. In addition, cultural dislocation is associated with an increased likelihood of emotional involvement, as an outcome of that dislocation.

My proposition is therefore that cultural dislocation, a heightened emotional state together with increased activity of the self as it engages in a project of self assertion and coherence, can set in place a by-product that entails a metaphoric, imaginative, process. A possible outcome of this metaphoric imaginative process is heightened creative expression, which can arise as a consequence of the initial cultural dislocation. The diagram shown in Figure 12.1, is an elaboration of the hypothesis indicated in Chapter One: Figure 1.1, indicating the stages and flow of this interaction.
model constructed in Chapter Four, indicates the dynamic systems that enable and make visible its occurrence.

Let me then examine this proposition in light of the constructed model. The Dynamic System of Reflexive Selfhood, suggests creative expression is influenced by cultural and social identity, and cultural and social action. Each of these four systems are in dynamic balance, meaning that if any one of them is asserting a lesser impact, then aspects of the other three will increase to maintain dynamic harmony.

Movement from one cultural domain into another tends to produce uncertainty and hesitancy with regard to actions centred within the new domain. This is implicated in the model through the overall system of Cultural Action, tending to temporarily play a lessor role. "Environmental" influences and "Milestones" centred on "significant others" tend to lessen; and uncertainty about new customs, as indicated through "celebrations" and "ritual", tend to lead to a lesser activity in those areas. This reduced effect is balanced by increased activity within the system of Social Identity, resulting in a corresponding increase in the level of emotional influence together with greater awareness driven by a heightened level of metaphoric imagination. This is indicated through the "emotional" environment, "narrative" and "reflective"
memory, and the relationship nodes of “friends” and “family”, in the model becoming more active.
This interchange of activity can be best thought of as analogous to the entropy levels of atomic particles. To maintain the dynamic stability of the system any decrease in energy from one component is complemented by an increase in another. Hence various nodes of the system of Social Identity increase their activity, resulting in an overall increase in the sub-system, which in turn is balanced by a decrease in the sub-system of Cultural Action. In this manner, harmony is retained in the overall system, resulting in its dynamic balance.

Within this chapter I have summarised and contextualised the key issues revealed in the study. I have then examined the role that metaphor plays in the construction of meaning and have suggested that it is instrumental in the process of heightening creative expression, as a result of increased cognitive activity. In the following chapter I will examine the influences upon the coherence of the self that leads to this increased cognitive activity.
Chapter Thirteen: Coherence and temporality

The essential ingredient necessary to precipitate a heightened creative expression resulting from cultural dislocation, is a heightened level of cognitive functioning. This increase in cognitive functioning arises as a result of the need to establish coherence in the self narrative. Imaginative awareness, through increased emotion and metaphoric projection, has been established as a key element in this process and summarised in the previous chapter (see Figure 12.1). However the influences upon the coherence of the self have yet to be examined. In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of awareness and the role temporality plays in this aspect of cognition, and elaborate on how this has a bearing upon the coherence of identity.

Organising the experience of time

As has been seen in Chapter eight, the coherence of self can be conceptualised using accepted notions of dramatic syntax and general narrative structure. However, to successfully subscribe to this narrative structure, there is a need to understand the notion of time as it relates to plot and simple on-going storylines.

The use of narrative to assign a linear structure to our lives, is enabled through its conformity with accepted dramatic norms. This dramatic structure becomes available as a means of dealing with the temporal nature of existence. But as Ricoeur (1991) expressed it so succinctly: time is "both what passes and flows away and, on the other hand, what endures and remains" (p. 22). As a way of processing this conundrum, an important means by which individuals can interpret narrative, is as a tool to assist in formulating an organisational base of experience.

The fact we are aware of a yesterday, a today and a tomorrow is one major aspect that is clear about our lives. That this notion may define our existence has been suggested by scholars such as Heidegger (1962) who questioned the fundamental meaning of our being. We are the only organisms or objects that care about our existence; that is, we question and think about who we are. This is the starting point for a philosophy of existence suggested by Heidegger, who goes on to propose that temporality is the fundamental, unique aspect of being human. Compared to other
animals which only have a present; humans through memory, expectation, foresight and imagination can move beyond the present to the future, or backwards to the past. Humans are able to understand and define themselves through these acts of consciousness. Our notions of existence are therefore informed by the specific cultural and individual perspectives which are our unique past, and our desires, hopes and preparations for our unique future.

Heidegger (1962) uses the German word “Dasein” to describe human beings. Dasein can be translated as simply human existence, but Heidegger breaks the word into its two constituent components: “Da” meaning “here”, and “sein” meaning “to be” or “being.” Therefore in Heidegger’s terms, Dasein encompasses a broader meaning of “to be here” or “to be in the world”. He further proposes, in a position at the core of his philosophy, that the meaning of Dasein is therefore linked to temporality; as time only exists for entities for which a past, a future, and an approaching death are issues. “Dasein exists as an entity for which, in its Being, that Being is itself an issue” (p. 458).

In Heidegger’s terms, we are always “being-towards death”, which is not to say that we dwell upon our own deaths; but the fact that our lives are of limited duration, and that we are aware of this fact, influences our existence. By contrast, death is not an issue for this page of writing; its destruction is an issue only for me or perhaps the reader. Therefore, Heidegger argues, time cannot find its meaning through some unreachable eternity, but gains its meaning in death. He suggests further that temporality is an important key to interpreting Dasein, for Dasein’s structures can in fact be interpreted as modes of temporality. It is temporality, understood by humans through death, that makes Dasein “stand before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 294).

