An exploration of South African visual culture and identity: Case studies in graphic design

by

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DECLARATION

I, Sally Diane Joubert, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Signed:

Date: 2 December 2022

ABSTRACT

As a result of South Africa's democratic socioeconomic and political transformation, graphic design processes have become multicultural and multilingual, bringing together designers, users, and stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds. Working in diverse cultural contexts is the current reality for South African graphic designers. Subsequently, designers are challenged to recognise and understand cultural heterogeneity in design. This study examines how South African graphic designers adapt their methods when working in unfamiliar cultural contexts. The concept of *culture* and how it relates to graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa is examined through interdisciplinary perspectives from Postcolonial and Indigenous theory and Cultural Studies. The central premise of this research is founded on Edward T. Hall's (1959) theory that "culture is communication and communication is culture." The contribution of postcolonial perspectives in the seminal writings of wa Thiong'o (1986) reinforces the dual nature of language – as a means of communication and a vehicle of culture. This study contends that graphic design, a visual form of communication that operates through semiotic representation systems, cannot disregard cultural contexts.

A transformative paradigm is chosen to highlight the researcher's transformation and discuss transformative practices within the South African graphic design industry. A qualitative multiple-case study methodology was employed to analyse the data collected from three case studies. The findings reveal that sociocultural knowledge is equally important as design skills and expertise when designing for a culturally diverse audience. Visual communication sensitive to the varying needs of culturally diverse audiences is required for successful and effective visual communication in post-apartheid South Africa. The study recommends Intercultural Knowledge for graphic designers working in heterogeneous communities.

Key terms: *culture, communication, visual communication, postcolonialism, Intercultural Knowledge (IK), Graphic Design.*

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GLOSSARY

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers and exploiting it economically.

Cross-cultural design: The term *cross-cultural* is widely used to refer to the process of designing for people from diverse cultures (McMullen, 2016: 22). Cross-cultural design is only the start of intercultural design.

Decolonisation: The process of creating awareness among individuals and cultural groups who have directly experienced the effects of colonisation to eradicate the stigma and discrimination experienced on both the individual and systemic, institutional levels of society.

Design: In the study, I use the term *design* to refer to visual communication. In this context, *design* refers to the discipline of graphic design in which a combination of words (type) and visuals (image) is used to communicate a certain message to a specific audience. The creative process addresses real-world and theoretical issues by focusing on problem-solving and creative thinking to visualise and communicate a specific message or solution in the form of a prototype, an artefact or a proposal to a specific audience.

Design for social innovation: The process of developing a progressive concept or system to encourage transformation by using the design process to achieve social objectives that have been collaboratively established while taking into account the needs of the communities concerned. It is activating diverse initiatives and reshaping societal discourses about "what to do and how to do it" as potential outcomes of the fluid, co-creative, and participatory process referred to as "*design for social innovation*" (Manzini, 2013: 66).

Intercultural design: Within verbal communication studies, there is a clear distinction between the terms *cross-cultural* and *intercultural.* The term *cross-cultural* refers to "the communication process that is comparative in nature" (McMullen, 2016: 23; Ting-Toomey, 1999: 16). The term *intercultural* refers to the interactive "communication process between members of different cultural communities" (cited in McMullen, 2016: 23; Ting-Toomey, 1999: 16). Intercultural studies emphasise the participatory nature of

cross-cultural communication which is beneficial to graphic designers (McMullen, 2016: 23).

Interculturality/Interculturalism: This is the ability to use knowledge of the heterogeneity and complexity of cultures and worldviews to shape the growth of interaction, discourse and communication in a multicultural society. In this evolving process, everyone is represented and no single point of view is privileged (cited in Grant & Brueck, 2011; Kymlicka, 2003).

Interdisciplinary research: This is an approach to research in which one or more disciplines collaborate on mutually agreed-upon issues, with the possibility of different levels of integration while each discipline maintains distinct disciplinary differentiation (Leavy, 2011; Lawrence, 2016).

Reflection-in-action: The concept of *reflection-in-action* informs thinking about doing (action) while one is actively engaged in doing (Schön, 1983). Reflection-in-action contextualises one's actions within one's developing practice.

Reflexivity: Being *reflexive* means looking at oneself and then acting in a corresponding manner; in other words, understanding one's values and views to comprehend others. According to Crouch and Pearce (2012: 49), reflexivity is crucial for design researchers, as it enables them to interact with their work and its dynamic cyclical link of cause and effect.

Self-reflection: Reflection is an important part of every practice. It is about pondering what one has learned from experience and applying that understanding to future actions (Dewey, 1910; Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Every practice should include reflection. It involves reflecting on lessons learnt from experiences and applying the understanding to guide future decisions and actions (Dewey, 1910; Crouch & Pearce, 2012).

Transcultural: This refers to transcending culture references, to how verbal communicators can merge their intercultural knowledge with their communication practice (cited in McMullen, 2016: 23; Ting-Toomey, 1999: 262).

Transdisciplinary Research: *Transdisciplinary research* is a method to research that is motivated by a concern or issue, particularly one that has to do with social justice issues (Leavy, 2011). Through collaboration between one or more disciplines, this method of study applies a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to problem-solving to integrate and merge different conceptual, theoretical or methodological frameworks (Lawrence, 2010; Held, 2016).

Visual Communication: In the study, I use the term *visual communication* to refer to the practice of graphically representing information to create meaning efficiently and effectively. Successful visual communication design is about conveying a message and communicating an idea from one person or group to another.

CHAPTER 1
Situating the study and the context

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognised and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Article 1: Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity
UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Paris
2 November 2001

1.1. Introduction

In the globalised world that brings together diverse cultural groups through migration, global collaboration, interconnected communities and accelerating digitisation, graphic designers face the increasing challenge of recognising and understanding heterogeneity in their design practices. Since graphic designers play a significant role in influencing social structures, economies, environments and cultural identity through visual language (Sasaki, 2010), designers today are expected to work with and within various sociocultural contexts. Many design scholars have asserted that "designers need to think more critically about what they do and the cultural, social and environmental conditions they contribute to" (Akama, 2008: 13). This study investigates whether graphic designers in post-apartheid South Africa require intercultural knowledge to be effective communicators in a heterogeneous society.

This study examines the relationship between culture and communication in relation to visual communication in order to determine whether graphic design, as a language that operates through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts. I took

an interdisciplinary approach to examine the relationship between culture and visual communication by looking beyond the field of Graphic Design, as *culture* has been extensively studied in the social and behavioural sciences as well as the broader design disciplines. Interdisciplinary research aided in the identification of the key theoretical concepts and perspectives that inform and frame this study.

The study starts by framing what is meant by cultural heterogeneity within post-apartheid South Africa, focusing on the key theories and literature relevant to the research objectives. Building on the literature review, the relationship between culture and language in relation to visual communication is examined. The methodologies and methods used to support the research findings are outlined. I discuss my observations and insights in three case studies that address the cultural context in professional practice and design education. Stuart Hall (1997) alleges that language provides a general framework for how representation and culture function. As cultural producers, graphic designers need to re-evaluate the meaning of representation by moving away from speaking for the "Other" and toward speaking with and to "Others." I contend that it is essential for graphic designers to work towards identifying subtle cultural nuances rather than reverting to stereotypes, which can result in insensitive visual communication. As a researcher, I recognise that "cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa is a complex topic that requires further research" and discourse on heterogeneous cultures within Graphic Design (Hino, Leibbrandt, Machema, Shifa & Soudien, 2018: 2).

1.2.   Overview of background to the study

Given the cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa, this research prompted the need to understand how graphic designers are equipped to be effective visual communicators in heterogeneous communities. My experience as a professional graphic designer and my sense of responsibility as an educator at a design institution inspired the research. I was interested in discovering how my lived experiences had shaped my teaching practice and whether this required altering. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of multicultural issues and the role culture plays in graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa, the research examined three case studies to demonstrate the transformation in my perspective and teaching practice.

1.2.1.　Research background

As a white English-speaking South African graphic designer, I was educated and trained during apartheid in the context of embedded hierarchical epistemologies and Euro-Western hegemonic discourses that positioned local and indigenous knowledge as inferior. Later, as a graphic design lecturer in South African higher education, I recognised that my approach to visual communication required a paradigm shift and a decolonial journey. I value the contributions made by multicultural and indigenous knowledge to my academic teaching and design practice. I am interested in a more inclusive context-centred design approach that reinforces the authentic representation of identities representative of heterogeneous communities in South Africa (Akama, 2017; Fry, 2017; Tunstall, 2013).

To avoid biases that lead to inappropriate visual communication, design approaches in South Africa must incorporate cultural awareness and sensitivity into their practice. This research was motivated by a desire to acquire deeper insights into the multifaceted and complex concept of culture within visual communication in graphic design. Designing for audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds is a challenging issue in graphic design today. As an educator, I was interested in discovering how designers can create meaningful work that distinct audiences can relate to on a deep level.

This study is a step toward engaging in and addressing the need for contextual approaches to design that include culturally sensitive, inclusive, and ethical methods. I learned from the research that there is still work to be done to make the design process more aware of and sensitive to cultural knowledge. Although human-centred design has significantly impacted how designers approach their creative practices, alternative methods must be considered through critical training and education to inform and address how designers can appropriately engage with different cultural contexts in their work. As a result of this, designers will be able to develop culturally informed and sensitive approaches to their graphic design practice.

1.2.2.　Contextual background

The context of the research is situated in post-apartheid South Africa, where citizens from all cultures and languages are entitled to participate in political, economic and cultural activities lawfully. I began by examining whether the graphic design industry in South Africa had

undergone a transformation since democratisation. The analysis addressed the early 1990s call, emanating from within the graphic design industry, to redress the dominant Eurocentric design aesthetic that thrived in South African higher education and industry before democratisation (Moys, 2004: 88, 103). I focused on how the design industry and academic institutions responded to this call for the re-assessment of "a defining South African visual identity and style" that is representative of an inclusive "new South Africa" (Moys, 2004: 103; Sauthoff, 1998: 9).

The assessment revealed that in the 1990s, the graphic design industry thought it was possible to unite South Africa's diverse cultures into a style emblematic of a "unique South African design language" (Moys, 2004: 2, 77, 84). While the graphic design profession continued to emphasise and acknowledge the need for transformative change, Moys' (2004: 103) research indicates that its discourse never advanced beyond the superficial. By the end of the decade, there was little indication of meaningful change in mainstream practice. Discussions on design revealed insufficient engagement and consideration was given to whether the broad range of South African cultures could be merged together in a specific visual language (Moys, 2004).

Twenty years into South Africa's democracy, Deidre Pretorius' (2015) historical examination of South African graphic design education and industry provided additional evidence for the need for a paradigm shift following the end of apartheid. According to Pretorius (2015: 311), the transformative challenges within graphic design education and the industry had been slow to respond to the call to transform beyond the dominance of the Euro-Western aesthetic. Little had changed during this time regarding the prerequisites and expertise necessary to incorporate intercultural knowledge in the education curriculum outside conventional frames of reference (Pretorius, 2015). According to these preliminary findings, transformation in democratic South Africa's design education curriculum and professional industry had been gradual and insufficient during this period (Pretorius, 2015). The findings indicated that the design industry required additional research into the establishment of a "local discourse that allows for a deeper engagement with social context" that "interrogates cultural meaning" (Sauthoff, 2004: 49).

1.3.   Problem statement

The "call for a South African design language emerged from within the industry in the early 1990s, around the time of Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the beginning of South

Africa's transition into a democracy" (Moys, 2004: 71). Designers were challenged to move beyond Eurocentric assumptions about national identity, to investigate what it "means visually to be South African," and to develop a more authentic and ethnically inclusive visual design language. From this perspective, graphic designers' current reality is to work with and within a diverse range of sociocultural contexts. Graphic designers play an important role in shaping cultural, social, and historical identities by creating a visual language that reflects the distinct contexts of a given space. In post-apartheid South Africa, a more equitable representation of cultural diversity is a complex process that calls for more research and discussion on cultural identities and an authentic visual representation of indigenous and diverse cultures. This research examines whether graphic designers in post-apartheid South Africa require and can acquire intercultural knowledge to practice effectively in a heterogeneous society and the industry's responsibility in upholding ethical standards.

1.4.   Research questions

The following research questions will guide the examination of the relationship between culture and graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa.

The primary research question is as follows:

> Should South African graphic designers adapt their approach to unfamiliar cultural contexts?

The secondary questions are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between culture and language? How does this relate to graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa?
2. How relevant is intercultural knowledge for graphic designers practising in heterogeneous communities in post-apartheid South Africa?
3. How important are ethical standards in the graphic design industry in post-apartheid South Africa?

1.5.   Aim of the study

In addition to evaluating the value of a culture-sensitive approach to design education and practice, the aim of this research was to determine how the heterogeneous sociocultural identities in post-apartheid South Africa influence the design language and approaches of graphic designers in their visual communication practice.

1.6.   Objectives of the study

The following objectives address the research questions:

1. To examine whether South African graphic designers are required to adapt their design approach when designing for unfamiliar cultural contexts;
2. To examine the relationship between culture and language and whether this relates to graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa;
3. To examine whether intercultural knowledge is relevant for graphic designers practising in heterogeneous communities in post-apartheid South Africa; and
4. To examine whether ethical standards are important in the graphic design industry in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.7.   Literature review and theoretical framework

Given the complex and challenging nature of the topic of culture in relation to graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa, I separated the literature review and theoretical framework into two chapters. Firstly, in Chapter 2, the term *culture* is examined within postcolonial and indigenous theories relevant to graphic design discourse in the South African context. Chapter 3 investigates the relationship between culture and language and the significance thereof for graphic design as a visual language.

Chapter 2 positions the study of culture within the discipline of graphic design in the South African context. However, as the literature and research papers in this field were limited, it was necessary to look to other disciplines to analyse culture from different scholarly perspectives. As culture has been extensively researched in the social and behavioural sciences and the broader disciplines of design, interdisciplinary research facilitated the identification of the key

theoretical concepts and perspectives that inform and frame this study. The literary review drew on the critical writings from cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, history and linguistics. Given the scope and depth of contributions from the humanities and social sciences outlining theoretical concepts and critical literature relating to culture, the study is not intended to be a comprehensive or in-depth analysis of each topic or the positions taken on it but rather an overview of the concepts and theories from these disciplines that are most relevant to the topic and the study questions.

South African graphic design discourse was actively researched in Chapter 2 to determine if the underlying biases of hegemonic and homogenous ideals are intentionally or unintentionally ingrained in local design processes that continue to favour Euro-Western paradigms and aesthetic (Moys, 2004: 1; Sauthoff, 2004; Pretorius, 2015; Kembo, 2018: 4 7, 67; Becker, 2017: i). For the examination of *if* and *how* sociocultural identities influence the design language representative of South Africa's heterogeneous ethnicities, I considered a combination of postcolonial studies and indigenous critical theories as the most suitable theoretical framework (Kembo, 2018: 5; Chilisa, 2012: 97; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002: 8-9; Smith, 2000, 2012). As a postcolonial field of inquiry, postcolonialism, or postcolonial theory, is "a critical theory that provides a way of dissecting colonialism and its historical impacts on the colonised" (Held, 2019: 9). The study uses the terms *postcolonial* and *culture* to critique prevalent sociocultural practices within the field of graphic design in South Africa with respect to the complex discourses of historical power hierarchies.

Since the study is situated in post-apartheid South Africa, I looked to primary sources of indigenous theory, specifically the seminal writings of wa Thiong'o (1986, 1993, 2009), McDowell and Hernandez (2010), Smith (2012) and Chilisa (2012; 2017, 2020). Chilisa and Malunga (2012) assert that efforts to "Africanise" research have only contributed to modifications to deeply ingrained Western research methods. To be authentically indigenous and "Africa-rooted," Chilisa (2012: 102) claims that theoretical and conceptual frameworks must emerge from the culture's "religion, cultural traditions, norms, language, metaphors, indigenous knowledge systems, community stories, legends and folklores, social problems, rapid social change, or public policies, as opposed to conceptual frameworks from some universalistic or Western literature."

