Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Critical reflections on the heuristic research process

In this section, I critically reflect on my heuristic journey and evaluate my claims to having unearthed previously 'hidden' knowledge(s). The subheadings below indicate the major intentions of the research, as contained in the first three chapters, and the final section will be a discussion of policy developments based on the evidence the women in this study gave about the intersection between their agency and contact with publicly funded infrastructure.

Unearthing subjugated knowledges

My personal reflections in Chapter One identified that the research would be a journey of discovery based on a three way dialogue between my personal life experiences, the women's narratives and academic and general literature. Although I made few direct references beyond Chapter One, my ontological and epistemological positioning and life experiences significantly guided my choice of research questions, method, theories, interaction in the dialogues and how I heard and interpreted the narratives. Concomitantly, my subjectivity would have occluded other possibly *thick* material. My chief aim was to 'hear' previously subjugated knowledges about the human condition as well as about women's lives. The wealth of the life-worlds existing in the countries included in the study illustrated the usefulness of the theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches I chose.

I had hoped that the thesis would contribute to the emerging literature about the equivalence of multiple ontologies and epistemologies across this planet, especially to add important

insights for educating human services workers. Human geographers Howitt and Suchet, in their chapter "Spaces of Knowledge: Ontological pluralism in contested cultural landscapes" (in Andersen et al 2003) show that despite their continuing marginalisation in scholarly and public discourses, Indigenous knowledges are often based on thousands of years of civilisation and continue to exist and govern people's lives, thus discounting Western philosophical claims to universalism.

I will mention two unexpected findings. The first is that refugee women told me that the first time they experienced real stress was in Australia when they were immobilised in the safety of Australian suburban spaces. This is a finding pregnant with meaning given my focus on agency: being given spaces and opportunities to act and engage with the world is central to the constitution of an adult personality. Self identity and its continuity have to be routinely created through one's awareness of one's activities and the discursive, inner reflections constructing meaning in concordance with our biographies (Giddens, 1991:35-36,52-54,67). The existence of other persons is central to the human need to trust in the coherence of the object world and in our own answers about who we are and what is our place in the world (Giddens, 1991:35-36,52-57). This explains the disintegrating effect of immobilisation prolonged by isolation, the latter being the chief constant in the circumstances of those women who became mentally ill, also an absent factor for the rest of the group who surmounted the initial depressions. Without the buoyancy emanating from interpersonal contacts, the suffering of migration exceeded their reserves of resilience and endurance.

This is hardly a novel finding, except to underscore the inhumanity of social spaces where small numbers of people are increasingly erecting walls between each other, ostensibly for security reasons. This harkens to the literature about social capital and the re-discovery after some two decades of neo-liberal reasoning about how to govern - that families and individuals need to live in supporting communities (Cox, 1995). This discussion will be picked up again below in the section dealing with the policy implications of the findings.

The second unexpected finding was that some of the most vulnerable women were those who came as *skilled* migrants or as the spouses of skilled or eminent professionals brought to Australia by employers. Such people are classified as privileged and they are not entitled to any free support welfare state services. Antonina, Larissa and Teresa were more vulnerable in Australia than refugees because they were transposed to a foreign space with no cues about how to reconnoitre. The parlous situation of some overseas brides can be included in this most vulnerable group as well. In other words, immigration policy which today is much more strongly skewed towards skilled, cashed-up migrants, as 'desirable types', undoubtedly dissimulates a great deal of suffering and human wastage.

Theorising on the basis of women's experiences

In the literature overview presented in Chapter One, I identified that my work fitted into the emerging trans-national, materialist feminist literature. I wanted to offer a more nuanced analysis and understanding of women's situated agency within multiples sites of meaning and systems of domination. I will not repeat here my discoveries about the sources of resilience of the women in the study and of the obstacles to their capacity to re-author their lives but will share some additional theoretical reflections.