Neisser (1994a) in accord with Heidegger’s position, suggests that to be human involves an understanding that we have a past, and will have a future; even if most people have no accurate awareness of the length of that future. The temporality of our lives is intrinsic to this awareness, and importantly, it is via a narrative structure that we are able to fashion day to day events into finite stories. These stories are made meaningful via an adherence to a recognisable narrative pattern of beginnings and endings. Lived experience, adapted into narratives that are comprehensible in form, enable everyday existence, founded upon the continuum of time, to be made meaningful.
Significant to this temporality of narrative, is the variance an individual may perceive with regard to the nature of time itself. That is, the awareness of time passing either more slowly or faster than would normally be the case. I have already elaborated on how metaphor is used to make sense of the meaning of time. But to discuss our awareness of time and thereby indicate its importance to this study, let me first consider how we perceive time itself. Unlike space, time is not a concrete physical manifestation. As such it is not easily defined in terms of our senses, which are geared more towards the physical realm.

Newton suggested time and space form a container in which all events are situated (Rynasiewicz, 2006). In opposition to that view, Leibniz and others thought of time as a conceptual framework (Burnham, 2006), within which we sequence events and quantify their duration. As already discussed in Chapter Eleven, Kant, described time as an a priori notion that together with the a priori notion of space, enables us to make sense of experience (Kant, 1996/1781). He held that both time and space are essential components of a systematic framework that are necessary for rational thought and agency.

Distinctions have also been made by scholars in the past about “individual time” (Flaherty, 1991), that which uniquely affects the individual, and “cosmic time” (Ricoeur, 1991), within which the individual exists. Cosmic time, is a time that precedes consciousness or perception. A time that “is”, rather than a time that is phenomenologically experienced. Such distinctions give rise to difficulties with the perception of “now”, which can only be felt in terms of an individual consciousness, participating within a continuum ranging from a personal past to an anticipated future.

As Ricoeur (1991) puts the dilemma: “for there really to be a ‘now’ it must be experienced by a consciousness which perceives it as the passage of the future towards the past across a present” (p. 12). But the enveloping notions of cosmic time do not allow for such individual experiences, thereby suggesting the existence of a greater conundrum. “The real disparity between cosmic time and lived time is that between quantitative and qualitative time, between a time without a present and a time with a present.” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 12)

The move beyond this philosophical impasse, has been achieved as a result of recent advances in neuroscience. These advances have enabled the measurement of brain activity during specifically defined events, which together with the physical sciences’ explorations of the relative nature of time, have progressed our understanding of
time itself. In fact, both strands of scholarship have helped to privilege the notion that time is a derivative concept. Physics has led us, through Einstein’s theories, to the position that there is no single “universal now”, but instead a time relative to a state of motion and position in space.

Further, Einstein (1954) also suggested that events exist simultaneously in a fourth, space-time dimension. In fact, he proposed that events are just there; mixed together, sharing equal temporal status, having neither occurred in the past, nor the present, nor certainly not lined up ready to occur in the future. Difficult for us to grasp conceptually, it would seem that a “flowing”, progressive time is the outcome of our subjective perceptions, without actual physical foundation in the world.

If the above is indeed the case, how then do we bodily “feel” this passing of time? Neuro scientific advances have gone some way to filling the gap and have provided valuable data to assist in the study of temporal perception. Studies of the brain and nervous system, suggest that temporal experience is closely related to sensory experience. The biological response the brain generates as a result of sensory stimuli facilitates our cognitive perceptions, through the discrete, measurable impulses that the brain produces. That is, perceptual processing as suggested by Evans (2004) is underpinned by intervals of time termed “perceptual moments”, which facilitate sensory experience into perceived “time slots”. These perceptual moments are timing mechanisms, governed by neurological processing that ranges in duration from anywhere between three seconds to a thousandth of a second.

Evans (2004) holds the view that it is actually these timing mechanisms which form the basis of our experience of time, thereby re-enforcing the notion that the perception of time is an internal construct of our biology:

> While time is not a physical thing, something that is objectively ‘out there’ which can be perceived in the same way that objects in space can be, it is nevertheless a real experience. Our awareness of time emerges from the process of perceiving, and from the properties of our perceptual apparatus. That is, it is a consequence, ultimately, of the various “timing mechanisms” in the brain which give rise to a range of perceptual moments, or different intervals, which are necessary for and underpin perceptual processing. As such, time necessarily enters into our experience of everything as it is fundamental to the way in which perceptual processes operate. (Evans, 2004, p. 16)
Cognition and the coherence of identity

At the heart of this study is the proposition that a cultural dislocation gives rise to a heightened level of cognitive functioning. However, to further this examination it is once again necessary to venture into theoretical areas of neuro-psychology. Whilst the underlying methodology of this qualitative study, as proposed in Chapter Three, is centred around phenomenology and the narrative form, at times through the investigation it has been necessary to touch on debates within other theoretical paradigms, namely social psychology and neuro-psychology. The reason this has been required, is because of the complex nature of identity.

No single, theoretical paradigm is able to supply all the answers necessary for this study, but taken as a whole, all four create a window through which theory is able to inform identity, and help reveal its structure. Using all four paradigms, a unified self can be shown to exist and a continuity of identity reflexively constructed and illustrated through the Model of Reflexive Selfhood.