Chapter 3 established the theoretical and conceptual framework for the central argument founded on Edward Hall's (1961: 186) theory that "culture is language and language is culture." The notion that *culture* is embedded in a language is reinforced by Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (2003) theory of language's dual nature as a vehicle of culture and a medium of communication. The conceptual framework addressed the central focus of the study that graphic design, as a language that functions through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts. Few things best represent South Africa's rich cultural heritage than the diversity of languages protected under the country's constitution. Given the country's cultural diversity, it can be argued that a South African visual language cannot be founded on a homogeneous aesthetic to represent heterogeneous sociocultural identities in post-apartheid South Africa authentically. A review of the field of verbal communication revealed that many of the cultural issues encountered in alternate interdisciplinary communication fields are similar to those experienced in visual communication (McMullen, 2016: 19). The following key concepts were discussed in greater depth: culture, identity, language, representation, visual communication, discourse, power and the subject, national identity, citizenship and ethics.

1.8. Research methodology and methods

To determine whether graphic designers in post-apartheid South Africa adapt their design approach and process when designing for cultural contexts unfamiliar to their own, the research design for this study applies a qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). A transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2008; 2016; 2021) was deemed appropriate for the study, guided by a qualitative case study approach (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018) that facilitates the examination of the findings using a variety of data collection methods. Applying a qualitative methodology locates this study "within a sociological context that recognises the ethnic heterogeneity in post-apartheid South Africa as one of the most complex and diverse in the world" (Hino, et al., 2018: 2). As the researcher in the study, I have a position in the research and am "not removed from the research process and context; therefore, I am a part of and able to learn from the research journey" (Mertens, 2016). As I was actively involved in the research collection process, I am aware that the data analysis may contain subjective bias; therefore, for this reason, I also discuss my position in the study and include personal reflections on the case study data collection and findings. I also validate my observations through multiple discussions with the support lecturer throughout the research process.

Secondary data from the research was gathered as an outcome of the literature review and the theoretical frameworks in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The secondary data focuses on the concept of culture and language within the field of graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research paradigm, methodology and research design used in the study. Three case studies were selected relevant to the examination that graphic design, as a language that functions through visual representation systems, should be critically studied within cultural contexts. I describe the data collection methods involved in the study. The "importance of employing more than one method of data collection" is explained by John Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 5). This allowed me to take into consideration different contexts and collect data of a subjective nature. To acquire different insights and perspectives on the extent to which cultural understanding and contexts are incorporated into design processes, data were collected primarily between 2021 and 2022 from a variety of viewpoints within the wider graphic design field, including professional graphic designers, graphic design lecturers and students. Interpretivism, according to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006: 274), recognises the relevance of each participant's subjective reality; as such, empirical data were collected and analysed throughout the research process through ethnographic methods of semi-structured questionnaires, which lead to further in-depth discussions, participant observations and in-person interviews.

I used *"purposive sampling"* or *"non-probability sampling"* to identify participants within the graphic design profession and educational field (Bryman, 2016). To contextualise the research methods, I drew on two distinctive sampling techniques. Following Teddlie and Yu (2007), the research process adopted a sequential approach, starting with an expert case study. The sample gradually expanded as the examination evolved according to the relevance of the research objectives. Case study and interview participants were selected based on their topical expertise, design approach and process, and potential to contribute valuable insights based on relevant design experiences (Bryman, 2016). Secondly, Hood's (2007) distinction between "*a priori* and *contingent sampling* approaches" was applied, which can be used as a mixture of both in a sequential manner. A combination of both sampling techniques was adopted as "the criteria for selecting cases, or individuals were established *a priori,* using sociocultural parameters in South Africa, as well as *contingent*, whereby the sampling criteria shifted and evolved over the course of the study as the research progressed" (Hood, 2007). Ethical processes were followed to ensure the protection of participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

1.8.1. Researcher's paradigm and role

As the sole researcher within this study's context, my opinion is that the sociocultural world is fluid and ever-changing and that individuals create reality as a lived experience on a daily basis. As I investigated the influence of language and culture on graphic design in South Africa, I was acutely aware of the fact that cultures are constantly evolving and changing (Van der Veur, 2003: 78). Cultural identity, I believe, is shaped by the social context in which we were raised, acquiring credibility when it is associated with significance and meaning as a result of people's understanding, interpretation, experience and acceptance of it, rendering it subjective.

The view that people are socialised in different ways that influence how we perceive and interpret the world is relevant to this study on cultural research in post-apartheid South Africa. At the intersection of culture and graphic design is the need to understand the subjective meanings of people's lived experiences. An interpretative methodology necessitates critical reflection on how the researcher and participants interact to create the study data and results (Klein & Meyers, 2001: 220). As the sole researcher interacting with all study participants, actively participating throughout the collection process, personal reflections were included throughout the data gathering phase and analysis. I believe that I cannot be objective or detached since I co-create whatever I am researching with my research participants. In this study, subjectivity and engagement are acknowledged in my work, making my role multi-faceted.

At times it is as follows:

1. an observer of people and their practices by contextualising the research and gaining other perspectives;
2. a researcher of others through reflection, analysis and interviews with others; and
3. a self-observer who is conscious of personal viewpoints in collecting and interpreting the materials and data collection process.

1.8.2. Ethical considerations

To assure the study's accuracy, validity, and fairness, I applied ethical considerations, as is required in qualitative research. I established a supportive and transparent relationship with all

the participants, given that the study's topic may be challenging for some participants to address. Considering this, I informed participants about the research's topic, objectives, and findings. I reassured the participants that the interview process would be strictly confidential. I provided participants with background information on the study. The interviews were conducted informally with semi-structured questionnaires, allowing the participants to answer in a comfortable way. All participants provided consent for the publication of their answers to the study's questions.

I kept the information provided by the participants private and secure using passwords that only I have access to. To protect their anonymity, I used participant codes to represent the data in the case studies and interviews (see Tables 4.1 to 4.5). I kept a record of participant names and codes for the purpose of categorising the data. I use these codes throughout the data descriptions, analyses, and discussions. Once the research is complete, I will destroy the data used for this study.

1.9. Scope of the research

The research is framed within the context of graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa, which considers the sociocultural diversity of the South African population. The goal of the study is not to answer all of the questions that have been asked but rather to add to the discussion and growth of critical knowledge. This research examines the relationship between culture and graphic design and how this relates to the cultures of designers and end users. In this study, the user's or the audience's culture is viewed as the intended recipient of visual communication. The study aims to add to the body of knowledge in the South African graphic design industry and academia concerning the appropriate and suitable visual representation of diverse cultures. The aim of the study is to encourage heterogeneity discourses in South African graphic design education that will equip current and future generations of graphic designers with the knowledge to employ alternative approaches to approaching cultural diversity in visual communication contexts.

1.10. Summary of the chapter

Chapter 1 outlines the focus of the study and the research intentions. The chapter provides an overview and background to the study topic, outlining the reasons and justification for the

research as well as the evolution of the research. The problem statement was followed by the research questions and the study's aim and objectives. The literature review and theory underpin the study's key themes and terms relevant to the relationship between culture and visual communication: postcolonial, dominance, homogeneity, heterogeneity, inclusivity and empathy. The research methodology and methods outline the study's design plan as well as the method of data collection. The researcher's paradigm and role, and the study's ethical considerations were addressed. A brief overview of the study's scope and contribution was provided. The chapter concludes with a summary outlining the first chapter.

In recent years, there has been an increase in demand for designers who can design for users and audiences from unfamiliar and diverse cultural backgrounds. The rise of globalisation and the interconnectedness of the digital world has created a demand for culture-focused research. According to research, the impact of designers' and users' cultures on particular designs and the overall design process has received limited attention thus far. An analysis of postcolonial discourses and hegemonic power imbalances throughout South Africa's history was required to evaluate graphic design as a language that operates through visual representation systems. Considering the diversity of cultures in South Africa, a concise account of the sociocultural context during South Africa's colonial, apartheid and postcolonial and democratic eras is provided.

CHAPTER 2

Establishing the theoretical foundation and theoretical framework

"Creation draws on the roots of cultural tradition but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialogue among cultures."

Article 7: Cultural heritage as the wellspring of creativity
UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Paris
2 November 2001

2.1.   Introduction

Chapter 2 contextualises the role that culture and language play within graphic design through the theoretical lens of colonial and apartheid legacies. The literature reviews the hegemonic systems that led to inequalities of power between different race groups, including the impact of disparities still evident today. The literature discusses how these hegemonic systems of oppression, designated for different race groups during these periods, led to sociocultural inequalities that continue to be evident today in postcolonial (and post-apartheid) institutionalised systems. In the form of a literature review, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework for the study: whether it is required for graphic designers in post-apartheid South Africa to develop a design language representative of their target audience's sociocultural identities. Whilst the South African democratisation period gave rise to new social, economic and creative opportunities, it is impossible to understand the reclaiming of displaced cultures, with their distinctive histories, without first comprehending the impact of colonial powers in changing and erasing the identities, cultures and knowledge of colonised people, as well as their inherent human dignity (Bhabha, 1994: 41; Smith, 2012: 22). A range of key theories pertinent to the study of culture and graphic design in the context of post-apartheid South Africa were reviewed at the intersection of cultural, postcolonial and indigenous studies.

2.2.   Theoretical foundation

Literature tells us that designers are not held accountable for addressing concerns within cultural contexts since there appears to be "no solid theoretical framework linking design and culture" to build on within the discipline of graphic design (Saha, 1998: 499-520; Kersten, Matwin, Noronha, & Kersten, 2000: 509-514). Numerous design scholars, such as "Clive Dilnot, Jorge Frascara, Tony Fry, Ezio Manzini, Victor Margolin, and Victor Papanek, have contended that designers need to think more critically about what they do and the cultural, social and environmental conditions they contribute to" (Akama, 2008: 13). Since visual communication is created for particular cultural contexts and audiences, the South African design industry was challenged to be more inclusive of different cultures and heritages following the democratic transformation. This meant that designers had to navigate towards a multifocal visual representation of previously marginalised and disadvantaged narratives.

The postcolonial and indigenous theories that formed the postcolonial indigenous framework addressed the theoretical underpinnings underlying the concepts of colonialism, hegemony, hybridity, decolonisation and postcolonialism. In a postcolonial indigenous framework, decolonial indigenous discourse offers aesthetic liberation from Eurocentric perspectives and ideals. Postcolonial theories, informed by wa Thiong'o's (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language*, and Homi Bhabha's hybridity, hegemony and appropriation theories, were combined with Chilisa's indigenous knowledge theories. The relationship between language and culture was framed by wa Thiong'o's (1986: 15-16) theory of "language as a carrier of culture," reinforcing his argument that "the loss of the former results in the loss of the latter."

2.2.1.   Colonialism and coloniality

Bhabha (1994: 67) defines *colonial discourse* as "a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that informs the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchisation." Quijano (2000) claims that colonial power structures are founded on hierarchies of racial classification, caste systems and differences. According to Bhabha (1994: 70), Colonialism yields "the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction." Loomba (2005: 11) defines colonialism as "the takeover of territory,

appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation." According to Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243), "colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire."

According to these definitions and descriptions, colonial conquest is characterised by the imposition of one nation's will on another; the exploitation and dominance of the conquered people and their territory, typically through military, political, economic, and cultural subordination (Cloete, 2019: 2). Colonisation establishes colonialism, an extremely complex power structure that economically implements dispossession and the transfer of economic resources from indigenous populations to conquerors and foreigners. It claims to be a civilised initiative while concealing its destructive purpose. Colonialism establishes institutions and power structures that support the coloniser-colonised engagement of exploitation, dominance and repression. Maldonado-Torres (2007: 240-270) describes *coloniality* as an invisible framework of global power structures that sustains colonial relations of dominance and exploitation following colonialism.

> *Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007: 243).

Colonialists, cautions Frantz Fanon (2008), are not content with merely physical dominance; they also erase the history of the oppressed people and replace it with their own. As a result, people who have been colonised lose faith in their languages, cultures, histories, and names. Indigenous cultures are deformed, devalued, and distorted by colonialism to the point where locals no longer see the value and worth in their customs in light of the cultural hegemony of the colonising power. In order to ensure the eradication of indigenous cultural symbols and the dominance of European ideals in the colonies, Fanon (2008: 169) notes that the process of European cultural dominance went to extreme lengths.

Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) discusses the challenge of coloniality:

> *Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.*

The legacy of colonialism can be seen in the systems of contemporary societies. The historical causes of the fragmented and hybrid identities that exist in so many societies today can be attributed largely to colonialism (Spencer, 2014: 69). Despite resistance, colonialism as a power structure persists as a metaphysical process and an epistemological programme, infiltrating people's mental worlds and displacing what they used to know with what colonialism brings. A few of the "crimes" that colonialism commits are epistemicide (erasure and displacement of prior knowledge), linguicide (erasure and displacement of indigenous languages) and culturicide (erasure and displacement of the cultures of a people). Ashis Nandy, a psychologist, contends that if something begins in people's thoughts, it must end in their minds. In other words, physically erasing colonialism without removing it epistemically would not eradicate it (Omanga, 2020).

2.2.2. Colonial systems and apartheid in South Africa

Before democratisation in South Africa and against apartheid and colonial systems, the socio-political situation favoured the classified white minority. South Africa enacted sweeping racial discrimination laws that suppressed the livelihoods, well-being, cultures, and aspirations of all people who were then referred to as "non-white" nearly two decades prior to becoming a republic and for three decades afterwards. (I do not subscribe to racial categories, but I use them to reflect the historical reality that persists in contemporary aspects of graphic design in South Africa.) A whites-only government-controlled and dictated every aspect of black South Africans' lives and brutally enforced it under the 'apartheid' policy.

Until the early 1990s, these laws excluded the vast majority of black South Africans from the design industry, limiting access to education to the extent that only a handful of design schools accepted African students (Kembo, 2018: 4; McLeod, 2010: 17). Pedagogical training in art

and design institutions followed Western models of design and Western modernist principles and theories (Kembo, 2018: 4; Pretorius, 2015: 298; Sutherland, 2004: 53). This resulted in South African graphic design characterised by a reverence for a "Western aesthetic ... with little regard for locally specific references" (Kembo, 2018: 4; Lange, 2006a; Moys, 2004: 1). The local creative aspirations of the majority African population were dismissed, and African indigenous knowledge was devalued as not "developed" and "exotic" as a consequence of graphic design education being influenced and directed by the history of apartheid (Smith, 2012: 25; Kembo, 2018: 6).

2.2.3. Democratic transformation in South Africa

The multicultural, non-racial "Rainbow Nation," which promised freedom and equality to all South Africans, was founded as a result of the end of white minority rule in the government. Apartheid in South Africa ended in 1994, with the transition to black majority rule led by the African National Congress (ANC) and former President Nelson Mandela. However, racial and economic inequality did not necessarily disappear as a result of the transition. Maldonado-Torres (2007: 242) argues that colonization, slavery, segregation, apartheid, and capitalism all had an impact on current forms of power dominance and must be taken into consideration when discussing or evaluating them. The negation and devaluation of the colonised people's cultural values and creative aspirations are central to the dominance of indigenous African knowledge systems, dismissed as lacking in value and uncivilised by the hegemonic display of the power of the Eurocentric knowledge system (Kembo, 2018: 4, 6; Willemse, 2014: 43; Higgs, Higgs, & Venter, 2003: 41-42).

2.2.4. Hegemony

Historical and colonial hegemony maintains ideas of indigenous African inferiority and subordination in a disparate, institutionalised, racially-biased, and power-based relationship with the more "civilised" or "developed" Euro-western values and practices (Cloete, & Auriacombe, 2019: 2). The study looked at how visual representations of race and cultural identity hierarchies in South Africa can embody and reinforce culturally hegemonic assumptions. As graphic design and culture are not two separate entities but instead are embedded and serve to shape one another, their interconnectedness and mutual impact must be acknowledged. Quijano (2000: 540) claims, "Europe's hegemony over the new model of global

power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony." As a result, the problematic issue of "Othering" people who represent differences at cultural identity and discourse levels emerges. Throughout and after colonial times, this form of stereotyping, or '"Othering," has devalued African cultures and identities (Carey, 2017: 2).