A key question I sought an answer to was: How does a woman keep together as a coherent personality: how does she keep all things together? I found that a woman's inner life was the site where she constituted meaning and that its presence or absence respectively was the source of her vitality or lack thereof. Women could draw on a plethora of past experiences, of *habitus*, predispositions, of symbolic and material capital and, as indicated in Chapter Six, family played a key role. I would propose that the nature of a woman's own private meaning making operates at a more fundamental level in influencing her exercise of agency in dealing with the world. The content of her inner meaning making is important, as seen with Anastasia's self blame and ongoing regretful attitude to her life. A new theoretical insight for me, however, is the proposition that the *clarity* of the meanings a woman is able to develop

or draw upon is one of the most important features of self-determining action. The women who were confused and could not *pull things together inside*, remained 'stuck', like Tahn and Teresa who were still tentative in their recovery. Mifsud rose out of her depression and was able to represent her journey to me in humorous terms. Hence, what was most important in the case of this cohort of women was not the *sophistication of thoughts, understanding or insight* but *clarity in their inner life*.

In Chapter Two, literature about feminist research methods, including Gluck and Patai (1991) and Anderson and Jack (1991) referred to the need to listen in *surround mode*, to a woman's *moral* language, her *meta-language* and the *logic* of her narrative. The women who showed remarkable agency often were those whose logic contained much moral cogitations. Some women, such as Zina, were of a pragmatic predisposition but they had a clear wisdom about how to make life work. Similarly, the women who were able to recreate themselves through a logical narrative of the themes of their lives in our conversation expressed a sense of competence and of being in control.

Diaspora and home

A sense of having a home is central to ontological security as well as to the capacity to enjoy life and draw nourishment from people and place. At home, one is, ideally, not in a place of *dreadful secondariness* but rather at the centre, participating as a member with full dignity with others in one's environment. Home, belonging and dignity imbricate agency. Experiences of colonialism and migration cast one into a marginal location in the receptor society where other configurations of meanings operate. Resettlement is about building a new home and if one is to avoid living a diasporic life as a state of permanent, and hence by definition, uncomfortable or painful exile, in my view, the *recapturing of dignity is crucial*. It seems to me that it is almost a contradiction in terms to have resettlement in tandem with a permanent sense of loss of dignity.

In Chapter Three, I referred to Habermas' theories about modes of communicative rationality available in a society for the making of meaning and for the very enjoyment of life. I noted that in Australia, spaces for communication that is not functional are being reduced by the penetration of the requirements of the economy to all levels of life. Larissa refused to lose her dignity and was unable to find any spaces in Australia for the expression of who she is and what she knows. Deprived of opportunities to interact with Australian people and having only minimal contact with the expatriate Russian community, she remained the most alienated, clinging to a negative, tunnel vision of the culture that surrounds her. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Fatima joined the Eritrean community, physically located together in high-rise Housing Ministry estates in inner Melbourne. She was then able to very rapidly gain employment in the primary labour market represented by local government and enjoy an occupational benefit of being sent to a national conference. There was little evidence of a break in her self-expression as a leader and a committed, moral advocate for the betterment of society. Her dignity was not subjected to prolonged assault because she was able to find a means of self-expression in the new society. Hence, she was able to recreate a hybrid family life, by absorbing the individualistic strategy of moving away from the Eritrean community to promote her children's educational chances. She now eagerly seeks opportunities to contribute to the creation of the Australian social world, as indicated in her long quote in Chapter Six. Self-expression is central to a satisfying diasporic life.

Along similar lines, when she arrived here, Teresa reflected "*oh, I am not the person I thought I was*", echoing for me Mary Stewart's exhortations to her fellow women slaves presented in Chapter Three to "Possess the spirit of independence … Possess the spirit of men, bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted" (Richardson, 1987). A spirit of independence resonates for me with issues of dignity and being accorded equal respect with others. Many live out their diasporic lives by enjoying equal respect and communication only within their own ethnic communities; those who triumph in life are able to maintain their sense of dignity and find ingenious ways of expressing themselves across diverse communities.