To continue with this approach, the sensory perceptions of time are integral to how we understand the world. Of relevance to the issues under discussion is how this perception relates to our general cognitive functioning. The temporal units, or the duration of moment that we accept as normal, common existence, can vary greatly. But it’s only when we feel that time is “dragging”, such as in a doctor’s waiting room, or time is “racing”, such as if our turn on the go-kart track has come to an abrupt end; or if we “see” an activity apparently occurring in slow motion, such as a dog suddenly running across a road in front of a car; that we are acutely aware of a major alteration in the duration of the normal units that make up time’s passing.

How the individual interprets, perceives, or “feels” the speed or duration of time, seems to be independent of the actual level or intensity of activity. Whether we are occupied with the furious day to day hustle and bustle of our lived experience, or luxuriating on a wind-kissed, tropical island beach; the speed with which time is felt to pass can be either rapid or slow - in quite opposing circumstances. In fact, it would seem that it is not the actual nature of the event or stimulus that affects our perception of time, but rather the nature of the perception through which we attend to the event.

Flaherty (1992) proposes a partial answer to this question of perceptual attendance and the resulting volatility attributed to the sensory perception of time’s passing. He suggests this change in perception is manifest in situations which effect individu-
als who are being challenged, due to a major change in their environment. “People who are faced with extreme circumstances have an increased emotional concern for making sense of their situations” (p. 146). These occurrences, such as when people suffer stress by being in unusual or unfamiliar situations, can often lead to an increased emotional need to make sense of the world. This unsettling, anxiety ridden, setting is outside the individual’s normal matter-of-fact routines of established understandings and behaviours. “As a result, there is a powerfully felt need to account for one’s immediate conditions......There is, consequently, a great increase in one’s cognitive engrossment with self and environment” (p. 146).

Flaherty is suggesting that there are qualitatively distinct kinds of attending experiences in response to external stimuli, mediated by the internal predisposition of the individual. This effect is perceived by the individual as a variance to the “normal” duration of time, through either compression, or protracted duration. Such cognitive alterations to the temporality of time occur because the individual is more systematically occupied with aspects of self, or in other words, the detail of their own psychological existence.

Therefore, if the perception of time is linked to our level of cognitive awareness and activity, as a result of an increased involvement with self perception, this proposition has major relevance to this study. Not because variances of perceived temporality may occur as we live out our lives, but because a key mechanism for this occurrence could well be the outcome arising from a change in social or physical circumstances. The physical referent for the perception of time’s passing is actually an embodiment of its underlying cause; that is, a heightened perceptual involvement and cognitive engagement by the individual. It is precisely this adjustment to cognitive functioning that is relevant to the proposition at the heart of this study. In other words, the following mechanism is postulated:

1. A change in social or physical environment gives rise to a cultural dislocation.
2. The dislocation gives rise to a heightened cognitive state.
3. This heightened cognition arises as a result of the search for coherence of identity and an increased emotional state, as indicated in Chapter Twelve.
4. The heightened cognitive state alters the perception of time which impacts upon the perceptual awareness of the individual.

The above analysis reveals that the diagram in the preceding chapter (Figure 12.1) requires modification to make room for these aspects, thereby incorporating not only metaphor generation but also temporal modifications, leading to the heighten-
Figure 13.1
ing of perceptual as well as imaginative awareness. The revised diagram, shown in Figure 13.1, now indicates the four aspects of the mechanism that translates cultural dislocation to an increased creative expression, namely (1) a heightened emotional state, (2) a search for coherence in identity (3) an increased metaphoric generation and (4) an alteration to the temporal perceptions of time. These four conditions, enabled by an initial heightened cognitive functioning, in fact become the manifestation of this increased cognition and result in greater imaginative and perceptual awareness, the outcome of which is increased creative expression.

An illustration of such an occurrence, is given by Hoffman (1990), in her autobiographical journey from girlhood in Poland to adulthood in America. In this account, she talks about her unsettling state of nostalgia and turmoil; a state which as a consequence informs a confused, but nonetheless heightened, cognitive awareness:

I couldn’t repudiate the past even if I wanted to, but what can I do with it here, where it doesn’t exist? After a while, I begin to push the images of memory down, away from consciousness, below emotion. Relegated to an internal darkness, they increase the area of darkness within me, and return in the dark, in my dreams. (p. 116)

The cognitive confusion rising within, as a result of the turmoil associated with the uncertainty of her new existence; leads her towards a profound need to make sense of the nature of her circumstances, her world.

Nothing here has to be the way it is; people could behave in a different manner; I could look different, flirt differently; I could be having entirely different conversations. Not any specific conversations; the other place in my mind no longer has any particularity. It’s just an awareness that there is another place – another point at the base of the triangle, which renders this place relative, which locates me within that relativity itself. (p. 170)

Perceptual awareness

Without doubt, a certain level of questioning and re-framing is quite normal, and commonly felt as we engage with the world. However, “the shock of transition to new and unusual circumstances provokes the person to intensify self-consciousness” (Flaherty, 1991, p. 82), which results in an amplification of this state. The level at which this anxiety is commonplace and experienced as a fundamental aspect of our daily lives, is of course important, and variable through time, and between indi-
individuals. But as Flaherty suggests “the individual’s framing anxiety is tempered by the fact of routine behaviour in a conventional setting” (p. 148).