Escobar (2012) outlines how the Global North transformed design into a hegemonic practice. This universalised approach has left an imprint on non-Western design cultures as well as indigenous communities (Fry, 2017). Hegemonic design practices have dominated the design field, established knowledge and research objectives and remained detached from local contexts and realities. Holm (2006) discusses how designers' beliefs, attitudes, values and perspectives manifest in their professional practice. Therefore, when approaching local indigenous communities for collaborations, designers in South Africa and indigenous designers who have undergone conventional training must reflect on and challenge their approaches in practice. Moving beyond hegemonic practices has become increasingly crucial for South African graphic designers. Rather than replicating conventional Euro-Western design methodologies, designers must adopt a more responsible and reflective approach toward alternate modes of production to create designs representative of South Africa's heterogeneous communities (Papanek, 1971, 1984; Bonsiepe, 1994; Chmela-Jones, 2011; Tunstall, 2013). Irwin (2015: 235) challenges designers to be more connected with humanity by examining "their own value system and the role it plays in the design process." In order to represent people's cultures and values more accurately, Tunstall (2013) suggests moving beyond empathy and compassion through inclusive, collaborative design approaches.

2.2.5. Neo-colonialism and globalisation

The postcolonial critique of neo-colonialism is applicable to globalisation since the concept of neo-colonialism encompasses all forms of influence over colonies after they achieve political independence. Neo-colonialism, replacing colonialism, is defined by wa Thiong'o (1981: 24),

> *The continued economic exploitation of Africa's total resources and of Africa's labour power by international monopoly capitalism through continued creation and encouragement of subservient weak capitalistic structures, captained or overseered [sic] by a native ruling class.*

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007: 100), "*globalisation* is the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate worldwide." The recent technological revolution has significantly accelerated and advanced this process.

2.2.6.　　Decolonisation

It is necessary first to comprehend *coloniality* to understand *decoloniality*. Challenges exist since many colonial values, practices, beliefs, and policies are embedded in the current identities of African cultures. These cultures have long endured colonisation in one form or another (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015: 211). Considering Maldonado-Torres' definition of *coloniality* as the enduring values underpinning a colonial power relationship, the impact of colonial legacies on different African cultures has contributed to shaping African society into what it is inherently today (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015: 211).

The democratic transfer of power in 1994 prompted a re-evaluation of the visual communication industry's principles in terms of how it would adapt to a new political order within the greater context of South Africa's transformation and decolonisation. Since visual communication is produced for specific contexts and audiences, the South African design industry has been challenged to be a more inclusive definition of culture and heritage, moving towards a more equitable and diversified visual representation of previously marginalised narratives. Graphic designers were challenged to move away from the ingrained Euro-Western frame of reference in pursuit of a more African-centric perspective that reflected South Africa's ethnic and linguistic diversity rather than only a privileged white minority (Kembo, 2018: 47, 67; Becker, 2017: i; Moys, 2004: 1).

In terms of culture, the term *decolonisation* refers to the act of separating oneself from both the "effects of historical colonialism methods of contemporary coloniality" (Smith, 2012: 1). From an indigenous perspective, decolonisation may be viewed as a process of self-determination (Smith, 2012: 121). Adopting a decolonial perspective claims Smith (2012: 1) offers insight into how beliefs become naturalised and, as such, shape the lived realities of people perceived as "Other". Cram (2018: 130) asserts that decolonisation is a "systematic way of research and evaluation that attempts to liberate the colonised mind so that formally colonised people are not only politically emancipated, but also mentally emancipated."

The current discourse on decolonisation has not resolved potential conflicts between different value systems or behaviours that may coexist in South African communities with diverse demographics. In presenting his position on indigenous perspectives and theories in academia and education, Jonathan Jansen (2017: 113) claims that it is "naive to insist on 'African versus European' knowledge in the globalisation age." South Africa's most prominent intellectuals cross international borders and collaborate with peers across several continents in Latin America, Asia, and the increasingly diversified 'West.' Furthermore, Jansen contends, "The insistence on a 'them vs us' dichotomy this side of colonial rule is anachronistic and unhelpful for those who actually do research and writing across the world." It is too simplistic, according to Cloete (2019), to believe that it is possible to integrate colonial legacy systems with African value systems and practices. It is evident in current decolonisation discourses across several continents that considerations of what should be decolonised and how it should be accomplished remain unresolved (Cloete, 2019).

2.3. Theoretical framework

Combining postcolonial and indigenous critical theories resulted in a postcolonial indigenous theoretical framework. This study asserts that graphic design requires postcolonial discourse to comprehend the connection between culture and the legacy of colonial dominance and oppression.

2.3.1. Postcolonial theory

The deep-rooted Euro-Western standards of practice and processes instituted by colonisation and apartheid in South Africa prompted calls for reform within the graphic design industry and education. These calls were characteristic of postcolonial discourse, concerned with marginalised identities, experiences, and cultures, whereby racial inequality reinforces white privilege. There are ongoing concerns in graphic design regarding design solutions that initially appear impartial but may represent a preference for one ideology, race, or ethnicity over another. Adopting postcolonial theory as a framework was considered a suitable approach to examine the shift in power relationships in graphic design, which incorporates indigenous experiences, knowledge and expertise. Promoting discussion among graphic designers will

raise awareness that personal bias can influence design solutions and, by extension, cultural hegemony, thereby undermining inclusion and heterogeneity.

Postcolonial theory "plays a significant part in the growing culturalism of current political, social and historical analysis" (Young, 2016: 7). Young (2009) asserts that postcolonial issues incorporate historical, ethnic, complex cultural identities and representational questions. Post-colonialism offers a language for marginalised individuals who do not appear to belong and whose knowledge, experiences and histories are irrelevant. The core of postcolonial politics will always prioritise concern for the oppressed, the underprivileged classes, minorities across all societies and people who are foreign or have immigrated. Young contends that postcolonial theory emerged from the political knowledge and experiences gained during colonial resistance to Western rule and cultural dominance, particularly during the "anti-colonial movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Young, 2001: 2). Postcolonialism, according to Young (2001: 2), represents the post-independence period, "the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being."

In the broader politics of knowledge creation, postcolonial theory is an important lens for addressing the colonial power structures created by European empires (Bhambra, 2018: 2). As a result of imperialism and colonialism's influence on the colonised, it is the "process of exposing and challenging the predominance of Western knowledge while opposing exploitative and discriminatory practices" (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007: 1171). The relationships and practices of "dominance, control and power over resources and knowledge that are intrinsic to political and economic colonial institutions are criticised and contested" (Kembo, 2018: 6). According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 15), "Postcolonial thinking challenges the hegemony of Northern knowledge and scholarship, as it calls for knowledge to be democratised, de-hegemonised, de-westernised and de-Europeanised" (cited in Chasi, 2019: 106).

While the 'post' in 'postcolonial' may suggest transcendence and the demise of the colonial system, however its application in this context acknowledges the persistence of the colonial rationale of dominance in a neo-colonial form (Begum, 2016: 31). The concepts of homogeny and heterogeneity were examined in relation to the discourse of a more contextually appropriate and culturally accurate visual representation as opposed to the legacies of power imbalances in graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa. As an academic field, postcolonial

theory is predisposed to the domain of culture due to its academic origins across several "interdisciplinary" fields in the humanities: anthropology, culture, sociology, history, linguistics, literature and philosophy (Spencer, 2014: 12; Walker, 1990: 35). To engage in postcolonial theory is to engage with the postcolonial concepts of race, ethnicity, culture, history, agency, representation, identity and power relations. According to recent literature, several theoretical perspectives exist on the term's underpinnings of race, ethnicity, culture and power relations. The interrogation of inherent colonial power is reinforced by wa Thiong'o's (1986) *Decolonising the Mind* and Smith's (2012) *Decolonising Methodologies*. Postcolonial and indigenous discourses are committed to restoring national and regional values by acknowledging cultures that were lived realities before colonisation (Biko & Stubbs, 2004). Postcolonial theory advocates for the usage, reinforcement and advancement of indigenous histories, resources and knowledge (Kembo, 2018: 22).

Postcolonial and critical race theories offer methods for critiquing colonialism, imperialism, and globalisation. Postcolonial theories offer frameworks for resisting imposed knowledge systems. Critical race theories use race as an analytical tool to reveal how race disadvantages certain individuals in a systematic manner. They examine power and power relations between researchers and participants and the intersections of race with class, gender, age, and ability. This approach to rethinking "practices, methods, approaches, tools of data collection and modes of analysis and dissemination … [to] promote justice" is transformative (Chilisa, 2020: 66). One criticism of the postcolonial theory of indigenous peoples is that "it can easily become a strategy for Western researchers to maintain control over research pertaining to indigenous peoples and the colonised "Other" in general while ignoring their concerns and ways of knowing" (Chilisa, 2020: 54).

Race-based methods include the following:
1. Opposing dominant ideologies;
2. Using approaches that are interdisciplinary;
3. Emphasising experiential knowledge;
4. Concentrating on the intersection of race and "Other" marginalisation;
5. Acknowledging history as the basis of knowledge, the repository of experience, and the voice from which to operate (Chilisa, 2020: 66); and
6. Reconsidering language as a knowledge source (Chilisa, 2020: 66).

Reviewing the contested territory of the postcolonial requires examining political, social, cultural, literary and identity formations. Bhabha, Spivak and others discuss the "mythical concept of an essential "Other" that is, in reality, always divided." Postcolonialism was first recognised in Frantz Fanon's ground-breaking book *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001). It is a battle cry for colonised peoples' voices to articulate their destinies, influencing the struggle for identity and the psychological scars left by colonialism.

The Kenyan academic, writer and social activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, is one of the foremost advocates of decolonising thought within cultural and postcolonial theory. In his book *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), wa Thiong'o argues for cultural empowerment while addressing issues of postcolonialism, imperialism, race, class, and racism. Wa Thiong'o challenges the literary tradition of writing in colonial languages by examining the unequal power relations between colonisers and colonised people. He discusses Africa's division, as well as the reconstruction of African cultural identity. While wa Thiong'o advocates for an Afrocentric perspective, urging African writers to "establish the centrality of Africa" (wa Thiong'o, 1986: 94), he did not endorse "rejecting "Other" cultural streams" (wa Thiong'o, 1972: 439). He defined the decolonial turn as "moving the centre" (wa Thiong'o, 1993), away from Eurocentrism and toward a plurality of cultures and "re-membering Africa" (wa Thiong'o, 2009). This process is referred to by wa Thiong'o (1986: 6) as "decolonising the mind." His view that language is a systemic issue has been one of his significant contributions to understanding African languages. Former colonised writers, advised wa Thiong'o (1986: 16), should refrain from writing in colonial languages:

> *Language carries culture and culture carries, [...] the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from us as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.*

His work is grounded in the idea that language and culture are inextricably linked; language serves as a means of communication, making it an integral part of one's cultural identity and

community. Language as communication and language as culture, according to wa Thiong'o (1986: 15–16), are by-products of each other because communication creates culture and culture carries "the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world." In his writings, he advocates for the preservation of indigenous cultural identities and makes the case that language does not transmit culture through its universality but rather through its distinctiveness as the language of a specific community with a specific heritage. He believes that "language as culture" is the foundation of African identity, outlining the people's experiences and history, and that "the loss of the former results in the loss of the latter" (wa Thiong'o, 1986: 15–16). wa Thiong'o draws attention to specific key features of language; as a method of communication between people; as a catalyst in the production of visual imagery; as a vehicle for conveying cultural ideals. A visual language transmits the worldviews inherent in the culture it represents through visual communication, much like oratory and literature.

By extending the argument for indigenous language as a valuable cultural inheritance to visual language, designers can preserve their own cultures while facilitating the values and uniqueness of other cultures in the face of the homogenising influence of globalisation. As part of decolonising the graphic design industry, this study proposes the re-evaluation and recovery of historical and contemporary visual communication material as a cultural carrier (Carey, 2017:3). Postcolonial graphic designers ought to increasingly operate as ethical, cultural agents and catalysts of social change. The case for indigenous language as a valuable cultural heritage can be transferred to visual language, allowing designers to preserve their own culture and promote different cultures' values and identities in global homogeneity. The decolonisation of the graphic design industry requires a re-evaluation and recovery of visual communication from the past and present as a "cultural carrier" (Carey, 2017: 3). As a result, the role of postcolonial graphic designers as agents of ethical, cultural and social transformation is increasingly important.

From the viewpoint of literary, political and cultural studies, both the concept and discipline of postcolonialism have been thoroughly and extensively criticised. The term's prefix 'post' continues to be the subject of debate among critics. From the onset, the term postcolonial has been a source of academic and interpretive debate, particularly on the significance of the signifying hyphen or its omission. Many critics who were worried about the effects of colonialism's historical context demanded the hyphen to set postcolonial studies apart from colonial discourse theory as a field. A more in-depth understanding of the underpinnings of

postcolonial cultures that reinforces the connections between and across the politically defined historical periods of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence cultures has challenged the simpler understanding of the term 'post' as simply meaning 'after' colonialism. In recent studies, postcolonialism has been primarily concerned with analysing the processes, effects, and responses to European colonialism from the sixteenth century to the present day, including neocolonialism. Irrespective of how the postcolonial is defined and despite disagreements about the usage of the prefix 'post' and the 'hyphen,' the term's origins in European colonialism history and institutional practices on the part of all colonised peoples remain crucial. Any definition of *postcolonialism* must consider a wider range of ongoing local and specific issues and practices because it is evident that these debates will take time to come to reach a conclusion. (Ashcroft, et al., 2001: 10).

Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins clarified the denotational functions in *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996: 43):

> *The term postcolonialism, according to a too rigid etymology, is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined independence on which a country breaks away from its governance from another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence which supersedes colonialism, postcolonialism is rather, an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies ... A theory of postcolonialism must then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism.*

Postcolonialism studies the effects of colonisation on various cultures and social systems. Although the study of the effects of colonial representation was central to the work of these critics, the term *postcolonial* was first used in literary circles to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). The term has come to represent the political and linguistic heritage of societies that were once European colonies. As a result, the term was subject to disciplinary and interpretive debate, especially when considering the implications of the signifying hyphen or its absence. Due to the major proponents of colonial discourse theory, including Homi Bhabha (Althusser and Lacan), Gayatri Spivak (Derrida),

and Edward Said (Foucault), who all had a strong poststructuralist influence, advocated for the use of the hyphen to separate postcolonial studies from colonial discourse theory (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 168). The significance of these postcolonial viewpoints has increased, challenging the theoretical discipline:

> *Post-colonial theory involves a discussion about experiences of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is 'essentially' post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field (Bose, Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1996: 2).*

2.3.2. Postcolonialism and the "Other"

Cultural critic Edward Said developed the term "*Orientalism*" and its connotations to describe the binary social relationship. Western Europe conceptualised the world as being divided into cultural representations that are social constructs, mutually constitutive, and unable to exist independently of one another as each exists because of the "Other." The "west," which constrained non-Western cultures to a homogenous cultural identity, created the "east" cultural concept. Gayatri Spivak, a theorist, claims that the term "subaltern" in postcolonial terms refers to "a space of difference" that is "inhabited by those who have no access to the lines of mobility within a society." Spivak cautioned against dismissing subaltern peoples as the cultural "Other," claiming that the West can evolve beyond the colonial paradigm by engaging in introspective self-criticism of fundamental values.

2.3.3. Postcolonial indigenous theories

Indigenous theory centres on reclaiming the displaced histories of the colonised people, together with demonstrating how colonising powers transformed and destroyed the colonised people's identities, cultures, knowledge and inherent human dignity (Bhabha, 1994: 41; McLeod, 2000: 7-8; Smith, 2012: 22). Chilisa (2012; 2020) discusses the relationship between indigenous research, particularly indigenous feminist research, and "ethics, methods, cultural

responsiveness, participatory research, and postcolonial research paradigms." The following section examines the diverse and complex ways Chilisa explains indigenous research. Chilisa (2020: 10) defines indigenous as non-indigenous to Euro-Western cultures and indigenous to those whom they have colonised.

Chilisa emphasises four aspects of indigenous research:

1. Instead of identifying and defining a research problem using Western theory, it focuses on a local phenomenon.
2. It is context-sensitive, taking consideration of the local context and developing locally appropriate interpretations, approaches and theories founded on personal experiences and indigenous knowledge.
3. It can integrate both Western and indigenous theories.
4. An indigenous research paradigm forms the foundation for its assumptions about what constitutes reality, knowledge and research values.

2.3.4. Indigenous research

Research and evaluation initiatives in local and indigenous communities and societies need to be sensitive to how cultural differences in national, regional, and local contexts affect attitudes, values, languages, and practices. This could result in inaccurate data and invalid results if not taken into consideration during the design and execution of the intervention in question (Ndimande, 2012). Chilisa (2012; 2020) is in favour of the concept that establishing connections is the goal of indigenous research, as indigenous research typically emphasises its relationship characteristics. She critiques how relationships between research, researchers and communities are disconnected through Western knowledge. Consequently, Chilisa recommends that designers and researchers conduct research more consciously, ethically and respectfully.