The methodology employed for the study

I claimed in Chapter Two that I would follow Sandra Harding's suggestions about *strong objectivity*, requiring that I submit myself and my social/gender location to the same objectivity maximising techniques as are applied to the topic of my research. I have noted my personal value stances, reactions and biases throughout the thesis but I do not believe that this has been a thorough process. It seems now, at the conclusion, that the chief flaw of my study is that I oriented my research too exclusively around *each woman as an individual*. My starting framework was to ask them to talk about themselves and how they thought, felt, acted, reacted. Despite my stated intentions to avoid the hegemonic Western worldview, my basic approach was just that. With the benefit of the insights gained from literature and people previously unknown to me, I could have - firstly - asked them *how they would like to talk about life*. Secondly, my discussion with the women could have been structured around their families which would have opened up quite different vistas on their lives. I also gained very little insight about their relationships with partners and with individual children or other family members. I noted in my methodology that the setting of the one-off interviews and the tape recorder ensured that only safe topics could be broached.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that I have documented here is based on *my having been open to submit myself*, with each woman, *to being destabilised by her alterity*. If there is any merit to a research approach based on a semi-structured in-depth interview asking an individual woman to speak about herself, then the trustworthiness of my information was enhanced by my attitude of humility and warm regard. As far as I was able, I carried out our dialogues by "seeing with a loving eye", which the natural scientist Cindy Cowden indicates is essential in order to understand anything (see Chapter 2).

I think I implemented Ricoeur's hermeneutic rules about the three movements of interpretation, by representing what the women were pointing to as faithfully to the meaning they intended as possible. I was only able to access some of the women who indeed verified that I had understood well. I looked behind their narratives at the broader political

and systemic dimensions by readily interpreting their conditions within the framework of the hegemony of global capitalism and its new forms of colonial domination in global discursive spaces as well as materially.

My bodily participation in the conversations enhanced the reliability of understanding the language they used. This was – for obvious reasons - strongest with the Russians but I do not have a professional level of Russian fluency. The greatest possibilities for misunderstanding reside in the issue of language; nevertheless, in the light of Heidegger's proposition that *being and understanding are co-terminous and that understanding is an ontological fact*, my lived-out understanding of the diversity of ways of being, knowing and suffering, would have been a strength in my interviews. In other words, each woman interacted with me, an *other* woman who yet was different to current hegemony and who displayed some potential to understand, a feature of the affective rapport constituting the context of our dialogue. Feminists of colour emphasise that knowledge can only emerge out of such sympathetic dialogic processes.

Nevertheless, I did not explore the routine encounters the women had with other bodies in situations of co-presence to any degree across the different spaces they inhabited, which may also have been a more useful lens for exploring the women's lives.

So what are my new tools for knowledge development?

I have acquired new research tools, including the recognition of the importance of being destabilised by *alterity* and implementing inter-subjective ethics as scrupulously as possible. Questions of ontology and epistemology must, in my view, be addressed in research or pedagogy related to the social. Cross-cultural practice or theory without being supported by and embedded in such philosophical questions is likely to lack depth. Similar comments apply with respect to the inclusion of life-world theories.

The project of understanding the integration of agency and structure is significantly enhanced by the researcher being prepared to encounter unlimited expressions of ingenuity and creativity in human agency. The narratives illustrated the women's creation of novel identities in the in-between spaces Homi Bhabha (1994) theorised, and the women were shaping new cultural forms in Australian life-spaces through their enactments of audacious, generous, loving, resilient and brave humanity. Such participation impacts on addressing racism, narrow social discourses and excluding ideologies.

The creativity simultaneously represents resistance to the powerless locations and subjectivities allocated to migrants and the women's agency is therefore also to be understood as inherently representing political acts. Only the Eritreans, three Filipinas and Wafa and Delal expressed a succinct political critique and sustained overt political engagement in local women's groups and overseas struggles alike. Wafa and Delal are active around Islamophobia and the empowerment of women. On the other hand, the rejection of injustice, oppression and distorted representations of people, cultures and events, constitutes a subversion of power and transformation of reality, even through the use of ingenious and quiet means that do not draw the attention that public protests and mass rallies might. Indeed, such unobtrusive means may also ensure the longevity of the act and the actors' well-being. The Russian women were all focused on conforming to the Australian lifestyle and enjoying its benefits, a continuation of the conformity expected in the highly regulated Soviet society. It is also understandable for people who spent a lifetime in spaces dominated by often unwelcome political reasonings, rationalisations and intrusions. The factor of class was traced to be quite salient in women's capacity to act but symbolic capital more so than material capital featured in the lives of the startlingly impressive women of this study. As Angela Davis recently reflected:

> Education and liberation were always bound together. I was persuaded very early in my life that liberation was not possible without education (Lowe, 1999:422).