General levels of anxiety are therefore often ameliorated by the details of the commonplace, the never ending fragments of our daily existence, which through the “noise” of familiar activity, reduces anxiety to such a degree, that it becomes part of our normal experience. “Only modest cognitive involvement is requisite if one takes an instrumental attitude and desires nothing beyond a practical level of interactional competence” (Flaherty 1992, p. 148).

This is even further re-enforced by the acceptance that it is possible to receive and process stimulus information, even when there is no awareness of the actual act of perception. (Merikle, Smilek, Eastwood, 2000). The “low level” of cognition required for everyday life is further supported by the notion (Schutz, & Luckmann, 1974) that in general daily activity, people tend to take at face value their provisional understanding of events. For example, we can perform quite complex tasks with this low level of engrossment and cognitive activity; such as driving a car in heavy traffic along a frequently taken route. In such a situation, we function on apparent “automatic pilot”, and often have no real detailed recollection of how we reached our destination, even though we probably performed many quite complex and stimuli-intensive decisions throughout the journey.

Routines and habits in our daily existence lead us to experience standard levels of cognition, and interpretive processes. As Flaherty (1991) suggests:

This consistency is an artefact of structuring processes that are both external and internal with respect to subjectivity. From the outside, the person is enmeshed in a web of habits, schedules, calendars, seasons, and other socially defined regularities. From the inside, primary socialization teaches the person to employ interpretive procedures in the self-conscious management of engrossment,... (p. 84).

The situation changes when we are confronted with an unusual social circumstance or a significant change in our environment. Such an occurrence leads us to re-frame our level of cognitive awareness, as a direct consequence of the heightened level of discomfort felt by the individual. A discomfort, which itself has resulted from an increased level of anxiety, caused by a lack of familiarity with our new lived experience. As a result, we are enveloped by a heightened cognitive and emotional level of functioning. In trying to make sense of the world, we need to examine the familiar
and measure it against the unfamiliar. We need to examine the desire for predict-
ability and harmony against that of acceptance, and understanding of the new.

Fortunately, the mechanism for this examination is inherent within our biological
make-up, as not only does our biology set constraints and limits, it also provides
broad possibilities. Stephen Jay Gould, amongst others (see Dusek, 2003) suggests
that pure evolutionary determinism must be ameliorated by historical and develop-
mental constraints. Gould, had long running disputes with socio-biologists such as
Richard Dawkins, Simon Morris and Daniel Dennett, amongst others, who claim that
his views incorrectly inject meaning and purpose into evolution. However, Gould’s
views leave “the fundamental underlying mechanisms of natural selection unchanged,
but present a different phenomenology or descriptive history of the significance of
the fossil record and its previously supposed gaps” (Dusek, 2003, p. 455).

Notwithstanding debates regarding the purely determinist nature of Darwinism,
versus a more liberal view of natural selection and it’s outcomes; the issue more
typically is framed in Bandura’s (2002) view around “whether nature operates as a
determinist that has culture on a ‘tight leash’, or as a potentialist that has culture on a
’loose leash’” (p. 272). In that regard, it would seem that perhaps our biology favours
our adaptive abilities, even if they are informed by our own agentic actions.

To elaborate on this proposition, it is necessary to further examine Social Cognitive
Theory, the school of thought which advances a view of human functioning that
accords a central role to cognitive, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes.
The ability to re-shape and re-examine our world, effectively an extended human
agency capable of change and adaptation, is put forward in this view of human
agency in which individuals are proactively engaged in their own development and
can make things happen by their own actions.

In Bandura’s (1986) Model of Reciprocal Determinism, introduced in Chapter One as
the foundation for the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood; the mind is an active
agent in determining and constructing individual reality. Bandura (2002) suggests:

Through agentic action, people devise ways of adapting flexibly to remark-
ably diverse environments. Moreover, they use their ingenuity to insulate
themselves from selection pressures. They create devices that compensate
immensely for their sensory and physical limitations, circumvent environmen-
tal constraints, redesign and construct environments to their liking, create
styles of behaviour that enable them to realise desired outcomes and pass on
The effective ones to others by social modelling and other experiential means. (p. 272)

As a consequence, by reflexively encoding information mediated through values, expectations, and the social and physical environment; a person’s behaviour ultimately influences, and is influenced, by that environment. In terms of Social Cognitive Theory, the ability to re-shape our perceptions of our world is afforded through human agency, a human agency that allows us to not only respond to change, but also to initiate change. In this manner, the study has almost come full circle, in that Bandura’s (1986) Model of Reciprocal Determinism is the underpinning theoretical starting point for the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood. The central tenet of Bandura’s model is the ability of human action to be self-referencing and reflexive (see Chapter One: Figure 1.2), in tune with environmental factors, and personal or “internal” factors, but somehow mediated by the over-arching power of human agency. The model of Reflexive Selfhood, takes this notion further. A major aspect of the nature of selfhood proposed by the model, is the mediating element integrating identity and action. In the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, this aspect of self is termed “Creative Haecceity” and I suggest it is the fundamental aspect of being human; the characteristic that represents us as agentic individuals.

The diagram shown in Figure 13.1 represents the mechanisms behind an increased creative expression resulting from a cultural dislocation. However, the heightened cognitive state postulated within this schema does not have only one possible outcome, that of increased creative expression. Many other possibilities may eventuate depending upon the individual, such as anxiety, depression, reclusiveness, uninhibited behaviour, sexual promiscuity, to name but a few. The aspect of selfhood that enables the outcome of an increased creative expression, over other possible outcomes, is human agency, free will, creativity, or as I have referred to it: Creative Haecceity.