Chilisa (2012: xvi) focuses on the "recovering, valuing and internationalising of postcolonial indigenous epistemologies, methodologies and methods." Questions like "Whose Reality Counts?" provide a critique of Euro-Western research while also commenting on how it frames alternative forms of knowledge. This is a discussion of paradigms and practices in postcolonial and critical race theories that emphasise methodologies and methods that support indigenous epistemologies and transformative approaches to research and learning while also respecting

integrative knowledge systems. Chilisa (2012) contends that indigenous research, such as participatory research and other similar methods, provides opportunities for broad connections. The colonised "Other" can learn to analyze and understand their situation to transform it through this process. According to Freire and Macedo (1987: 36), the system for achieving "a critical reading of reality" entails reading the world through words to understand and transform it. To read the world, one must comprehend how social, political, and economic structures, as well as human behaviours, shape and manipulate language, culture, society, and history to highlight privilege for some and deny humanity to others.

Chilisa (2012: 307) focuses on collaboration and building partnerships that incorporate knowledge systems, saying that "the researched are gatekeepers of their indigenous knowledge." She combines "anecdotes, stories and narratives with case studies, charts, learning activities and definitions of terminology, as well as her references to and acknowledgement of mixed methods, all of which connect the researcher with the researched in a critical way that both evokes and challenges simple descriptions." Finding the kind of evaluation that best supports and serves indigenous communities depends on how responsive that evaluation is. To improve results with a more competent, culturally sensitive approach, Cram (2018: 131) presents the following questions:

1. Is it appropriate to evaluate that indigenous group?
2. Does it reflect their values, culture, faith, experience, history, needs, and priorities?
3. Is there a structural assessment of the sociocultural context - typically a colonial context - in which indigenous peoples live?

Cram and Mertens (2016: 178) assert that "methodologies must be culturally acceptable at the community level." Identifying and implementing the most appropriate research and evaluation methods is critical to producing reliable and accurate results. Chilisa (2020) proposes developing and implementing a more context-sensitive, responsive, representative, and participatory research or evaluation design and methodology. Reporting approaches and techniques must be developed and conducted collaboratively with communities, stakeholders and co-workers to optimise the most accurate realisation of the research or evaluation objectives.

Indigenous research identifies the following:

1. Relationality: Developing relationships with communities, stakeholders and co-workers while conducting research. Acknowledging people's relations with the land, both living and non-living.
2. Responsibility: The researcher's responsibility in advocating for justice, challenging dominant ideologies that marginalise communities, and assisting the local community.
3. Reverence: Acknowledging ethics, values and spirituality as significant sources of knowledge.
4. Respect: The community should be the focal point of the research process in all respects, from concept to implementation. Since the community owns the collected data, it follows that the community should benefit from the research..
5. Reflexivity: Researchers consider alternate perspectives as they reflect on their standpoint.

2.3.5.   Indigenous research paradigms

Critics argue that indigenous research methods cannot simply adopt different paradigms, such as transformative methodologies, as this would cause them to be assimilated by dominant Euro-Western epistemologies and practices. Chilisa (2020) advocates incorporating a fifth indigenous paradigm to the current four: postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic. An indigenous research paradigm would prioritise "value systems that emphasise connections with place, people, past, present, future, the living and the non-living" (Chilisa, 2020: 20).

Chilisa (2020: 20) proposes a distinctive indigenous paradigm for several. The four major paradigms and indigenous research are as follows:

1. Indigenous paradigms are grounded on various assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values.
2. Indigenous paradigms are defined by assumptions that are relational.

3. Indigenous paradigms are based on an integrated local worldview, whereas transformative paradigms are built on a Western worldview.
4. Transformative paradigms evolved as a Western research approach, rendering it inappropriate for progressive decolonisation.

Chilisa (2020) contends that Indigenous methodologies and Western knowledge systems can coexist. She discusses a variety of indigenous approaches, ranging from the least indigenous to third-space methodologies. The indigenous approach that gives the least consideration to decolonising relationships has a universal Euro-Western viewpoint. Although the integrative and adaptive approach connects different knowledge paradigms, decolonisation is evident. Both indigenous and Western viewpoints have been incorporated. Indigenous epistemologies serve as the foundation for a predominantly indigenous framework and are distinct from Western knowledge systems. Finally, third space methodologies question indigenousness through the voices of those who are most marginalised, challenging and refuting Western paradigms. Chela Sandoval (2000: 70) recommends a "coalitional consciousness" in which all people collaborate to bring about change, including the integration of ideas, knowledge and theories.

## 2.4.	Summary of the chapter

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework, which addresses the study focus on the interrelatedness of culture and graphic design through a postcolonial and indigenous theoretical lens. The study traces the impact of the inherited legacies of colonialism and apartheid of the power relationships of exclusion, marginalisation and homogeneity on the visual representation of the vast majority of the South African population. Almost three decades into democracy, the South African design industry continues to perpetuate the dominant Euro-Western paradigms through inappropriate and insensitive visual representation in a heterogenous society in post-apartheid South Africa. The study acknowledges that examining the term *culture* is particularly challenging within the context of South Africa, as it carries with it legacies of race, racism, colonialism and other socio-economic inequalities from the nation's history.

CHAPTER 3

Culture and graphic design in South Africa

The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples. No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope.

Article 4: Human rights as guarantees of cultural diversity
UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
PARIS, 2 November 2001

3.1.   Introduction

Chapter 3 establishes the study's conceptual frame that culture is inherent in language, founded on Edward Hall's (1961: 186) theory: "culture is language and language is culture." From this perspective, graphic design should be critically studied in cultural contexts as a form of language functioning through visual representation systems. Neat, succinct wrap up of the research aim. Research on visual communication cannot disregard the cultural context. To evaluate whether graphic design, as a language that operates through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts, I considered it necessary to conduct a more thorough examination of the complex term *culture* in relation to graphic design. The foundations of the term *culture* are examined within interdisciplinary fields to understand the embedded relationship between culture and language. Visual communication is analysed as a cultural practice in relation to various interdisciplinary fields of study. I discuss different design approaches to designing for unfamiliar cultural contexts and audiences. In this study, I talk about the ethical responsibilities of graphic designers in South Africa regarding visual communication.

3.2. An interdisciplinary approach

Culture is a complex, multi-layered concept that has been examined from a variety of disciplines and points of view. In initiating this research on the term *culture*, it was important to assess how culture has been defined in other disciplines within the humanities and social sciences and the concerns raised about the topic while attempting to define it. An interdisciplinary approach requires significant collaboration between disciplines resulting in shared learning experiences that address common areas of concern. A graphic designer's expertise is essential as visual communication is ubiquitous. As the design is focused on human needs, a designer with extensive interdisciplinary knowledge can anchor a project, facilitating connection and interaction between the clients, professionals, stakeholders and users.

More than 30 years ago, Jorge Frascara (1988: 28), a renowned visual communication design authority, recognised that graphic design's primary focus is human communication. Frascara recognised the receiver as an active participant in the formation of the message. He identified the importance of shifting the designer's attention from the interaction of visual elements to the relationship between the audience and the design communication. He understood that decisions on visual representation should be informed, not only by compositional considerations but essentially through research and insights into human contexts. According to Frascara, the resources of traditional design schools were insufficient to meet the requirements of design education and various components of psychology, verbal communication, sociology and other disciplines should be implemented into the design curriculum to equip students with the required knowledge and awareness.

Frascara (1988) argues that for the field to advance, graphic designers must acquire the interdisciplinary knowledge to assume responsibility for the conception and implementation of effective and ethical visual communications. The graphic design industry must be concerned with professional and social responsibility, as well as with ethics and aesthetics. This appears to be the only option if a theoretical understanding of graphic design is to be developed, if the discipline is to assume responsibility for the conception and production of effective and ethical communications, and if the field is to assume responsibility for the education of graphic designers. This particular operational component must be validated using a concern for professional and social responsibility, which includes ethics and aesthetics.

While 'cultural studies' is inherently interdisciplinary, encompassing academic theories from various disciplines, culture is almost entirely absent from graphic design theory and discourse. The absence of a debate on the cultural dimension of graphic design is a significant limitation that prevents the graphic design industry from becoming the agent of cultural and, consequently, social and environmental change that it could and should be (Manzini, 2016: 52). American design scholars Anthony Faiola, Stephen Davis and Richard Edwards (2010: 693) criticised the "lack of interest in integrating design and social science together." Shaughnessy (2010: 172-3) claims in *Graphic Design: A User's Manual* that graphic designers must engage with various disciplines to gain more in-depth and broader knowledge to contribute insightfully and competently to the diverse audiences with whom they will work. Embracing interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative and participatory design processes from outside the field allows for a more thorough assessment and understanding of someone else's position on a specific issue with respect to one's own (Friedman, 2003: 508-509).

Design theory's foundation as an interdisciplinary field of study places it at the intersection of a number of major academic disciplines. In *The Education of a Graphic Designer*, Boradkar discusses a variety of academic disciplines that can serve as useful resources for design, such as visual culture, media and cultural studies, anthropology, material culture, and sustainability studies. Engagement with discourses drawn from such different sources will result in greater comprehension of the value of images as signifiers of culture, human behaviour and society. It will therefore give a significantly more well-informed understanding of the wider relevance of the field of graphic design.

3.3.   Cultural terminology

3.3.1.   The term *culture*

Research on the value of communication design today cannot disregard the term *culture.* Examining the concept of culture in the context of South Africa is particularly complex as it carries with it legacies of race, racism, colonialism and other socio-economic injustices. By claiming that we no longer act as our predecessors did in the past, we cannot continue to use their interpretation of terminology in the post-modern era. Addressing culture within visual communication is essential, challenging and unavoidable. The majority of cultural resources cite *culture* as one of the most complex concepts to define in the human and social sciences due to the wide range of interpretations. There have been considerable discussions and debates

about what the term *culture* means. The cultural critic Raymond Williams (1976: 87) alleges that culture is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." Considering culture is a broad concept that encompasses all aspects of human rights, each discipline interprets, characterises and defines culture from its perspective. This position exemplifies the wide disparity of cultural definitions by academics and researchers across the different disciplines.

By the mid-twentieth-century, anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) critically identify and cited 164 definitions of culture. In the ten-volume *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, Apte (1994: 2001) summarises the issue as follows: "Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was no agreement in the late 20th century among anthropologists regarding its nature." The early definition of culture as an interpretive framework is attributed to the nineteenth-century British social anthropologist E.B. Tylor. He introduced the concept in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871: 1): "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [sic] as a member of society."

The critical question, according to Tylor and many subsequent anthropologists, was not to identify the greatest intellectual achievements of a particular era and region but rather to comprehend how human civilisation came to create an artificial, non-natural, and thus a cultural way of life. This definition of culture takes into account the idea that human values, beliefs and practices are integrated into one another, which was regarded as a primary definition of culture in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, for current research and the purpose of this study, Tylor's early definition has been criticised as being too restrictive because it does not encompass all cultural aspects; it is "both too vague and neglectful of the importance of the fact that cultures are different from one another" (Sinha, 2021: 2). This quote is not closed.

The following definition of *culture* by Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952: 181) emphasises the significance of symbols, artefacts and action while understating the importance of the cognitive underpinnings that support these (Sinha, 2021: 2).

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts … culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 181).

Sinha (2017: 9) proposes that meaning should be the central component of any definition of *culture,* with any human culture being understood as "a pattern or patterns of meaning … a normative order, realized and reproduced in semiotic systems or vehicles including language, and in enduring artefacts and institutions; and enacted and renewed in social and communicative practices." According to Sinha (2017: 9), there are three equally legitimate ways to conceptualise culture: "*Ways of doing things* (practices); *Ways of thinking and feeling* (mental models, schemas, worldviews, ideologies, structures of feeling); and *Ways of talking* (discourses)." These perspectives have shaped how language and culture have been thought about throughout history in various academic fields (Sinha, 2021: 2).

Since *culture* is a term that is frequently used but has multiple meanings, it must be defined in the context of this study. Given the wide range of cultural concepts and definitions available, I sought to determine how culture may be understood in a way that is beneficial and relevant to graphic designers within the scope of this study. I turned to the cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) as one of the most influential contributors to how many social scientists comprehend the transformation of social life. Hall referred to this transformation as the *cultural turn* (Rose, 2007:5).

Stuart Hall (Hall, 1997: 2) explains,

Culture, it is argued, is not so much a set of things – novels and paintings or TV programmes or comics – as a process, a set of practices. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between the members of a society or group … Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways.

Stuart Hall (1997: 2) contends that, in the wider social science context, culture refers to that which is distinctive about a person's community, nation or social group's way of existence. Hall (1997: 2) describes the term *culture* as the "shared values" held by individuals and groups within a society. In this research, a society is defined as a collection of individuals who may be classified in several ways, such as by nation, profession, and activities.

Hall (1997: 1) claims that "shared meaning" is the foundation of culture. Only by using the common language we use daily can meanings be communicated. Language has always been considered the primary repository of cultural meanings and values and is fundamental to meaning and culture. Culture is the process of assigning meaning to people, things and behaviours (Hall, 1997: 3). These interpretations are the result of the mind "coding" the conceptual map using a system known as "signs" (Hall, 1997: 18). Different social groups derive their meaning from culture and share this meaning through interpersonal interactions. Hall (1997: 19) alleges that visual signs and images remain signs regardless of how closely they resemble the objects they represent as they carry meaning and therefore need to be interpreted. People use language as the medium through which meanings are transmitted and created (Hall, 1997: 19). Meaning is created and developed and not inherent in real-world objects; it is constructed and formed as "the result of a signifying practice – a practice that produces meaning, which makes things mean" (Hall, 1997: 24). The symbolic practices and processes that support language, representation, and interpretation must be distinguished from the material world, which consists of objects and people (Hall, 1997: 25). It might be challenging to decipher a concept in another person's mind without the "linguistic codes" to help translate the signs into understandable concepts (Hall, 1997: 35). Nevertheless, these codes are subjective to individual interpretations and rely on social principles and cultural values. *Culture* can also be considered "in terms of these shared conceptual maps, shared language systems, and the codes that control translation relationships" (Hall, 1997: 21).

I concur with Hall's (1997: 2) view that *culture* is the "shared values" and practices in a group or society. People are perceived as members of groups who belong to one or more groups and demonstrate a certain level of mutual knowledge and awareness of their shared environment to connect and communicate. I also concur with Hall's (1997: 2) concept that culture is acquired rather than inherited and that meanings are never static or permanent but are instead shaped by sociocultural and linguistic contexts (Hall, 1997: 3). Relevant to graphic design, objects 'in

themselves' rarely contain fixed, unchanging meanings, but instead, words can carry several interpretations depending on the context (Hall, 1997: 3). Meaning is assigned to objects, people and events facilitated by a system of interpretation which is rooted in a particular cultural context. In accordance with Hall's view, the following definitions of culture apply: "[the] collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from the Other" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005: 4). Another relevant definition because it explicitly includes material culture is as follows: "[the] system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artefacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning? (Bates & Plog, 1976).

3.3.2. Cultural diversity

Culture and its relationship with language and, specifically, visual communication is the focus of this study. Determining what constitutes *diversity* is one of the challenges in conducting research on cultural diversity. Despite being one of the most widely used terms today, *diversity* is rarely defined explicitly despite having several meanings. The term *cultural diversity* can be found in sociological studies to refer to "ethnic pluralism." Anthropology is the academic field that has historically and currently focused on culture the most. Multiple challenges are associated with *cultural diversity*, as demonstrated by the development of anthropology's cultural concepts over the course of its history. The term is applied to a theory, a policy and a curriculum in philosophy, politics and education. The terms *multiculturalism, interculturality* and *cultural heterogeneity*, all used interchangeably in this study, are synonymous with *cultural diversity* (Oetzel, 2017: 352). The central concepts that form *cultural diversit*y today are equity and justice. This can range from demonstrating equal respect for all cultures to preserving *cultural diversity,* recognising all cultural identities and transforming societal structures and systems.