The significance of contact with Australian welfare state: a discussion about policy

The evidence presented in the previous chapter related to the usefulness of a range of publicly funded services, mostly available on a universal basis and as a corollary to citizenship. I am not using the language of rights because Australian citizens do not have guaranteed rights enshrined in any formal documents. The Australian Constitution is largely of administrative import, being concerned with the rules for establishing a federation of the previously disparate six colonial states (Jamrozik, 2005). The services that assisted the women were in place during the decades from the late-seventies to the mid- to late-nineties. They were developed by prolonged contestation by the labour, women's and other social movements, backed by social policy research and professional advocacy. Labour's solidarity and power to strike has been a usual underpinning for success in gaining social rights, as Verity Burgman noted in a 2000 conference on activism in Australia (Burgman, 2000:14).

The first attempt to construct the Australian welfare state on social democratic lines was undertaken by the government of Ben Chifley after World War II, when he tried to include as part of the internationally implemented planks of a welfare state a nationalised and free, medical and pharmaceutical benefits scheme (Kennedy, 1982). Where it had succeeded in European countries, including Britain, it failed in Australia due to the influence of the Australian Medical Association (Watts in Kennedy 1982). There was only one other social democratic government in Australia, between 1972 and 75, led by Gough Whitlam, who ushered in significant shifts in Australia's cultural, social and political life, such as responding to the demands of the feminist lobby, land rights for Australian Indigenous people and the official resolve to change the structural causes of poverty (McMahon *et al.*, 2000:220-222). It was, however, Whitlam Treasurer Bill Hayden, who abandoned Keynesian economics theory and embraced the methods of Milton Friedman. The well-documented and theorised legitimation crisis of the welfare state (Habermas, 1973; Mishra, 1984; Macintyre, 1985; Pierson, 1998; Pierson & Castle, 2000) was taken particularly seriously by subsequent

governments across both major parties in Australia. The understanding that has prevailed over this period in policy circles about how to respond to globalisation has been unimaginatively uni-dimensional, with neo-liberal economics and politics embraced to the letter: "there is no alternative" (Margaret Thatcher). At the time of writing, mid-2006, many of the affordable and geographically accessible supports which were shown to be life transforming stepping stones for the women's regaining of their capacities to recreate life, have been reduced or de-funded. The Australian community seemingly has accepted that "we cannot afford it," and the Left in Australia still does not seem to have any viable alternatives to put forward (Mendes, 2003). Critically, there has been a systematic emasculation of working class solidarity and militancy and the far-right Coalition government of John Howard has introduced a new industrial relations system which is based in commercial law, signifying the abandonment of the hundred-year-old industrial relations system founded upon the 1907 Harvester Judgement, which allocated a minimum wage based on the needs for modest existence of a man with a wife and three children (McMahon et al 2000:19-41). Diametrically distinct from basing wage levels on employers' abilities to pay, the ensuing industrial system was underpinned by legal due-process defining the involvement of trade unions and employers in bargaining for wages and conditions. This was the hallmark of Australia's wage earners' welfare state (Castles, 1985). Another Labor government (1983-1993), led initially by Prime Minister and former charismatic leader of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Bob Hawke, initiated the model of trade union bargaining enterprise by enterprise, in my view, fundamentally at odds with the traditional motto of working class solidarity "*United We Stand, Divided We Fall*" as work was identified as the basis for solidarity and interdependence by the founding fathers of social science Emile Durkheim, Max Weber as well by Karl Marx (Jamrozik, 2005:153). 'Enterprise bargaining,' by contrast, led to the acceptance of the strategic benefits of amalgamating the hundreds of unions into a dozen mega unions, which promptly lost touch with the rank and file and, logically enough, over a matter of less than a decade, a

decline in perceptions of the relevance of and participation in the union movement (Jamrozik, 2005:168-169).