In this study, through the voice of the participants, particularly in Chapters Seven and Ten, the many forms of this reflexive interaction between self and perception, are illustrated. In this chapter, the nature of the mechanism underlying the process proposed as a hypothesis in Chapter One, has been elaborated in line with notions of temporality. In the final chapter, the broad conclusions and illuminations revealed by this study will be further examined.
Chapter Fourteen: Conclusions

The chapter summarises and considers the findings of the study, initially discussing the research question and drawing together the theoretical paradigms, the stories of the participants and the implications of the constructed model. It returns to the main aims of the research and addresses how these aims have been explored through the integration of the study of lived experience, with the theoretical discourse and critical analysis of philosophical and psychological debates. The initial section of the chapter, reviews the findings of the research, while the later sections reflect on the implications, limits and impact of the study.

Overview of study outcomes

The primary contention examined in this thesis is that an experience of cultural dislocation or cultural stress can have an effect on self perception, which under certain circumstances can act as a lens; amplifying creative output. The major conclusions resulting from the study can be summarised by the following:

1. Creative expressions, or the outcomes of creativity, are a result of the interaction of three key elements: imaginative awareness, perceptual awareness and the creative essence of an individual, or their Creative Haecceity.

2. Creative haecceity, a fundamental ingredient of being human, is the aspect of self that renders us as agentic, human individuals.

3. Imaginative awareness is stimulated by increased metaphoric projections arising as a result of an increase in cognitive activity.

4. Perceptual awareness is stimulated as a result of adjustments to our perceptions of temporality, arising as a result of an increase in cognitive activity.

The following additional conclusions support current understandings and debates concerning selfhood (Fisher, 1987; Giddens, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981; Taylor, 1989):
1. Cognitive activity is increased in an individual, as a function of the self as it
endeavours to formulate a coherence and consistency in the self narrative.

2. Feelings of cultural dislocation or a disturbance to the cultural understanding
and precepts of the individual, encourage an attempt to make sense of the world
through a re-examination and re-alignment of the self narrative, to restore a level
of coherence.

Of key relevance to this study is how cultural dislocation can become transformed
into a heightened, creative, construct; or how a resultant creative expression has
been influenced by a cultural disharmony or ambiguity impacting upon the indi-
vidual.

The research questions posed for examination within this study were:

Q 1. How do constructs of identity and the impact of cultural experience, affect both
the outcomes and the perceptions of the creative self?

Q 2. How does cultural dislocation and the influence of cultural background, impact
upon the creative output of arts practitioners within a photographic domain?

In addressing these questions, the following hypothesis was postulated:

The experience of cultural stress or a cultural dislocation has an affect on self percep-
tion, which in turn can act as a lens, amplifying creative output.

The study used an amalgam of critical reflection upon theoretical paradigms, together
with a qualitative examination of lived experience. The manner in which creativity
is influenced through the superimposition of family bonds and cultural rituals, asso-
ciated with feelings of dislocation or cultural disturbance arising as a result of the
immigration experience, was examined. Narrative and phenomenological enquiry was
together intertwined with neuro-psychological and social psychological discourse, to
gain sufficient insights into the nature of selfhood to be able to address the questions
posed in the study.

In essence however, the scope of the study sits within cultural, social and environmen-
tal elements that inform the Positive Disintegration process the individual undergoes
within Dabrowski’s (1970) model, and the role it then plays in the construction of the
creative self. The effect of culture upon this process was examined through the twin
constructs of enculturation and acculturation. The study endeavoured to extend the cultural, social and environmental elements that inform the Positive Disintegration process, into a reflexive, constructionist view of selfhood; given form through the configuration of an on-going self-narrative, and depicted in the Model of Reflexive Selfhood presented in Chapter Four.

Elaborating on the hypothesis tested through the study, it was proposed that cultural dislocation, through a heightened cognitive activity, can result in an increased level of creative expression. To explore this contention, narrative and its link to consciousness and identity was examined through the participants of the study, and positioned against the considered theoretical frameworks. These representations were made tangible within the constructed Model of Reflexive Selfhood. The role of narrative as a guiding force in our concept of selfhood is critical to this process.

Building upon Johnson’s (1987) contention, the claim is made that imagination is the fulcrum of cognition and the basis for a coherent view of the world. Further, it is suggested that if we are in a situation where the narrative of our lives comes under stress or loses its coherence, then in an effort to rectify this situation and re-establish a former equilibrium, the imaginative aspects of mind function at a heightened level.

Johnson’s positioning of imagination as central to our understanding of the world, coalesces with the other key tenet of this research, that is, the use of narrative to give cohesion to our sense of self. Together, it is proposed, they form the duplex of conditions that can lead to an intensity of creative expression.

It is however important to be clear that this study does not make a claim for a direct causal relationship between cultural dislocation and heightened creative expression. The argument I have proposed is that the complex links between creativity and cultural dislocation, as detailed in the model, the interviews and the underlying theory, constitute a contingent link, which I have sought to explicate. In the constructed model, cultural expression is fostered through the dynamic interaction of identity and action. These interactions are elaborated within the sub-systems of "Social Identity", "Cultural Identity", "Social Action" and "Cultural Action". Arising directly from the outcomes of the model, it was then proposed that Creative Haecceity is the fundamental aspect of cognition that completes selfhood and is the aspect of self that is intrinsically associated with creative outcomes. That is to say, creative outcomes expressed by the individual are mediated by the influence of
Chapter Fourteen

Creative Haecceity, which in terms of the model, together with Identity and Action, form the three “pillars” of selfhood.