People inherently embody multiple layers of culture as they simultaneously belong to various groups and cultural categories (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005: 11). Cultures are rarely homogeneous since subcultures are based on regions, languages and beliefs (Limon & La France, 2005: 126). Interculturalists define *culture* as encompassing a diversity of cultural contexts, including national, regional, ethnic, work, gender, generational, religious and social class cultures (Oetzel, 2017: 352). Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 11) refer to these cultural

contexts as "layers of culture." The complexity of interpreting nonverbal aspects of communication is increased by the diversity of cultural contexts (Beamer & Varner, 2001: 160).

South Africa has been home to a variety of languages and ethnicities, both indigenous and immigrant, for over two centuries. This diversity became a distinguishing feature, leading to the term *Rainbow Nation* (Baines, 1998). South African urban areas, in particular, are multi-ethnic communities with a variety of dialect and language influences. Within the framework of this study, the term *cultural diversity* goes beyond merely describing the widely acknowledged reality that South Africa's population is made up of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. It includes a multicultural perspective which promotes respect and understanding of *all* cultures (Thomas, 2006: 11). *Cultural diversity* reveals a wide range of inherent beliefs, ethics, practices and behavioural patterns in culture and ethnicity (Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991: 22). The term *cultural diversity* refers to a broad concept that encompasses more than the coexistence of diverse human knowledge, ideas, arts, morals, laws, customs, beliefs, languages, abilities, disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, and nationalities. It also includes how people respond to and choose to coexist with this reality. The renowned social psychologist and organisational anthropologist Geert Hofstede (1997: 5) defines *culture* as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" Hofstede and Hofstede (2005:366) claim that working in a multicultural context does not require feeling, thinking and behaving in a similar way to demonstrate collaboration to reach an agreement and to participate in practical issues.

Diverse cultural backgrounds have many variables that influence intercultural communication and present frequent challenges to successful communication (Parry & Potgieter, 1996: 153). Cultural diversity can result in many challenges, including conflict, misunderstanding and poor performance (Matveev & Milter, 2004: 105). This is consistent with the theory that language differences cause languages to change (Torgersen, Gabrielatos, Hoffmann, & Fox, 2011: 115). Torgersen, et al. (2011: 115) make clear that the linguistic and social factors that motivate language change are complex, and none can be determined to be a sole cause; rather, their interplay creates an environment for the innovation to occur, and this may lead to change.

3.3.3. Cultural contexts

The term *context*, especially *cultural context,* has been overlooked in terminology (Cabezas-García & Reimerink, 2022: 1). Faber (2012) alleges that the concept of *context* remained underdeveloped until new terminological advancements emerged which recognised the need to explore words and concepts within communication contexts. Since words and phrases can have multiple meanings across disciplines, cultures, and languages, it is essential to comprehend the cultural context. According to certain theories, meaning is dependent on context and fluctuating contextual factors (León Araúz, P., & Faber, 2014; Evans, 2006; Evans & Green, 2006). Graphic designers need an in-depth knowledge of context to comprehend the impact of culture on visual communication.

Escandell (2013) considers it as "everything that, physically or culturally, surrounds the communicative act" (cited in Cabezas-García et al., 2022: 2). Kecskes (2014: 128) defines context as "any factor that affects the actual interpretation of signs and expressions" (Cabezas-García et al., 2022: 2). This concept of context, which can be further defined in terms of "culture, the communicative setting, and linguistic context," is one that Cabezas-García et al. (2022: 2) concur with Kecskes (2014). When thinking about how different cultures influence the production of visual communication, I find this idea of context particularly important. According to Kecskes (2014), context does not impact communication within the same culture in the same way that communication between cultures does. The connection between languages and their social contexts is the focus of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1989). It indicates, in particular, how important cultural contexts are to communication by making a distinction between situational and cultural settings. As a result, it is essential to highlight the distinct nuances of language (linguistics), communicative situation, prior world knowledge, and culture as contextual factors that influence communication.

Despite recent research acknowledging the relevance of culture in communication, the development of the term culture in terminology is still underrepresented, perhaps in response to the complexity of reflecting the cultural component in the description of terms and concepts. This is evident by the comparatively low number of studies in the field (Faber & Medina-Rull, 2017). Since the proto-typicality of visual images is culture-specific, I believe graphic designers must consider cultural context when choosing criteria for multimodal content – such as images – to convey concepts. Designers must comprehend how cultural context influences

the social impact and representation of time, place, politics, purpose, ethnicity, gender, and religious and agnostic beliefs, including how these factors contribute to engagement and meaning in visual communication. Additionally, contextual and conceptual information should be integrated with multimodal information to facilitate knowledge acquisition, as combining textual and visual material enhances understanding. Because of this, a thorough investigation into how human perception and cultural cognition influence the representation of concept systems and terms in specialised knowledge contexts is required (Kecskes, 2014).

3.4. Culture, language and graphic design

An introductory paragraph explaining the significance of and relationship between the sections below would help the reader to understand what their relevance is and how they build together to present an understanding of "Culture , language and graphic design".

3.4.1. Culture and language

The anthropologist Edward T. Hall was the first to use the term "*intercultural communication.*" Hall contributed to the discourse of culture in *The Silent Language* (1959: 186) with his theory that "culture" and "communication" are interchangeable. He equated the terms by asserting that "culture is communication and communication is culture" (Bennett, 2017). Furthermore, Hall (1976: 16) claims, "Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture." In reference to the reciprocal relationship between communication and culture, Barnlund (1989: xiv) interpreted Hall's theory as follows: "It is through communication that we acquire a culture; it is in our manner of communicating that we display our cultural uniqueness." In essence, language is rooted in culture; individuals acquire culture through diverse forms of communication and express and reflect their culture through diverse modes of communication. Since language shapes how we understand and communicate with one another, speaking the same language immediately establishes a community and a space of shared understanding. Sharma (2019: 225-226) describes language as an identity marker that plays a significant role in conveying cultural identity.

Kim (2003: 12) states, "without culture, language cannot exist." In other words, whether language impacts culture or vice-versa, the loss of one results in the loss of the other. From the standpoint that language and culture are embedded in each other, this study recognises that the

boundaries between language and culture are indeterminable. wa Thiong'o (2003) addresses this dual nature of language: language as a medium of communication and a vehicle of culture. In *Decolonizing the Mind,* wa Thiong'o (1986) states that language is an inseparable part of human life. Although human beings are connected through communication by using a particular language, a specific culture is not transmitted through language in its universality but in its distinctiveness as the language of a specific community with a specific history. Based on the theory that "communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication" (wa Thiong'o, 1986: 15-16), this study argues that successful and effective visual communication requires an in-depth understanding of culture, in the same way understanding culture requires knowledge of how people communicate.

3.4.2. Culture and graphic design

Central to this study is the examination of the relationship between culture and visual communication. Based on wa Thiong'o's (2003) statement of the dual nature of language as a vehicle of culture and a medium of communication is the fundamental understanding that graphic design is a language that works through systems of visual representation. According to Barnard (2005: 67), "the study of communication is the study of culture, and that culture is the creation and use of meaningful forms, which would include graphic design." Barnard considers that culture is represented by means of communication from individuals, making graphic design one of the communication forms that can transmit cultural meanings in visual ways so that people can understand each other's culture. He expresses that the relationship between culture and communication from a graphic design perspective is apparent when "culture consists in groups of people who communicate with each other, who talk to each other, show each other pictures, read and understand each other's books, magazines, newspapers." The discovery of various cultural groups within society coincides with the definition of a target market and an audience within communication design (Blauvelt, 1994: 9). A critical aspect of graphic design is that communication is always aimed at a specific target group. Considering graphic design from this perspective, the relationship with cultural identity is significant as designers are dealing with the cultural character of groups.

Understanding that graphic design is a form of communication built on a visual language presupposes that designers recognise the inherent cultural values embedded in the context of their work. As culture shapes a person's perception of the world, designers reflect the diversity

of human cultures in their designs. Graphic designers need to consider sensitively how members of different cultures visually interpret the world. Dunworth's (2008:98) study found that "cultural misunderstandings and communication failures were cited frequently as causes of problems while positive experiences were also often explained as the result of good communication and shared cultural values." Considering the "central role that art and design play in the formation and expression of post-1994 South African visual identities," it is critical for graphic designers to reflect on their design process to create ethical and visually appropriate communication representative of a multicultural society in postcolonial South Africa (Faber 2009: 11). According to Faber (2009: 11), the broader redefinition of South Africa's social and cultural identities is still ongoing on multiple levels.

Research indicates that a better understanding and knowledge of culture promotes group identity and a sense of belonging. Cultural sensitivity and awareness of the cultural context are crucial for the design outcome and the design process, as it is key to the effectiveness of the interaction between designers and the intended users. van Boeijen (2015:195) proposes that designers not only study culture to avoid incompatibilities but also explore opportunities for cultural exchanges to improve the design processes. Participatory methods, approaches and materials must be culturally suitable for a culture unfamiliar to the designers (van Boeijen, 2015:102). Design education should be concerned with cultural sensitivity within the educational approach to prevent discrepancies between what is offered and how it is viewed as the outcome of effective education while ensuring that the cultural context's relevance improves learning through inspirational education.

3.4.3.   Culture and visual representation of the "Other"

The specific criteria that can and must be applied to the visual representation of the "Other" should be established by thoroughly understanding visual cultural diversity. Each culture has a distinct visual language that reflects its distinct values, despite the fact that it is difficult to ignore the impact of the visual language of the dominant global culture. Studies by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen on reading visuals are important in this context. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, there is a visual grammar structure like the linguistic one. This grammar structure bears intercultural differences and it is not possible to talk about universal visual grammar: "Visual language is not – despite assumptions to the contrary – transparent and universally understood; it is culturally specific" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 4). van

Leeuwen and Kress' (2006) study on interpreting images is critical in this context since visual grammar has a similar structure to linguistic grammar. Their research indicates that this grammatical structure reflects intercultural differences, making it difficult to reflect a universal visual grammar. Sociology and visual anthropology aim to avoid oversimplified approaches to understanding the "Other." They develop more appropriate methods for interpreting visual representations of the "Other."

Andrew Blauvelt's (1994: 7) discussion of representational approaches is central to the graphic designer who is routinely asked to speak for the "Other." Blauvelt (1994: 7) observes that the graphic designer, like the cultural anthropologist, is caught between being instrumental in creating cultural artefacts and living in the society that distributes them. Graphic designers, as members of society, live with their creations and the creations of other designers. In this way, designers are expected to be experts inside and outside of culture. The dilemma of being both in and around culture exists at another level, too – at the level of individual subjectivity. Graphic designers identify with traits like race, ethnicity, gender, age, affiliation with a particular religion, sexual orientation and class.

Although culture has been used to label people as "Other," it also has the capacity to preserve people's distinctiveness and avoid homogenisation and oppression. As a result, it is critical to recognise which elements of culture are being addressed in different contexts. Culture may be present in society on both a superficial and substantial level, depending on the circumstances. In contrast to a "substantial" level of culture, "superficial" refers to an approach that is only concerned with the obvious or apparent, something that is easily noticeable without study or close examination, which may or may not be meaningful for people's intrinsic sense of belonging and identity (Lin, 2020: 930). However, a spectrum approach should be taken rather than a binary approach to the concepts.

3.4.4. Culture, language and representation

Stuart Hall (1997) describes *language* as a representational system that depicts culture as a collection of shared meanings. People within a particular sociocultural community can transfer their thoughts, concepts and values to others through symbols and signs such as words, sounds, images, colours, tactile gestures and other elements. Given the inherent relationship between language and culture, the representation of cultural diversity is intertwined within a specific

language. Considering that language is the primary tool for transmitting the meanings of different objects, Hall contends that linguistic representation is critical to constructing meaning. Meaning gives people a sense of their identity, who they are and where they belong. People from the same culture share particular viewpoints, ideas, thoughts and images that enable them to perceive reality similarly. Members who understand a unified language might share similar cultural codes, beliefs and concepts. Every social and personal contact generates an exchange of meaning (Hall, 1997).

Stuart Hall's (1997:15) definition of *representation* is relevant to this study, as he describes it as the process of making meaning using a language. The objects of representation do not possess meaning; instead, the meaning is created through interpretation and communication, coding and decoding texts, and depends on the cultural context (Hall, 1997:21). As cultural producers, graphic designers are starting to re-evaluate the meaning of representation by moving away from speaking for the "Other" and toward speaking with and to "Others." **cite** Hall alleges that language provides a general framework for how representation and culture function. He distinguishes two approaches: the semiotic approach, which is concerned with how representation functions and how language forms meanings; and the discursive approach, which is concerned with the consequences and outcomes of representations. He contends that constructivism, which employs semiotics and discourse in its approach, can demonstrate the consequences of representation, knowledge and power relations, as well as distinctive historical contexts. Furthermore, he argues, there are no correct or incorrect interpretations since meanings differ depending on usage, context and historical events.

Since power, emotions and values dominate meanings, they play a significant role in defining people in terms of excluding or including them, particularly when "identity is marked out by difference" (Woodward, 1997: 9). Hall (1997) views representation as a crucial factor that forms the complex relationship between the aspects of language and cultural differences. By using the appropriate meaning in a culture, the representation process shapes concepts, ideas and feelings into a straightforward form that can be easily understood. Participants can communicate and reflect on their culture and identity with others while exchanging meaning using the same shared cultural codes.

3.4.5.   Visual culture and graphic design

Through the 1990s, the academic field of visual culture evolved, with its core interest being the study of the connection between the spectator and the viewed (Julier, 2006: 64). Interpretations change and are constantly diverse since the meaning of visual culture is multimodal and formed in relation to the viewer, other images and viewing contexts (Rose, 2007: 11; Conradie, 2019: 10). Cross-disciplinary interest groups and a number of new journals have emerged as a consequence of the increased interest in visuality in the humanities and social sciences. These developments are regarded as evidence of a "visual turn" in the study of culture and its artefacts. To account for the visuality of the objects of study, the study of visual culture developed across a variety of disciplines, including cultural studies, anthropology, museology, advertising, media studies, comparative literature, and film and photography (Mitchell, 1994). Visual culture is "located somewhere at the crossroads of traditional art history, cinema, photography, and new media studies, the philosophy of perception, the anthropology of the senses, and the burgeoning field of cultural studies," according to Martin Jay (2005: 25). Margaret Dikovitskaya (2005) believes it emerged after encountering poststructuralist theory and cultural studies from the intersection of art history, anthropology, film studies, linguistics and comparative literature.

Berger's writings in the 1970s had a significant influence on the development of visual culture. By investigating the relationships between seeing and perceiving, Berger's seminal publication, *The Ways of Seeing* (1972), revolutionised the way individuals perceive visual language and see the world. Berger's writings from 2016 continued examining and challenging how individuals construct and interpret signs, or "language," and how it applies to philosophy, art, music, storytelling, and political discourse. While the theories and concepts of culture and media studies have been defined and debated since the 1960s, today, they are being theorised and developed from a completely different premise. By the late 1990s, academics with a background in cultural studies had begun to recognise the potential of visual culture. Publications by visual culture writers and theorists such as Jenks (1995), Walker and Chaplin (1997), Evans and Hall (1999), and Mirzoeff (1999) that first appeared in the late 1990s demonstrate a critical time in the history of visual culture. Walker and Chaplin's *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (1997) addresses institutions, the gaze, pleasure, and new technologies. The classic *Visual Culture: The Reader* (1999), edited by Evans and Hall, features a wide range of writers, from Tagg, Silverman, and Dyer to the seminal Barthes,

Benjamin, and Foucault. Visual culture shifted from its roots in art history, no longer viewed as "art history with a difference," and into the fields of media and cultural studies. cite

What is significantly notable about the efforts to establish the field of visual culture during the 1990s is that the words *design* and *design history* were absent from the discussions. A search of key design journals and forums from this significant period reveals the absence of discourse about visual culture in graphic design. Graphic design does not make itself heard in art history or cultural and media studies as part of visual culture's "new interdisciplinary field" (Mirzoeff, 2013). Historically, graphic design has always been regarded as a journal's token article or "special edition". Reviewing the previous decade of the *Journal of Design History* demonstrates the significance of consumer studies and material culture to design history. In 1995, an entire issue of *Design Issues* was dedicated to debates on the scope of graphic design, involving design history and the concept of design studies; however, they omitted discussions in visual culture (Design Issues, 1995). The terms *graphic design* and *design* are conspicuously absent from Jeanne van Eeden and Amanda du Preez's *South African Visual Culture* (2004), a contribution to the discussion and discourse on South African visual culture.