Civil society and social capital

The narratives of the women's lives and achievements show me that *there is no alternative* but to have a welfare system in place. At the beginning of this chapter, I commented on the implications of this study for the rediscovery of the need for human community, expressed through contemporary discourses about *social capital*. Disregarding the monetary language of *capacity building* and *social capital*, the human need for community has been proven according to the strictest canons of empirical science by neuroscience. There has been - over the last ten years - an unprecedented international consensus about the direct relationship between an infant's emotional experiences and how neurones are imprinted during the first three (and up to six) years of brain development. Such neurological configurations significantly impinge upon lifelong capacities for learning and for coping with stress (Mustard, 1999, 2000; Vimpani, 2000; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). *Developmental Health and the Wealth of Nations* (Keating & Herzman, 1999) brought together interdisciplinary evidence in support of the hypothesis that the persistent socio-economic gradients in health and well-being outcomes have their origin in the early life environmental experiences that affect brain development. The environmental experiences of a young child are constituted by the family, its emotional health and the quality of stress levels prevailing in the home of the care givers. A lack of enjoyable and nurturing social relationships beyond the immediate nuclear family would significantly magnify the stresses of daily living. A central risk factor identified in research about the prevention of child abuse, mental illness and criminality is paucity of familial social networks (National Crime Prevention, 1999; Bowes & Hayes, 1999; NSW Child Protection Council, 1998; Wise, 2000).

In his review of the Keating and Herzman text, Graham Vimpani (2000:6), a leading Australian paediatric researcher, comments:

> Where else in one volume has the emerging knowledge about the impact of early environmental circumstances on genetic expression in brain development (biological embedding and neural sculpting), the role of attachment between young children and their primary caregivers on children's ability to self regulate emotional and behavioural expression, been brought together with an analysis of the part played by social capital in contributing to those environments?

Vimpani then stresses that those who craft public discourse and policy, that is the media, governments and particularly economists, need to absorb such research evidence in order to comprehend that expenditure for ensuring that families with children are supported, is not a drain on the public purse but a wise investment for the future health of entire populations. Vimpani is a founding member of a national lobby group Niftey (2000, 2001) (National Investment for The Early Years) working to influence governments' funding of public infrastructure. The Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital-based Centre for Community Child Health (2003:55-56) documented the role of playgroups in promoting child development and parenting skills enhancement through social support. Social support was defined as a multi-dimensional concept, with the interpersonal relationships resulting in emotional, cognitive and behavioural benefits. The international literature overview identifies social networks as a stress buffer, improving the quality of parenting, reducing exacerbation of parental depression or despair into possible child neglect or abuse (2003:59).

A globalised welfare state

The neo-liberal economics of the Anglophone world are viewed as a 'haunting spectre' by Europe (Rhodes, 2005:363); indeed, one only needs to look at the empirical evidence from Europe to find clear alternatives to policy orthodoxies which have consistently led to increased inequality, social exclusion and breakdown in social cohesion (Esping-Andersen, 2002:1-25). Australia and New Zealand distinguish themselves on the world stage by having the highest rates of youth suicides. Interestingly also, by the end of last century, the OECD had added to its economic paradigm that *social growth* is also a key dimension that is ignored

at the peril of greater social and even violent public backlash (Sullivan, 1997:55, 108). I will give brief examples of this body of comparative welfare state research.

Recent texts examined nations' responses to the directives of the OECD and World Bank to conform to supply-side theories (Armingeon & Beyer, 2004:226; Castles, 2004; Obinger, Leibfried & Castles, 2005):

> Given its theoretical orientation and its claims to consistency and efficacy, we have to conclude that, from the mid-1970s until the end of the 1990s, the OECD exerted a unidirectional effect on national welfare states, supporting the idea of welfare state retrenchment and an increased onus on individuals and families to shoulder personal responsibility for their security in times of need. (Armingeon in Armingeon & Beyer, 2004:227).

OECD analyses and prescriptions do not include a category measuring possible indirect effects, such as the supportive contribution of a functioning welfare state to economic development (Armingeon, 2004:229). A collaboration of European scholars examined how consistently and efficaciously European nation states have responded to OECD advice and concluded that approximately 50% of the OECD's recommendations were adopted by European countries. Closer analysis revealed that states exercised a sovereign selectiveness in adopting OECD advice when it converged with their own interests, national policy analyses and political and demographic shifts, or with the requirements of the European Union. Another caveat was that where states adopted OECD directions, they did so to very limited degrees, as was evident with the Nordic states (Armingeon, 2004:231). OECD directions were rejected if they contradicted central domestic political institutions, political culture and power distribution:

> hence, if there is concordance, it occurs in those areas where there was little ideological distance between the OECD and the national tradition (Borzel & Risse, 2000, cited in Armingeon, 2004:235).