As a result of the proposition that cultural dislocation is able to act as a catalyst in the process of Positive Disintegration, the study’s purpose was to reveal, through the use of life stories, links that can be drawn between cultural dislocation and creative expression. The mechanism of this contention is that cultural dislocation, a heightened emotional state and an alteration to the perception of temporality, together with increased activity of the self as it engages in a project of self assertion and coherence, can set in place a process that invigorates perceptual and metaphoric, imagination. As a consequence of the initial cultural dislocation, therefore, the outcome of this imaginative process is heightened creative expression.

The diagram shown in Chapter 13 (Figure 13.1), indicates the four aspects of the mechanism that translate cultural dislocation to an increased creative expression, namely (1) a heightened emotional state, (2) search for coherence in identity (3) increased metaphoric generation and (4) alteration to the temporal perceptions of time. These four conditions, enabled by an initial heightened cognitive functioning, are the manifestation of this increased cognition and result in greater imaginative and perceptual awareness.

In terms of Social Cognitive Theory, the ability to re-shape our perceptions of our world is afforded through human agency, a human agency that allows us to not only respond to change, but also to initiate change. By reflexively encoding information mediated through values, expectations, and the available social and physical environment, a person’s behaviour is influenced, and ultimately influences, that environment.

A major aspect therefore of the nature of selfhood proposed by the model, is the mediating element integrating identity and action. In the Model of Reflexive Selfhood, this aspect of self is termed “Creative Haecceity” which I suggest is the fundamental aspect of being human; the characteristic that represents us as agentic individuals able to engage, interact and adapt our world.

Contributions and boundaries of the study

The narratives that make up this study, overlaid with the theoretical conclusions, make a series of contributions, which re-enforce and even shift the focus of selfhood and identity construction, as it applies to the manifestation of creativity. There are four key areas which I will elaborate in turn.
Firstly, the stories of the participants illustrate a number of sociological concepts related to the manner in which cultural and social influences relate to identity formation. The research indicates that given the opportunity to reflect and give an account of their lives, the photographers within this study, attempt to come to terms with early episodes and cognitions, in an endeavour to frame the on-going social construction of their identity. Autobiographical remembering is seen to be a construction that informs the coherence of self and the story of the life being lived. Each participant has reflexively constructed, through autobiographical rememberings, incidents experienced and attitudes perceived, that have been related to the listener as the narrative of their self-story (see Chapter Seven and Chapter Ten).

As McAdams (1996) tells us “stories told at day’s end create a shared history, linking people in time and events as actors, tellers, and audience”, but importantly he also suggests that “stories are less about facts and more about meanings” (p. 28). These constructed meanings, transmitted through the act of telling, are examples of identification by the participants with dual cultural influences and the manner in which this affects their self perceptions.

However, the underlying issue at the heart of the narratives, and stated as the subtext of the research, is not the more traditional questioning about modes of acceptance and conformity pressures evident in the receiving cultural milieu, but how this self-perception of cultural shifting has influenced their creative selves. Therefore the consideration of culturally informed self perceptions of identity, impacting on the outcomes and the constructed perception of creative selves, is an approach not hitherto taken in studies examining impacts of acculturation.

Secondly, psychological concepts related to emotion (Chapter Eleven), metaphor (Chapter Twelve) and temporality (Chapter Thirteen), and their impact upon personal identity formation, are given form in the narratives and lived experience of the participants. Particularly in regard to the underlying influences upon creative self perceptions, this study is a first step in providing support, through the lives of creative practitioners, for the theoretical propositions suggested in regard to metaphoric and perceptual awareness.

Thirdly, the inclusion of photographers as subjects of this study, enables examination of lived experience not only through their autobiographical narratives, but through their images as well. This offers a deeper insight into creative outcomes as referenced to the group. Since the issues addressed in this research are concerned
with creative expression and its relationship to identity formation, the narrowly defined, selected participants of the study, bring into sharper focus the implications and creative outcomes of that particular section of the population. This allows a more direct connection to be drawn between the imaginative constructions of the participant photographers and their relationship to identity and selfhood. Whilst only a relatively small number of images are included as data for the study, they nevertheless provide an insight and a data source that so far has not been considered in other studies.

Fourthly, the integration of a number of theoretical perspectives. Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, Dabrowski’s (1970) Positive Disintegration, Johnson’s (1991) imaginative basis for cognition, overlaid with Lakoff & Johnson’s (2003) metaphoric basis for cognition, takes this research into a direction not undertaken previously. By synthesising all four theoretical notions into one interrelated proposition, the door is open for further research to follow this new position. The significance of the essentially narrative methodology utilized in this study, is in its ability to intersect with the theoretical discourse elucidated in the analysis of identity (Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen) and by the heuristic illumination of actual lived experience.

The boundaries of the research’s significance relate to the complex nature of lived experience itself. Each participant in this study has a life story and trajectory of experience that is unique. Each participant brings forward differing backgrounds, different influences, different circumstances and indeed differing outcomes in their lives. It could also be said that each participant has differing motivations for their actions. As such, similarities and generalizable conclusions with regard to their lives may at first glance appear to be impossible, or at least difficult to identify or formulate. The manner in which each person views a particular situation, interprets an action, or responds to particular stimuli, will sustain a definite characteristic that is not the same as any other.