Similarly, there are no contributions from anyone involved with graphic design history, theory or critique in Nicholas Mirzoeff's *The Visual Culture Reader* (2002), which has been reissued several times. The absence of the word *design* from the discussions and published works on visual culture is surprising, given that graphic design is primarily visual. Additionally, this is unexpected given the network of art and design history departments that many academics working in the emerging field of visual culture would be connected to.

When discussing the new field, authors of visual culture, including academics in closely related disciplines, failed to recognise graphic design's cultural relevance and the importance of its inclusion in critical discourse. Given that the discipline of graphic design is active every day, with its messages, target audiences, and roles in community culture, it should be a suitable topic for analysis. In view of the central focus of visual culture, the absence of graphic design issues in publications addressing visual culture is concerning. Richard Poynor (2012: 21), Professor of Design and Visual Culture at the University of Reading, claims it is "unaccountable" that graphic design was overlooked while playing a "central role" as a "shaper of the visual environment." Poynor (2012) alleges that graphic design's "transparency" or "invisibility" has long been a source of concern among designers.

Graphic designers draw on visual culture when designing. Developing a framework for analysing visual cultural contexts is likely to result in a deeper comprehension of the work's communication and message. According to Heller (2011), historically, graphic design has been limited in its approach. This has been essential to building a subject. However, graphic design history has remained limited to comparing graphic design to graphic design as the foundation for informing us what we need to know. This is not to undervalue the important work achieved but to question whether the insights could be more profound. The argument for visual culture is strong for several reasons: graphic design is surprisingly complex, and a visual culture is an approach which can accommodate these complexities and serve the subject well. Graphic design plays a key part in the visual environment, such as what visual culture is referencing; it relies on cultural understanding and decoding, audiences and viewing conditions.

A shift toward visual studies would require a deeper engagement and discussion with theoretical and literary works in visual studies, which has received limited attention in historical and critical writings on graphic design. Graphic design, positioned between disciplines, requires a more prominent academic representation in academia. The discipline has been unaccountably overlooked by design historians ignoring visual culture and its debates, and inexplicably disregarded by cultural and media studies and visual cultural theorists. The inward-looking nature of graphic design writing and other modes of design discourse, combined with the persistent notion among graphic design writers that the ultimate purpose of such commentary is for professional improvement, has resulted in a body of writing that seems to be exclusively of interest to design professionals (Poynor, 2012). Poynor (1999) states in his concise article on the history of First Things First that "The vast majority of design projects – and certainly the most lavishly funded and widely disseminated – address corporate needs, a massive over-emphasis on the commercial sector of society, which consumes most of a graphic designers' time, skills and creativity." Consequently, Poynor (1999: 56) makes a critical distinction between graphic design's singular, commercial role and "the possibility... that design might have broader purposes, potential, and meanings."

For many graphic designers, there is a perceived disconnect between theory and practice. Poynor (2003: 10) alleges that graphic design has "long had an aversion to theory." Before it can engage a broader academic audience, graphic design must take a different stance. It would benefit graphic design research to be open to new interdisciplinary perspectives and studies from outside sources. For graphic design to grow as a discipline, the practice needs to be more

interdisciplinary, thereby genuinely accounting for the complex cultural role and agency of graphic design in the visual experience of the world. Designers need to engage a wider academic community beyond design history and graphic design theory to develop the discipline further. This point made by Poynor (2012) is an important aspect of the development of appropriate critical frameworks. Graphic design theory would become more engaging and beneficial to design professionals and students if it took a less designer-centric approach and examined societal implications. The discipline will only be taken seriously as a subject of study alongside established, recognised visual media when academics from other disciplines begin to view it seriously as a relevant area of study. Sternberg and Lubart (1999: 3) assert that for an idea to be creative, it must be relevant and acknowledged as having social value. Creativity, in their view, is the capacity to generate new imaginative ideas and create products that solve community problems. Creativity and innovation must be used to think differently when developing social value for a community. Creativity helps people generate new ideas, goods, services and other technological advances that improve lives and solve issues (Baron & Shane, 2008). This demonstrates that social innovation has become one of the most important ways to create social value (Fields, 2016: 99).

Questions about visual representation or the relationship between what we can see or imagine and what we know become inextricably linked to who we are and what we know. Visualism, like the postmodern desire to visualise knowledge, forces designers to consider the critical necessity for visual culture to eradicate its racialised inheritance. For many critics, the underlying issue with visual culture is not its focus on the importance of visuality but rather its use of a cultural framework to explain the history of the visual. This raises the question of how visual culture relates to other definitions and ideas of culture. The process anthropologist Johannes Fabian has called visualism: "The ability to visualize a culture or society almost becomes synonymous with understanding it" (Fabian 1983: 106).

3.5. Culture and visual representation

An introductory paragraph explaining the significance of and relationship between the sections below would help the reader to understand what their relevance is and how they build together to present an understanding of "Culture and visual representation"

3.5.1. Visual grammar

The concept of *visual grammar* presented in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) book *Reading Images: Grammar of Visual Design* is a new approach to "reading visuals." They claim that the study of the interpretation of images is relevant to graphic design as visual grammar has a similar structure to language. Their approach holds that it is possible to apply grammar while working with visuals and that visual images can be interpreted as texts. Grammar is a collection of resources that are combined to generate meaning rather than a set of instructions for the appropriate usage of visual language. The research conducted by Kress et al. (2006) demonstrates that despite the global dominance of the dominant homogeneous visual language of Euro-Western culture, each culture has its own distinct visual language through which its unique values are expressed and communicated. Kress et al. (2006: 4) claim, "Visual language is not – despite assumptions to the contrary – transparent and universally understood; it is culturally specific."

Visual grammar, like verbal language, differs across cultures, making visual grammar and visual language culturally related. Similar to how the syntax of each verbal language is distinct, each culture's visual language has a distinct aesthetic grammar. Writing traditions are highlighted by Kress et al. (2006: 4-5) as the most visible examples of intercultural visual grammar differences. The alphabet and writing orientation (from left to right, right to left, up to down, and so on) are essential factors in shaping visual language and communication across cultures. For example, the tradition of writing from left to right is an element that is significant to Western visual communication. I concur with Kress et al. (2006) that it is not appropriate to use universal visual grammar in all contexts due to the fact that grammatical structures differ across cultures.

3.5.2. Cultural semiotics

Ferdinand de Saussure's view on language as a fundamental semiotic system became public with the publication of *Cours de linguistique Générale* (1916). A century later, the impact of his ideas on modern linguistics and semiotics is still being studied. His theories have been widely deployed, as a foundation for a general approach to language and meaning, providing a model of representation which has been applied to a wide range of cultural objects and practices. Saussure (1916) termed it *semiology* or semiotics after the Greek word sēmeiōtikós,

which means "sign." Saussure (1986: 16) claimed that "language is above all a system of signs and that therefore we must have recourse to the science of signs." In Saussure's view, language is a fundamental semiotic system that studies signs in social life. Semiology, also known as semiotics, examines the theoretical relationship between language and the signs or symbols used to convey language (Saussure, 1986:15). Saussure's semiotic theory expands on the concept of language's functionality, allowing it to be applied to any other communication system, such as visual communication. Reading and interpreting signs is a fundamental cultural activity. According to Hall (1997:6), semiotics is concerned with how signs function as cultural meaning signifiers within language.

The study of culture as a symbol or semiotic system is known as cultural semiotics. This type of research, viewing symbols or the semiotic system as having meanings, incorporates an academic approach that defines culture's key elements. Tylor (1871) describes the cultural world as an all-inclusive collection of human existence's spiritual and material aspects, including thought, behaviour, literature, art, the legal system and material products. As a result of this classical definition, culture has long been indistinguishable from society, ideology, literature, art and tools. Unlike Tylor's definition of culture, cultural semiotic theory, originating from sociologist Max Weber and anthropologist Clifford Geertz, cite is essentially equivalent to claiming that the essence of culture lies in symbols or simply that culture equals symbols, the representation system of human beings. The study of culture, therefore, is the study of the symbols or the representation system used by human beings.

Semiotics is a complex academic discipline that can serve as a cultural translator, bringing clarity and understanding to the shifting relationship between meaning and signifier. The image is referred to as the 'signifier' and the concept as the 'signified.' The signifier and signified have a conventional rather than an inherent connection. As a result, it is subjective and dependent on societal customs. Additionally, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is flexible and open to change and development because it is indeterminate. This indicates that word meaning, or value, is formed through the relationship between the signifier and other signifiers in the language system rather than the signifier-signified relation. The relationship between 'language' and 'speech' is similar to that between 'code' and 'message', which most subsequent semioticians adopted as a model. Codes or pre-existing systems of relationships are used to assemble and transmit messages. Language, therefore, is a system of relationships rather than an object. When creating a sentence, we select elements from lists of

options, such as words or grammatical structures, and arrange them in syntagmatic relationships. According to Roland Barthes, this principle can be applied to all sign systems, including visual communication: the act of visual communication by selecting images and typefaces from multiple options and putting together in a 'syntagm,' or combination of elements within a specific composition.

People from the same culture read and analyse visual language codes in the same way. The way an image is perceived varies across subcultures. This is defined by John Berger (1972: 10) as "although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing." Russian-born linguist Roman Jakobson (1963: 289), one of the most influential semioticians of the twentieth century, defines semiotics as "the general science of signs which has as its basic discipline linguistics, the science of verbal signs." Jakobson (1970: 455) asserts that "language is the central and most important among all human semiotic systems." He claims that the use of signs and the processes of signification they undergo is the only way we can know culture and reality (Jakobson, 1976: 47). In communication, meaning is dependent on the function of the signs within the message:

> *Every message is made of signs; correspondingly, the science of signs*
> *termed semiotics deals with those general principles which underlie the*
> *structure of all signs whatever and with the character of their utilization*
> *within messages, as well as with the specifics of the various sign systems*
> *and of the diverse messages using those different kinds of signs*
> *(Jakobson, 1968: 698).*

Kress and van Leeuwen (2020:4) assert that meanings and values are likely to differ based on that culture's traditional use of visual space and placement of visual elements, including writing.

> *... the elements, such as "centre" or "margin", "top" or "bottom",*
> *will play a role in the visual semiotics of any culture, but with meanings*
> *and values that are likely to differ depending on that culture's histories*
> *of use of visual space, writing included. The "universal" aspect of*
> *meaning lies in semiotic principles and processes, the culture-specific*

aspect lies in their application over history, and in specific instances of use.

In *Reading Graphic Design in Cultural Context*, Grace Lees-Maffei and Nicolas P. Maffei (2019) focus on the theory first, emphasising the relevance of framing graphic design concerning semiotics to represent its social and cultural context better. Instead of a static interaction with graphic design, they advocate for one that emphasises the viewer's role in co-creating meaning. As a response to changing technical, cultural and historical contexts, aligning with postmodernism and poststructuralism rather than modernism and structuralism. Semiotics is a disciplined method of analysis and deconstruction that does not apply to projects with short turnaround times and limited resources.

Semiotics is a valuable tool for designers because it allows them to understand how users perceive and impart meaning, including designing meaningful solutions based on a deeper understanding of the context. The significance of a designer's work for a specific audience would be meaningless without knowledge of the underlying meaning codes within a given culture. These codes have the potential to be complex because their meanings are constantly shifting to reflect the rapidly changing external environment. Meaning is constantly interpreted, transformed and recreated by designers. Designers can only produce meaning that resonates with a culture if they take the time to research these sociocultural contexts. Active communicators are responsible for the audience as the receiver through this two-way exchange between visual language and the audience who understands it. Semiotics serves as a reminder that visual communication design should prioritise the audience over the designer's intentions for the work. Designers can use the semiotic system in practical and effective ways to create visual communication that effectively connects with the audience. Using semiotics as a design tool, they can create effective visual communication that transcends verbal explanations.

3.5.3. Stereotypes

Due to the wide variety of perspectives and behaviours across cultures, intercultural communication approaches help prevent false assumptions and promote an understanding of diversity (Bennett, 1998: 2). Stereotyping is an approach to processing information that simplifies images and concepts into a straightforward form. The danger of a stereotype, however, lies in an inaccurate assumption made in response to a communication strategy.

Stereotypes are formed when we view a cultural group as sharing the same characteristics (Bennett, 1998: 4). In this Krippendorff (2006: 103) promotes using ideal types of the users we design for, rather than the traditional stereotypes. Citing the work of psychologist Carl G. Jung, he explains that the term *archetype* corresponds closely to the ideal type. It describes individuals' guiding concepts, cultural in origin and of deep psychological significance. A *stereotype*, by contrast, is an oversimplified characterisation of the members of classes, ethnic or religious groups being prominent examples. They are likely sources of misidentifications. Thus, the ideal type embodies the essence of a category or user group and provides the graphic designer with an accurate simplification that can aid in the situating of the design solution.

Language is the primary form of expression and representation in daily life, and speaking, writing and reading are integral to that process. Linguists study how people interpret language as a cultural, social and psychological phenomenon. The smallest variances in language usage can reflect the speakers' impartial perspectives and prejudiced attitudes. Linguistics attempt to identify what is distinctive and universal about a specific language, how it is acquired and how it evolves over time. As language plays a significant role in people's perceptions of the world, linguists research to determine which words and phrases may unconsciously impact us. Likewise, designers can improve their knowledge and interpretation of distinct cultural behavioural patterns by researching how people use language, and the words and phrases they instinctively and inherently select and combine.

3.5.4. Cultural appropriation

Designers are not the arbiters of what is right and wrong and instead should focus on determining the intermediaries who have the authority to act on behalf of the custodians of the local and indigenous knowledge in a process that is indigenous-led. The scope of this study is not about censorship, overt protection, or the promotion of the containment of cultural visual iconography. The research aims to challenge designers to consider what is appropriate and what is not appropriate, meaning designers always consider these concerns in their design practice. In all cases, determining appropriate use should remain with the owners and defenders of indigenous knowledge. For designers to engage appropriately and ethically with local and indigenous knowledge on projects involving the graphical depiction of indigenous culture requires a sensitive approach with broad consultation regarding permissions and intellectual property rights; issues can be addressed if respectful practice methods are applied. The study

asserts the need for information, guidance and understanding to heighten designer awareness of the context in which they are working, as it is a difficult landscape to navigate when identifying what is appropriate and what is appropriation.

In today's globalised world and multicultural societies, visual communication designers must work with multiple stakeholders to find design solutions that appeal to diverse recipients, each of whom holds a strong emotional investment in the presented representation. Incorporating indigenous symbols into visual communication design strategies impacts a wide range of stakeholders. The study highlights how choices in visual imagery with a strong cultural connection require sensitive consideration. The inappropriate choices of imagery by the dominant cultural group, the borrowing or taking of a valued cultural item, is commonly referred to as cultural appropriation and can be considered equivalent to theft. Cultural appropriation and cultural hegemony are not new and problematic. That creative, cross-cultural interpretations and expressions of hybridity need to be approached with respectful communication, consultation and collaboration whenever commercial application of indigenous culture is attempted (Meghan, 2016). Ultimately, a moral problem exists if cultural appropriation leads to a loss of income for the original culture and threatens the perceived authenticity or the identity of the original group (Meghan, 2016: 6). Therefore, the study recognises the need for designers to follow a sensitive, workable process to address concerns of all stakeholders when working with cultural and indigenous knowledge on projects involving the visual representation of indigenous culture.

Ziff, Pratima and Rao (1997) define *cultural appropriation* as "the taking from a culture that which is not one's own - of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artefacts, history and one's knowledge." Ziff et al. (1997: 1) ask, "What does it mean by taking? What values and concerns are implicated in the process of appropriation? And how, if at all, should we respond?" While some see cultural appropriation as theft, problematic and unacceptable, others see it as innocent, perhaps useful or even an essential part of the development of a culture. Their interpretation is that it can generate interest in the original group, increase the value of traditional or original items, and perhaps bring culture to a broader audience. A cross-cultural aesthetic appreciation can enrich our understanding of different cultures and honour their accomplishments. According to Hal Duncan (2006), "simply representing a culture in terms of artefacts, practices and persons doesn't mean you are laying claim to those artefacts, following those practices, mimicking those persons. It doesn't mean you're doing a big land-grab on that

cultural territory, setting up a fence, and saying 'This is mine now'" (Duncan, 2006: 1). "Local design cultures are both challenged and enabled by the increasing globalisation of the marketplace" (Fiss, 2009: 3) and the use of cultural artefacts.