This text concludes that the data presented in the data chapters on each country do not support the notion that the OECD has been successful in destroying the welfare state and

creating a neo-liberal convergence (Armingeon, 2004:238; Goodin & Rein 2001). Similarly, in an empirical comparative study seeking to determine the difference between myth and reality in discourses of the demise of welfare states, Francis Castles (2004:21-46) found that there has not been 'a race to the bottom' in Europe, in cutting wages and working conditions in order to prevent the flight of multinational capital. Manipulating the OECD's Social Expenditure database disaggregated by program type for 21 countries over 20 years, Castles constructs measures to track not only shifts in the magnitude of social allocations but also shifts in the shape of nations' welfare states. He concludes that there has been a pattern of convergence, with states which overspent (Sweden, Netherlands and Denmark) reigning in social expenditure to conform to an international norm, while underdeveloped nations increasing their welfare state investments to catch up (Castles, 2004:110):

> Examining the three models of expenditure change … we find that prima-facie evidence to the contrary, two of the models contain no international economy term, and in respect to the third, the apparent evidence for a globalisation effect does not pass statistic muster. This means that we must reject even the most modest of the variants of the globalisation hypothesis. It would appear that expenditure change in recent decades … is very substantially a function of developments in the domestic sphere.

In Australia, it is accepted dogma that social equity and economic efficiency are mutually exclusive and have to be traded off. Bessant, Watts, Dalton and Smyth, in their 2006 Australian social policy text, reported the findings of an international collaboration by Goodin *et al*., (1999) to test Esping Andersen's (1990) three models of welfare state regimes, concluding that only the social democratic regimes were able to most successfully and simultaneously ensure economic growth, social stability and the reduction of poverty. My reading is that the above research confirms the heuristic value of Esping-Andersen's model and represents another empirical validation of the policy mix which constitutes effective strategic governance for capitalist societies for the twenty-first century. Current Australian policy debates, however, still seem consumed with searching for an alternative to the harsh neo-liberal agendas of both major parties.

Australian social policy and research has been often described as being rather a-theoretical, with poverty research, for example, concentrating on forms of measurement, reframing a political problem into a technical one (Jamrozik, 2005:118). A useful piece of Australian research would be to explore the cultural and other formations that have enabled the implementation of what can be fairly described as a thorough social engineering project over the last two decades. As Don Edgar (2001:65), founding and former director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, points out, Australian businesses and policy makers have applied the downsizing logic more ruthlessly than anywhere in the world. Jamrozik (2005:309) concludes that this is a reflection of the immaturity of Australia's civil, political and cultural institutions traditions and institutions. He is supported in this by other scholars (Castles, 2004:178; Scharpf & Schmidt, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Goodin & Rein 2001).

The research done for this thesis showed the inestimable and cost-effective potential of publicly funded infrastructure and of employing civil servants in building a healthy citizenry amongst those who had experienced the trauma of migration. Adelman recently reported on the impact of the British Labour government's policy and resource commitments in decreasing child poverty, while during the same period, the Howard government's austerity initiatives have been associated with an increase in the same (Adelman, 2003). A conservative Swedish economist begins with the proposal that while globalisation is of great long term benefit, in practice, it has been associated with increases in inequalities (Held & McGrew, 2002:77-87, cited in Sorensen, 2004:192). Sorensen and Sodersten also point to the weakness of some national economic and political systems in their capacities to reap the benefits (Sodersten, 2004:22). Soresen documents examples of parallel economic growth and improved welfare in nation states which apply appropriate governance, based on strong institutions, political will and choice of knowledge base (Sorensen, 2004:192). Thus, most non-English speaking countries of the world do not consider the welfare state an anachronism, but rather are consolidating what has been dubbed the "steady state welfare state" (Castles, 2004:166-182) and the international debate is about how to develop "a globalised welfare state" to sustain a globalised economy (Vivekanandan & Kurian, 2005).

Don Edgar's (2001) analysis of the institutional, programmatic and philosophical arrangements needed for families to thrive in 21st century Australia accords with the above literature and with the narratives in this study, about the factors which facilitated the migrant women's agency.