We are individuals who can share experience with others and also participate in many common experiences; but those experiences do not make us identical to anyone else in the world. There is no total conformity to rules, external influences and perceptions; and even though some behaviour can be predicted under certain circumstances, it can never be totally pre-ordained with absolute confidence. That all such qualitative studies are interpretive by nature, individually focused, and based on judgements determined through the examination of lived experience, is beyond dispute.
On the other hand, their importance also revolves around these very same considerations. It is precisely because of the individual focus of a qualitative study, that is, the constructed interpretations based on a lived human life; that meaning can be attributed that is of intrinsic value (Eisner, 1988).

A more particular limitation of the study is the general lack of focused analysis that was able to be made with regard to the feelings and perceptions of the participants, at the actual moment of creative expression. Whilst their experiences were reflected upon and told in a manner consistent with their formulations of identity, as McAdams (1996) suggests “each of us creates a personal myth that in all details is like no other story in the world” (p. 50). Which is not to suggest that the authenticity of the stories is questionable, but rather that in each re-telling of our life, we fashion events and perceptions to fit our on-going self narrative. Therefore interpretation and analysis is always retrospective of the events and perceptions themselves, giving rise to a separation of outcomes and their respective influences.

**Implications for educational practice**

Qualitatively examining and contextualising life occurrences through narrative perceptions of self-identity, lends considerable impetus to informing educational practice, and its relationship to the development and nurturing of creative output. Although the implications for art based creative expression are more readily apparent, creative outcomes are fundamental for our behaviour in general, integral to problem solving, and do not reside exclusively in art practice. To better understand the impacts and mechanisms of creativity is an essential goal for all educational endeavours.

This study makes the claim that a heightened imaginative awareness, together with a heightened perceptual awareness, stimulates our innate Creative Haecceity to produce creative outcomes. The implications for educational practice emerging from this claim are situated in two distinct areas. Firstly, in the potential to harness this mechanism, and secondly, in the acceptance that without exception, Creative Haecceity, a creative essence, or the potential for creativity, resides in all individuals and is integrally bound together with our agency and individuality.

The outcomes of this research indicate claims that art based educators have heard on occasions from students such as: “I’m just not creative“ or “I don’t have a creative bone in my body” are demonstrably ill informed. Clearly, what is at play in those types of statements is either a lack of recognition of how creative outcomes
are integral to our lives and are experienced, without exception, by everyone; or a total lack of self awareness of the perceived requirements to stimulate creative expression. The latter is most probably closely tied to the self narrative of the individual and would be a fruitful area for further research.

Underlying the claims of this study, is an agreement with Lakoff & Johnson’s (1999, 2003) argument that metaphor is at the heart of our sense making, and is indeed the fundamental basis of our understandings and perceptions of the world. Following this position, the study makes the claim that a heightened imaginative awareness is a product of increased metaphor generation. It is this link that has potential significance for educational determinations. If the means of metaphor generation can be stimulated in the individual, an outcome of a heightened imaginative awareness can result, which is then able to stimulate creative expression. In this study, the claim is made that this increased metaphoric generation is a product of a cultural dislocation; however this is most probably just one possible mechanism. Within an educational context, exploration of other mechanisms that may stimulate metaphor generation, may lead to fruitful advances in the ability to foster creative outputs.

The other link to the stimulation of creative expression claimed in this research, is an alteration of the perceptions of temporality leading to an increased perceptual awareness. In this regard, the study moves on from Csikszentmihayi’s (1996) position, where he posits that individuals in the midst of creative expression experience a “flow” like state. According to the claims of this study, the “flow” state is a by-product of the alteration of temporal perception, and induces through increased perceptual awareness, the creative expression.

As indicated in Figure 13.1 (Chapter Thirteen), this process is also reflexive, with the increased awareness further altering temporal perceptions; in accord with the “flow” state that Csikszentmihayi proposes is at the core of creative expression. However, the outcomes of this study suggest attention be directed to mechanisms that may manipulate temporal perceptions, in an attempt to induce a heightened perceptual awareness, or “flow” state, and thereby an increased creative expression. In this regard, the implications for educational practice lie within the search for such mechanisms.

**Possibilities for future research**

In concluding this study, some suggestions for further research are offered. The significance of this qualitative inquiry has been the articulation of a process which connectively may result in a heightened creative expression. Future studies can now
use the model and the steps outlined in the underlying mechanisms to examine individual aspects with a view to understanding how they may be harnessed, adapted or otherwise manipulated.

For example, the claim that increased metaphor generation will lead to a heightening of imaginative awareness, can itself be further tested. However, other fruitful research may also consider what other mechanism will lead to an increase in imaginative awareness; or indeed what other aspects can stimulate increased metaphor generation in the first instance. Similarly, although this study was dealing with the effects of a cultural dislocation upon the individual, and how this relates to creative outcomes, it would be important to consider what other types of life events may become a catalyst for the mechanisms laid out in this research (Chapter Thirteen: Figure 13.1).

Although there is great renewed interest in the role emotion plays in the formation of identity, and indeed a growing body of evidence seems to indicate a heightened emotional engagement, leads to a greater possibility of metaphor generation; further examination of this proposition is well worth the attention of scholars interested in the mechanisms for stimulating creative expression. Emotional aspects within the individual psyche have long held an anecdotal connection with creative outcomes, but research is only recently examining the connections between cognition and emotion. The link between creativity and emotion, whilst acknowledged in this study to lead to increased metaphor generation, also requires further attention.