The problem with determining if there has been an issue of cultural appropriation comes in defining factual information about that culture. This is often difficult to do when appreciation of culture is deeply rooted within members of that culture. Individuals are conditioned in aesthetic appreciation through non-formal modes of articulation acquired over time and not formally articulated (Heyd, 2003: 39). Becker (2012) recognises the layered complexity of creating an aesthetically pleasing design as ethically considered. Becker highlights the need to make explicit methods of ethics to assist with understanding what constitutes the right action to avoid bias and group affinities. Coombe (1998), an anthropologist and lawyer, highlights the need to recognise indigenous peoples' rights formally. She recognises the transportation of local knowledge to new locations as people travel between communities. The fluid, porous, layered nature of communities makes delineation and control difficult: "Any new regime of rights will have to be accompanied by a related set of exemptions that are relevant to the different forms of knowledge to be protected and their likely uses if it is to be congruent with human rights principles" (Coombe, 1998: 82).

3.6. Paradigm shifts in design

Globalisation has highlighted the diversity of cultural contexts rather than homogenising Western culture globally. New markets outside the mainstream of Western society have grown in importance due to their expanding economies, consumption patterns, and large populations. Due to the rise in stakeholders from various cultural backgrounds participating in the design process, designers must incorporate cultural diversity into their practice. When designing for a different culture, designers must consider their designs' unintended consequences on preserving cultural values. Designers have taken on new responsibilities in terms of cultural and environmental sustainability as a result of the emergence of these new markets. In culturally diverse markets like South Africa, with multiple different demographics, a one-size-fits-all marketing strategy is unrealistic and constraining because it cannot guarantee that all people are targeted.
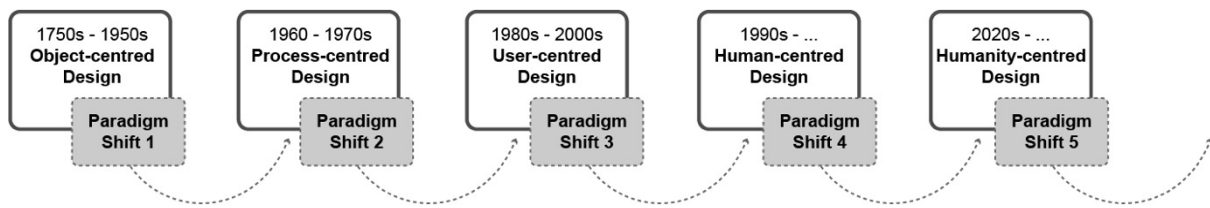
Figure 3.1: The model for paradigm shifts in design (Source: adapted from Berk, 2013)

The emphasis on culture in the design process increased as a result of paradigm shifts in the design industry that parallel socio-economic growth. From the Industrial Revolution through the mid-twentieth century, design was centred on visually attractive forms. In the 1960s, design was acknowledged as a rational process for the first time in academia. This period promoted a process-centred design approach. In the 1980s, the design industry redefined itself by incorporating feedback from the user into the design process. By the twenty-first century, the design profession had changed from being user-centred to human-centred, and more recently, to being humanity-centred, due to the acceleration of globalisation and the emergence of environmental and social concerns. These evolving methods promote designing for people rather than users, placing a focus on the social and cultural contexts of design. According to Girling and Palaveeva (2017), designers are responsible to evolve from human-centred design thinkers to humanity-centred designers.

3.6.1. Human-centred design (HCD)

Human-centred design is an "approach to problem-solving, commonly used in design and management frameworks that develops solutions to problems by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process" (WDO, 2022). Designers who practice human-centred design place people and society at the centre of their projects. Ellen Lupton, the author, educator, designer and curator, has contributed to the conceptualisation of graphic design as a discursive practice in her book, *Beautiful Users* (2014)*,* by expanding on the ethos of "designing for people" and replacing it with "designing with and for people" (Lupton, 2014: 21). focusing on design that centres around people, and the user, as design professionals seek more effective relationships with the audience. Human engagement occurs when a problem or need is observed in its context, and then a solution is conceptualised, developed, designed and implemented within that particular context.

Human-centred design discourses have developed approaches and tools for integrating people's perspectives, values, and concerns throughout the design process to increase the effectiveness of visual communication for a specific audience. Integrating ethics into the design process is the goal of these discourses. To develop effective visual communication, systems, services, and experiences, designers use a human-centred design approach that puts the person at the centre of the process to gain a deep understanding of requirements and needs through empathy (M'Rithaa, 2020). The transformation of a designer to being a human-centred practitioner is achieved in relation to others. This connection between self and others, including people, animals, objects and the environment, is essential in positioning and embedding oneself in the world. The transformative process is more than cognitive learning or professional development – it is a process of self-awareness that comes from continually reflecting on our activity, behaviour and how we are with others through reflective practice. Akama (2021: 1) contends that being a human-centred practitioner means becoming more self-aware through reflective practice to fully comprehend who we are, our relationships, and how we relate to others.

The human-centred approach in Africa reinforces an epistemological perspective that defines Africa from the inside out, as opposed to the Western outside-in perspective of Africa. Chimamanda Ngozi, a Nigerian author, recounts in her TEDx talk, *The danger of a single story*, how she failed to see herself in the stories she grew up reading since they were about Western culture, whiteness and girls with blue eyes. We risk falling into the danger of the single story if we do not read widely, listen actively, engage in friendships and cultivate empathy (M'Rithaa, 2020). Adichie asserts that,

> *the consequence of the single story is this: it robs people of dignity. It*
> *makes our recognition of our equal humanity different. It emphasizes*
> *how we are different rather than how we are similar.*

According to Krippendorff (2006), human-centred design is "ideologically motivated by values that relate to transparency, participation, and empowerment through the influences and integration of participatory design methods." Increasingly, design is regarded as both a commercial practice and a significant method of cultural production. Akama (2009) asserts that designers are defined by what they can enable, not by what they "make" (in Chmela-Jones, 2011: 62). Acquired knowledge and understanding may remain abstract, potentially flawed and

inaccurate if students do not apply theoretical principles to practice (Chmela-Jones, 2011: 65). To engage in the practice of human-centred design solutions in projects, students must have a thorough theoretical understanding of culture that addresses social contexts such as user perceptions and cognitive interactions, as well as aspects of sociology and demographics.

3.6.2. Humanity-centred design

When the term *human-centred* was created in the late 1980s, the individuals for whom the design was intended were the primary focus. This strategy is widely used today and has numerous advantages. However, four decades later, we have developed a greater sensitivity to biases and prejudices against societal groups, as well as a greater concern about the impact of people on the environment. The term *humanity-centred* emphasises the rights of all people and refers to the entire ecosystem, which includes all living things and the surrounding environment. Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Cognitive Science and Psychology, Don Norman (2022), stated during a series of twenty-first century designs developed with the Interaction-Design Foundation,

> *Humanity-centered design represents the ultimate challenge for designers to help people improve their lives. Where "human-centered" puts a face to a user, "humanity-centered" expands this view far beyond: to the societal level of world populations who face hordes of highly complex and interrelated issues that are most often tangled up in large, sophisticated, "human-caused" systems.*
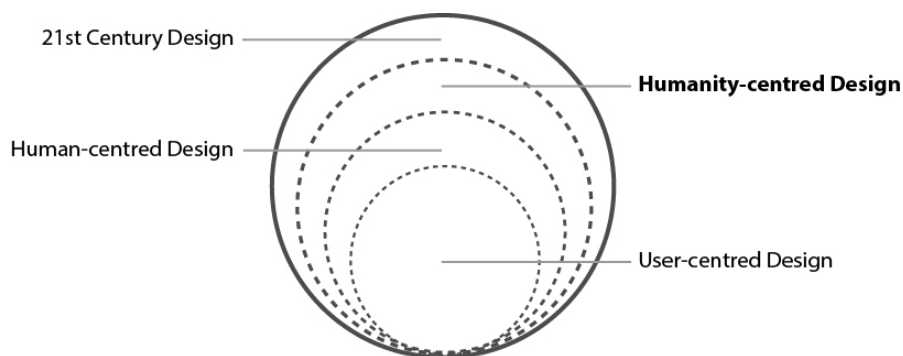
Figure 3.2: Humanity-centred design

(Source: Interaction Design Foundation, © Daniel Skrok, Kasturika)

To practice intercultural design, designers must recognise the validity of other cultures and visual languages. Only then will designers be culturally sensitive and willing to alter their designs accordingly. The concept of mindfulness is important as it refers to the practice of keeping an open and accepting mind rather than relying on a "familiar frame of reference, old, routinized designs or categories, and customary ways of doing things" (McMullen, 2016: 26). For graphic designers to be interculturally competent, they must shift their frames of reference to accommodate different modes of visual perception.

3.7.   Various design approaches in graphic design

3.7.1.   Culture-centred design (CCD)

The study identifies an absence of research on cultural influences in graphic design studies in South Africa. This could be attributed to graphic designers not being educated to identify, integrate or understand design processes that serve the interests and values of different cultural viewers or user groups. All too often, market research into the visual representation of communication is superficially addressed. In design research, especially under human-centred design methods, there is a focus on designing with the users' culture at the centre. Globalisation-related issues are encouraging an increase in intercultural collaborations. Designers recognise the significance of culture in design and the growing importance of cultural sensitivity and knowledge. They can choose to create designs that are culture-centred. Designers, as humans, cannot avoid being culturally biased; they must conduct in-depth research on the culture in which they are designing (McMullen, 2016: 27). Understanding how other cultures interpret images, layouts, colours, symbols, forms, textures, and so on is required. Various studies have examined the relationship between design and culture from different perspectives. Concerns about how mass media may diminish cultural heterogeneity have been expressed, Support and approaches to promote cultural sustainability are being considered. A "user-centred" approach focuses on knowing individuals, whereas the "culture-centred" design approach seeks to understand a distinct cultural group (McMullen, 2016: 26).

The terms culture-centred design, culture-oriented design, cultural innovation, culturally sensitive design, and cross-cultural design describe the emerging design approach that focuses on cultural aspects. McMullen (2016: 23) explains that cross-cultural refers to "the communication process that is comparative in nature." The term "intercultural" refers to the

interactive "communication process between members of different cultural communities" (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 16). Additionally, the term "transcultural" refers to transcending culture. And the term "multicultural" refers to a culturally diverse environment or person (Chen, & Starosta, 2000: 216).

3.7.2. Participatory design (PD)

Participatory design involves end-users or participants in the design process (Graffam, 2010). It facilitates participant observation and gives feedback on a design's suitability and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the specified target users. Participatory design differs from design thinking, Explain. How? and user-centred design approaches are an ongoing inquiry into how to engage users as fully active collaborators and participants in the design process. This involves the way in which and by whom participation is mediated and defined (Robertson & Simonsen, 2012). According to Bjögvinsson, Pelle, and Per-Anders (2010), participatory design, a process involving long-term cooperation among different stakeholders, can promote democratic principles by visualising use before actual usage.

Participatory approaches assist in the transition from project-based models to more collaborative methods of acquiring knowledge. Designers must facilitate the processes by which participants contribute to project goals and have a stake in the outcomes (Blomberg, & Karasti, 2013). The participatory process guides the principles of mutual respect, knowledge sharing and collaborative mediation. Working at a slower pace is a necessary methodological consideration when multiple stakeholders are involved in a project. Light (2015) contends that participatory design is adaptable, flexible, and responsive.

3.7.3. Inclusive and Universal design principles (UDP)

Universal Design, also known as Inclusive Design and Design-for-All, is a human-centred design approach of everything with everyone in mind, aiming for diversity and inclusivity. It is not a design style but rather an approach to any design process that begins with responsibility for the user's experience. Design can improve access to information, education, healthcare, and happiness. Unfortunately, accessibility in design is not mandated despite the widespread belief that doing so would improve people's quality of life and increase their productivity. Access to

tangible realities like sites, information, and experiences is not always fair and just. An essential part of the designer's knowledge is to comprehend how the interaction of social, economic, environmental, technical, and geographical factors can facilitate or obstruct equitable access under certain conditions and to devise inventive means of allowing more people "in". Accessibility design necessitates consultation with stakeholders who have first-hand knowledge of the relevant contexts (ICoD. 2021). Collaboration can assist in eliminating ingrained bias in design which can be challenging. Designers can learn from recognising how their design choices can lead to inaccurate design representations when they reframe exclusion as a cycle.

Shifts toward inclusion are most effective when inclusive or universal design principles are applied to all stages of the design process (Perez, 2020). Susan Goltsman, an expert in inclusive design and accessibility, asserts that designing for inclusion starts with recognising exclusion. The definition of inclusive design provided by Goltsman is widely recognised:

> *Inclusive design doesn't mean you're designing one thing for all people.*
> *You're designing a diversity of ways to participate so that everyone has*
> *a sense of belonging (ICoD. 2021).*

The perspectives and experiences of designers influence the design of services and products. Exclusion becomes a vicious cycle when design shapes society, and society shapes what is designed. Design choices and systems that support our lives can have unintended consequences that lead to inequality and exclusion (ICoD. 2021). To protect individuals and groups from harm, designers must intentionally create inclusive products and services (Perez, 2020). Designers must disrupt their decision-making and patterns of thinking when creating new systems, products and services for different cultures. Inappropriate designs facilitate the marginalisation of specific cultural groups in society (Perez, 2020). Antionette Carroll (2020), a graphic designer, social entrepreneur, activist, and mentor who advocates for equity, diversity, and inclusion, urges designers to redesign the design process with social justice in mind. Carroll (2020) poses the hypothetical question, "What if we could redesign for inclusion?" Her fundamental belief is that all oppressive, unequal, and inequitable systems exist by design and can be redesigned through intentional design.

The application of Universal Design Principles in developing design services and products ensures that all users are included, and their needs are met. Universal Design is a design process that improves human performance, health and wellness, and social participation in a diverse population (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012: 3). The seven Principles of Universal Design guide designers to evaluate the needs of users (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012: 72).

1. *Equitable use:* ensure that the design respects the diversity of users and does not stigmatise, marginalise or disadvantage any user group. Everyone must be able to use it.
2. *Flexible in use:* ensure the design is adaptable to accommodate individual preferences, needs and abilities.
3. *Simple and intuitive:* ensure the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, literacy and language skills; removing meaningless and purposeless complexity, following user expectations and intuition, accommodating a wide range of literacy and language abilities, and classifying information according to its importance.
4. *Perceptible information*: ensure that the design effectively communicates necessary information to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory capabilities; maximise the legibility of essential information; and clarify the process of supplying instructions or directions.
5. *Tolerance for error:* ensure the design does not expose the user to the risk of unintended or accidental actions; minimise all potential dangers in the new inclusive design by including fail-safe features and warnings of risks and errors.
6. *Low physical effort:* ensure the design can be used effectively, comfortably and with the least amount of fatigue possible, minimising repetitive actions and sustained physical effort.
7. *Size and space for approach and use:* ensure the design allows for adequate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of the user's body size, posture or mobility.

3.7.4. Design anthropology (DA)

Design and anthropology have recently been regarded as distinct and separate processes. Within the design community, there has been a challenge to reframe design as a collaborative

effort involving diverse stakeholders, skill sets, and competencies. In contrast to other design approaches, design anthropology is collaborative, critical and cyclical, enabling open-ended and ongoing design processes (Gregory, 2018: 219). Any social design process must consider the following three elements of design anthropology: the designer's "reflexive" repositioning; *design anthropology* as "new ways of knowing;" and the significance of an integrated, long-term approach (Akama, Stuedahl, & Van Zyl, 2015: 132; Gregory, 2018: 212). Design anthropology proposes a more intentional, slower approach that prioritises people and cultural influences throughout the design process. Design anthropology is an approach that investigates "emerging worlds and possible, potential alternatives" (Akama et al., 2015: 132). Design anthropology facilitates the analysis of how control and power inequalities are addressed and how trust is built and maintained (Manzini, 2015). The approach considers natural human instinct, not merely professional expertise.

Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall (2012), a design anthropologist and design advocate, investigates the hybrid practice of teaching design anthropology. This combines design studio and social system-making with critical anthropological and design theory. She is a recognised leader in the decolonisation of art and design education and works at the intersections of critical theory, decolonisation, culture, diversity, equity, inclusion and design. To respect different ways of knowing and making, she lays out eight guiding principles for design anthropology, a decolonised field. Transcultural aesthetics and contemporary design highlight the discipline's potential as a link between respectful knowing and making. Design anthropology is concerned with human values as part of design's intent to contribute to the creation of a positive universe. It is concerned with the creation of environments, things, communications, and interactions that express these values, in addition to creating experiences that interpret these values and their meanings (Tunstall, 2012).