Immigration policy

Until the advent of the Liberal Coalition government of John Howard, immigration scholars have documented that the most undesirable spaces in Australian capitalism have been systematically reserved for migrants, without whose labour the local capitalist economy could not have evolved to its present level. In the last two decades, many migrants have arrived who Australia does not seem to need, as industry has been profoundly restructured. So of what use are these foreigners to Australia, given that they use scarce resources, contested by taxpayers and imposing a strain on our ecology? The notion that a human being can only come to another country for *functional purposes* is in itself ethically and culturally problematic. Nevertheless, within the confines of currently accepted wisdom, I recapitulate that a salient finding in this study has been the extraordinarily rich human qualities embodied by the women and their families. There is an enormous gap between the talents, experience and energies that migrant people bring and the spaces made available in Australia for their expression. Larissa's musical scholarship and virtuosity, Anastasia's nuclear physics, the statesmanship of the African women's husbands, the international law expertise of Teresa's husband, are all lost to this nation. How much the women will be able to fully exercise their agency and ingenuity in their future lives is unknown. I do not believe that this issue is well documented and hence it is not on the public agenda.

Bhikhu Parekh (2000:336), a British cultural diversity scholar, begins with the reality that all cultures are diverse and that international movement of peoples is accelerating, rather than otherwise. According to Hugo (2004), Australian statistics from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA, 2002, 2003, 2004) show that entry under temporary visas has increased by between 400% to 498% in the decade

beginning 1982-83. In 2002-03, a total of 3,570,905 persons were granted temporary residence and 93,914 were granted permanent residence. At any time, there are approximately half a million temporary residents in Australia (Hugo, 2004:22; 2003: a & b). Trans-national migration has been a powerful reality over the last five hundred years (Castles & Miller, 2000) and will increase to be so in the future (Schiller *et al*., 1995:48-63). As Hugo (2004:20) summarises: "international migration is now within the calculus of choice of a much larger proportion of the world's citizens as they weigh up their life chances.

Multiculturalism is not a political doctrine but an acceptance of the human condition and entails three profound insights according to Bakhu Parekh (2000:336-337): the cultural embeddedness of all people; the equivalent validity of all cultures in their capturing of a sliver of what constitutes the good life; and finally, that cultural purity *sui generis* rarely exists, as almost all peoples and identities have been constructed from the melanges of multicultural interaction over aeons. From this, Parekh (2000:339) argues that multiculturalism is both inescapable and desirable and only dialogical encounters on the basis of ethical mutual respect can increase comprehension of the grandeur of life's complexities. For example, liberalism stresses the sanctity of the individual life, autonomy, liberty, equality and critical thought, but it needs to be educated by the knowledge and ontology of cultures where human solidarity, selflessness, humility, scepticism about materialism and a transcendental approach to the meaning of life stand as central values The stability of Western societies can be explained by their acceptance of and allocation of spaces to the internal and external contradictions of diversity. Such acceptance is based on dialogue, which requires:

> certain institutional preconditions such as freedom of expression, agreed procedures and basic ethical norms, participatory public spaces, equal rights, a responsive and popularly accountable structure of authority, and empowerment of citizens … Apart from its fundamental commitment to the culture and morality of dialogue, the dialogically constituted society privileges no particular cultural perspective … it sees itself as a community of citizens and a community of communities, and hence as a community of communally embedded and attached individuals (Parekh, 2000:340).

The human condition requires belongingness and social recognition, which implies that a primary task for those involved in immigration policy making and program development should be to ensure opportunities for migrants to regain their dignity. This agenda however, is not likely to become adopted by current governments. As shown in the immigration literature overview in Chapter One of this thesis, Australian governments' historical approach on containing and controlling migrants and aliens has recently escalated exponentially (MacCallum, 2002:1-74; Brett, 2005:1-79; Manne, 2001). Even without having recourse to post-colonial perspectives, attaining respectful recognition can only come through political contestation, because, as Chantal Mouffe (2002) discussed in Chapter Six, culture is like language: *agreement about forms of life*.

Having documented the subversive cleverness of this cohort of women, migrant people are needed to lead in dialogic education towards new forms of truly civil citizenship. I therefore conclude by proposing that in the very fluid and unpredictable globalised reality of the future, migrants are critical to the building of a vibrant civil society in Australia. The dangerous, difficult and dirty jobs are not needed but the human largesse that migrant women and their families bring are greatly required by a 21st century post-modern society, where the fissures of distrust, social injustice and material inequalities are expanding through deliberate and undemocratic government policy repertoires (Castles & Miller, 2000:297-8).