Another area of possible future interest raised in this research, is in an individual’s ability or inability to engage with the aspect of selfhood I have termed Creative Haecceity; and the connection this has with aspects of the self narrative the individual constructs. The notion that some individuals are more creative than others is widely understood in terms of an innate creative ability that one person may have and another may not. However, the suggestion resulting from this research implies that all individuals have the potential for creativity, but many do not engage with this aspect of selfhood. The question remains why? Or indeed, what aspect of identity construction taps into a person’s Creative Haecceity to lead to the production of creative outcomes. Indeed, if as widely suggested by many theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; Bruner, 1990; Fisher, 1987; Giddens, 1991; McAdams, 1996; Ricoeur, 1991a), and supported in the study, the construction of an on-going self-narrative proceeds as a project of attempted cohesion, the role that Creative Haecceity plays in this process needs to be further determined.
In addition, the claim that Creative Haecceity is a fundamental aspect of being, itself needs further exploration. If this model provides a new way of viewing ideas of creativity and agency, the implications for understanding human behaviour are indeed significant. Not only is it profoundly important to understand the mechanisms of how this aspect of selfhood is engaged, utilized, developed or moderated, but the manner in which it intersects with our daily lives, our mental health and our ability to take control of our pathways and journeys, is an area for possible future analysis.

Final conclusion

Illuminating the significance of this research, and harnessing my thoughts by way of drawing this final chapter to a close, I ask myself: Why did I choose to embark on this journey?

The study topic itself was born of my perceived association between culturally informed lived experience and its relationship to creativity. My own experiences, being an example of the immigrant Diaspora that has contributed to the richness of Australian life in many ways including through creative practice, was at the heart of my questioning. I wanted to ask: “where did I fit in?” and I wanted to know: “where do those with experiences similar to mine fit in?” The resulting study has led me to a greater understanding of the forces behind my own identity and my own experiences, and in the process of answering my questions, the study has also informed new knowledge about how cultural understandings and constructions of self can influence the creative process.

The area of convergence between the study of lived experience, the stories of people’s lives, and the claims articulated in this thesis, promises to be fertile ground for further research to develop theory and educational practice. The claim articulated in this thesis that a heightened imaginative awareness, brought about by metaphor generation and an alteration of perceptual awareness, gives rise to creative expression, provides a site for a partnership between these theoretical junctures and the articulation of the stories of people’s lives.

The Model of Reflexive Selfhood, constructed in this study to illustrate the influences upon the self, is in itself a useful tool that can be used in further research, to explicate the interactions of social and cultural contexts, with the inner psyche and the outer engagement of the individual. The means by which these aspects are able to be illuminated is through the examination of autobiographical rememberings as they are harnessed into self stories. The narratives of our lives are an integral
component of our construction of identity, but at the same time, they are also the fertile ground for revealing broader understandings of behaviour.

As has often been suggested, any understanding of others, or indeed ourselves, can only be seen in the context of our own lives and our own lived experience. However, we only gain meaning from the experience of others if our cultural and social frame is such that the experience is able to be interpreted. If there is not sufficient cultural understanding through shared experiences, then meaning itself cannot be shared. An example of such a disconnect is with children of parents who underwent rationing during World War Two, in for example London or perhaps Leningrad, who may have difficulty in appreciating the desire of their parents to “horde” food. They may not understand or relate to the difficulty their parents have in indulging themselves and spending money on luxuries. Even though these children may logically understand the reasons for their parent’s behaviour, their lack of shared experience, resulting in a cultural frame that is very different to that of their parents, does not enable sufficient meaning to be formed.

Whilst the means to generalise from the small and selective samples that are a feature of much narrative research, is not readily available to the qualitative researcher, the nature of the data obtained through the re-telling of lived experience is so redolent in associations, as to still render it profound. Additional potential also exists in the use of the visual as data, along the lines of, but considerably beyond, their use in this study.

As suggested by Jones (2005), the “propositional mode” of the created image, gives it huge potential as a source of rich data for critical as well as metaphoric discourse. However, she also makes the point that to ask what the artist is really trying to say is the wrong question:

The experience of the work is the work. And that experience is to be found within the person looking at the work. The question to be asked instead is: what do I see and feel? (p. 13)

The nature of this personal, referential, induction of emotion-laden meaning, engendered through artworks, is where the potential to understand ourselves and our actions resides. In asking the question “what do I feel?” the issue of what the artist felt is also reflected. Gaining insight into the nature of identity and behaviour is greatly advanced by the asking of these questions and the use of images as data for these interrogations. Rather than asking “what is the person actually trying to
say?” when we examine stories of lived experience, true relevance comes from the question of “what is the person feeling, or has felt, during their life?”

Although our lives are lived through agentic engagement in the world, not many individuals have a plan that is adhered to from beginning to end. Trying to determine what a person “means” through their life actions is not strictly relevant, as meaning for the individual is constructed through the totality of their experience. But the life experience of others through their stories helps us gain meaning in our own lives. Similarly the life experience of others, reflected through the images they have created, has the power to do likewise.

Intersecting with the narratives of people’s lives, through their stories and equally importantly through their images, enables us to absorb a wider cultural and social frame. In turn, this frame informs our identity and our actions, and together with creative haecceity, these three “pillars” make us who we are. Indeed, these pillars give meaning to our experience, and for me in particular, answer the question: “Why did I choose to embark on this journey?”
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