3.7.5. Intercultural design sensitivity (IDS)

To address culture in design, one must first become aware of the cultural context and then develop cultural sensitivity. While cultural knowledge can be revelatory, learning how to include cultural contexts in design is a process of acquiring cultural sensitivity. This is essential for understanding what factors are important, why they are important, how to incorporate these factors into the design process and outcome, and how to develop cultural awareness in design. The challenge is how to increase a designer's sensitivity to cultural differences. Individuals

with different people have various belief systems and customs. Being culturally sensitive is ability to see one's beliefs and cultural sensitivity know actions as only one possible framework for reality, among many other alternatives.

In design, understanding one's cultural background is a strong foundation for developing cultural sensitivity to other cultures. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds requires an awareness of the distinct cultural characteristics of the intended audience, particularly when the designer's cultural background differs significantly from, or is unfamiliar with, the intended audience. A designer is also required to be aware of how their cultural background relates to the context for which they are designing. In design education, dedicated methods and strategies that address cultural sensitivity in the educational process are limited. There are various tools such as cultural probes, context mapping, personas, customer journeys, and so on; however, limited design methodologies are designed to assist designers to develop empathetic sensitivity to cultural contexts and cultural heterogeneity within that context. Cultural awareness in design education is becoming more acknowledged, as is the recognition for it to be increasingly addressed in research.

3.7.6. Intercultural competence (IC)

Intercultural design competence is difficult to define due to its multifaceted nature. Academics have investigated intercultural competence using a variety of terms, including the following: cross-cultural adjustment (Benson, 1978), cross-cultural competence (Ruben, 1989), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993), cross-cultural effectiveness (Vulpe, Kealey Protheroe & MacDonald, 2001), intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983), intercultural communication competence (Sercu, 2004), international competence and culture learning (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002). This study uses the term *intercultural competence,* as the term *intercultural* is not "bounded by any specific cultural attributes" (Kim & Ruben, 1992:404).

Fantini (2000: 28) defines *intercultural competence* as having five dimensions: "awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge ... and proficiency in the host language." Intercultural competence can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, as it is regarded as a developmental process. Bennett (1993) contends that critical self-reflection is necessary for developing intercultural competence since learning without it may be confrontational and threatening. Intercultural

competence comprises a wide variety of skills, some of which cannot be acquired through formal education but require exposure, practical experience and introspection (Stier, 2006). While there is no universally acknowledged definition of *intercultural competency*, there are certain agreed principles and a growing understanding of its components (Fantini, 2009). For example, intercultural competence comprises three competencies, according to Fantini (2000: 27): the ability to build and maintain relationships; the ability to communicate adequately and appropriately with minimal error or misrepresentation; and the ability to develop conformity and acquire collaboration with others.

3.7.7.   Intercultural design knowledge (IDK)

Since no two societies are alike, any overlaps, parallels, or correlations between identities, experiences, cultures, and knowledge produced within one community and those produced by another cannot be ignored (Moore-Gilbert, 2000: 452-453; Stubbs, 2005: 45-46). This implies that understanding and rejecting the perspective and practice of universal knowledge is required for knowledge of local and indigenous cultures and production (Young, 2001: 64-65). The sameness misconception, also known as universalism, is the preference to "blur any differences in the researched "Other" (Chilisa, 2020: 81). Universalism views Euro-Western discourse as universal and reduces distinction. Context is frequently omitted when describing a generic "Other", implying that all "Othered" cultures are similar (Chilisa, 2020:81).

For meaningful progress and social transformation to take place in the current postcolonial South African context, indigenous African innovations and knowledge systems must be integrated into the field of graphic design. Intercultural knowledge is specific to particular locations, regions, or ethnic groups. Whereas Euro-Western studies are rooted in the West, postcolonial indigenous knowledge is indigenous to specific colonised regions. Indigenous knowledge is defined as "the traditional norms, social values, and mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate ... ways of living in making sense of the world" (Chilisa, 2020:90). Chilisa, (2019:91) claims,

> *academic researchers are increasingly called upon to collaborate with*
> *IK holders and indigenous communities to codesign and coframe*
> *research problems, co-create a methodological framework that*

supports the integration of knowledge systems, and jointly co-create
solution-oriented knowledge and apply it to address complex problems.

3.8.   Social design process and alternate ways of knowing

As communication design plays a significant and purposeful role in shaping meaning and identity in global communications, it has become increasingly important for designers to recognise the importance of visual representation respectful of culturally diverse audiences (Sasaki, 2010). Although human-centred design has had a significant impact on how designers collectively carry out their design practices, it can be argued that design discourse urgently requires the inclusion of postcolonial and cultural studies analysis to help reframe and shape a more inclusive and ethical design practice, as well as to inform critical training and understanding. Far more needs to be done in the development of alternative methods to negotiate how designers account for cultural differences in their practices.

3.8.1.   Socially responsible design

An important objective of this study is to analyse the importance of socially responsible design concerning visual representation inclusive of cultural diversity (Baur et al., 2016:2). A framework for social responsibility and human-centred design approaches was evident at the turn of the century in a variety of design fields, including industrial, service and product design. Despite graphic designers' and researchers' growing interest in social responsibility over the last decade, the majority of human-centred research projects are in design disciplines such as industrial and product design (Manzini, 2014; Blyth & Kimbell, 2011; Jégou & Manzini, 2008; Morelli, 2007; Margolin & Margolin, 2002). The origins of social design can be traced back to the 1960s, when the designer's responsibility first became a central concern (Garland, 1964; Papanek, 1972). Victor Papanek (1974) discusses the designer's responsibility in his seminal book *Design for the Real World*. Design, according to Papanek, is "the conscious effort to impose a meaningful order" (Papanek 1974:17). This definition is significant as it reinforces design's purpose as integral to all human activity. Although Papanek's references were directed primarily at industrial design and mass production, Papanek advocated for the advancement of the social context of design (Escobar, 2012). Poggenpohl (2002) expands on the idea, asserting

that "design envisions the future" by taking a felt need or problem, or what is frequently an abstract concept, and making it tangible so that the different stakeholders can imagine collectively, socially, creatively and interactively, to give the conceptual form and shape (Mumtaz, 2010: 3).

There are differing perspectives on the definition and boundaries of these "rapidly emerging, though not new" design directions (Agid, 2011: 1). According to Armstrong et al. (2014), *social design* is an umbrella term in academic literature to cover three distinct representations, namely "design for social innovation" (Jégou & Manzini, 2008), "socially responsive design" (Thorpe & Gamman, 2011), and "design activism" (Julier, 2013; Markussen, 2013). In social design, the significance of the approach and method is emphasised (Kimbell & Julier, 2012:2). Kimbell and Julier (2012) acknowledge the use of a variety of phrases to describe social design practices, including "service design," "design for social innovation," and "human-centred design." Blyth and Kimbell (2012) prefer the term *design thinking* to describe design practices that address social issues. Jorge Frascara (2007:213) advocates for social responsibility in graphic design by incorporating user feedback into the design process. According to Frascara, the goal of visual communication is to change users' attitudes, thereby influencing their behaviour (Chmela-Jones: 2019:58). Baur and Felsing (2016:2) contend that social design places the original purpose of design – improving living conditions – at the centre of the focus. Margolin and Margolin (2002: 25) assert that "the foremost intent of social design is the satisfaction of human needs." In The Politics of Design, Ruben Pater (2016) examines the responsibilities of graphic designers in visual culture: "there is no simple answer to how to avoid insensitive communication or cultural bias." Designers have a position of power because they are partly in control of the messages that are visually communicated. According to Pater (2016), design professionals have an ethical responsibility to recognise everyone has prejudices and limitations to what one person can know and comprehend.

Even though designers are committed to ethical and inclusive practices, their life experiences have resulted in different worldviews and ways of knowing. Designers knowingly bring this to their design processes and practices. This enables them to provide a variety of interpretations and to resist a static meaning (Akama, 2020: 20). To avoid insensitive miscommunication, graphic design processes must incorporate cultural insight and sensitivity into their practices. Professor Mugendi M'Rithaa (2020) contends that designers can help to facilitate social innovation and design-led interventions. Designers must imagine a world with equity for all

people, in which all parties are entitled to participate and achieve on level playing fields with equal opportunities. If all actors and stakeholders are willing and able to commit to confronting wicked problems in a constructive and non-prescriptive manner, designers can help increase participation and equity (Mugendi, 2020).

3.8.2. Ethical values within curricula

In the future, Davis (2008: 16) claims, graphic design will be guided by "thinking about the people for whom we design as participants in the design process, designing social interaction, and the importance of understanding community." According to Akama (2008: 56), designers "need to think more critically about what they are doing and the cultural, social, and environmental conditions they contribute to." (Chemla-Jones (2011: 60) claims that social and ethical concerns are becoming increasingly relevant in the development of curricula. Building a framework for the future of graphic design education requires crucial discussions about sustainability and graphic design (Chmela-Jones, 2011:66). Scholars who have created rigid definitions and models of what it means to be an ethical designer have frequently undermined attempts to address this. It is not as simple as identifying the "right" or "wrong" values and then expressing them through design (Akama, 2012: 63).

To avoid visual miscommunication that does not take other cultures into account, graphic designers must be aware of and sensitive to different cultures. Postcolonial and cultural studies analysis still needs to be incorporated into the graphic design discourse, despite the fact that human-centred design has fundamentally changed how designers collaborate on innovative practices. In this study, far more needs to be done and alternative methods developed to negotiate how designers account for cultural differences in their practices. With a shift in perspective, the design community will be able to develop and shape design approaches to culturally delicate issues. Designers will improve their ability to engage in critical thinking and connect their work to ethical standards and inclusive global practices.

Despite the increase in interest in social design over the last decade, the vast majority of design research projects are in the fields of architectural, industrial, and urban design, rather than visual communication. Frameworks for sustainable and human-centred design are also available in the design fields of industrial, service, and product design (Manzini, 2015; Blyth & Kimbell, 2011; Morelli, 2007; Margolin & Margolin, 2002). The graphic design industry

needs to promote the benefits of encouraging social responsibility within its practice. Scholars are increasingly questioning the role of graphic designers in society. The current challenge for graphic design practitioners is to provide users with meaningful experiences.

According to Gray (2004:9), thinking about how to design experiences with the user in mind necessitates new and different perspectives on the function of design and how it can meet human needs. Designers can produce more enriching content for the user by understanding their needs and goals rather than just through conventional marketing profiles. Caroll (2020) asserts that diversity is critical in design. When people with multiple viewpoints are at the table throughout the design process, designers create more inclusive experiences for a wider audience. Caroll (2020) contends that design can be "a powerful tool for social change and racial justice." As the study is framed within social design, I argue for a more culturally inclusive, socially responsible, and ethical approach to graphic design within South African education and professional design industry.

3.8.3.   Ethical values through reflective practice

The terms *reflective practice* and *critical reflection* are frequently used synonymously. Both require an ongoing practice analysis based on identifying underlying assumptions. The term *reflective practice* originates primarily from the writings of Donald Schon, notably in 1983 and 1987 (Fook, 2007: 441). Schon was among the first to call attention to the professional crisis, which was characterised by a disconnect between formal theory and actual practice. He believed that reflective practice was a means of bridging the gap by revealing how theory is embedded in what professionals do, as opposed to what they claim to do. In this sense, reflective practice is primarily a means of enhancing practice (Fook, 2007: 441). Interestingly, "reflection" encompasses more than "*reflective practice*" (Fook, 2007: 441). *Reflection*, as defined by Socrates as the "examined life," is a means of understanding one's decisions and actions, as well as the "ethical and compassionate engagement with the outside world and its moral challenges" (Nussbaum, 1997, cited in Fook, 2007: 441). This is a powerful reminder of why reflection is necessary: reflection can apply to multiple facets of life, whereas reflective practice focuses primarily on professional practice (Fook, 2007: 441).

Ethics is a theory or system of moral principles or values that address the rightness and wrongness of particular behaviours. It also refers to the codes of conduct or moral principles

that are accepted in a given profession, field of endeavour, interpersonal relationship, or another context. The main questions it asks are about what ultimate value is and how we can determine if a person's actions are right or wrong. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2022) definition, ethics would not have existed until humans began contemplating the best way to live. Reflective practices emerged long after human societies established the first moral ideas in the form of accepted norms of what was right and wrong behaviour. The Japanese moral philosopher, Watsuji, is interested in the practical application of ethical principles in people's everyday interactions. In *Rinrigaku*, (1996), a study of ethics, Watsuji writes that "the ethical relational association is situated in "betweenness" (aidagara); humans undergo a continuous process of transformation" (Krueger, 2013: 128).

Reflection, assert Addy and Gerson (2019), is required by designers to understand how to integrate core principles and ethics into graphic design practices. Designers can discover their values and beliefs through reflective processes to integrate key concepts actively and intentionally into their practice. Educating designers on how to integrate ethical design principles into their work is critical to guide them in a socially responsible direction. This is accomplished by providing them with the required reflective tools and resources. Reflective practices are a technique that designers can employ to assist in visualising and aligning their values with the services they deliver to their clients. The purpose is to remove insensitive and unsuitable perspectives from their work. Reflective practices enable graphic designers to examine cultural and societal influences on their practice in view of their personal and community beliefs and prejudices (Addy and Gerson, 2019).

3.8.4. Social identity theory and stakeholder theory

Hofstede (2003: 1) contends that it is recognised that "cultural values exert an influential role on almost all aspects of human life. This is broadly corroborated in much literature." Therefore, it can be concluded that graphic design, a component of human life, is similarly influenced by culture. Graphic designers can no longer disregard the impact of cultural values on their work. By examining the design of international, trans-cultural visual communication within graphic design, it is possible to define design as a practice that is rooted in culture and, frequently, cultural myths and assumptions. Culture is an essential aspect of the graphic design process. Design, aesthetics, intuition, cognition, and cross-cultural exchange cannot exist independently due to their interconnected nature. A cultural theorist views it as a complex, interconnected

activity involving multifaceted connections between visual representation, visual communication, people, the environment, and culture.

The need for group cohesion and action with various categories of stakeholders is acknowledged by Crane and Ruebottom (2012), who combine stakeholder theory with social identity theory. Additionally, Crane et al. (2012: 80) emphasise the need to identify stakeholders based on their needs and interests rather than using stereotypical and general definitions of them. As a result, it is possible to comprehend the community's stakeholders more fully and establish a value scale based on what they mean to the group as a whole. Culture plays a significant role in social identity theory for this reason. Hall (1999) contends that culture, as defined by the codes that give a group its meaning, embodies the most meaningful or influential things a social group has said or thought about; the shared values and systems of representation uphold these aspects.

Cultures have complex sets of rules, values, prohibitions, permissions, and classifications. These "codes appear natural and normal "to the general public, according to Kress (1988: 12). As a result, we acknowledge these rules as the natural order of things. Strong bonds can be formed between individuals who speak the same language and live similar lifestyles. According to Simmons (2006: 1), "Culture gives us a mirror upon which to look and see ourselves, after which we model ourselves" (cited in Kennedy and Makkar, 2020: 164). Usunier (1996: 383) asserts that people's perspectives are formed automatically and unconsciously without their knowing it. The national cultural norms shape it. This enables people to assess others, interpret their experiences, and define their attitudes to communicate and negotiate with members of their own culture. According to Pitchford (2008: 97), as cited in Kennedy et al. (2020: 164), "Where customs differ, communication is difficult, time is short, and attention spans are limited, both parties are likely to "code" observations in the most efficient way possible." As a result, people can break down complex information into smaller, more understandable portions. Consideration of stakeholders' social identity connections recognizes the emotional attachment that certain groups of people have to the community or organisation in which they participate (Meghan, 2016: 9).

3.9.   Challenging the myth of a collective identity

The metaphor of the "Rainbow Nation" has been widely credited to Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Being a clergyman, Archbishop Tutu's reference to the "Rainbow People of God" undoubtedly drew inspiration from the Old Testament flood story, in which the rainbow represents God's promise not to judge humanity any further. According to Baines (1998: 1), Albie Sachs' public speech at the D.C.S. Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture at Rhodes University in 1991 is where he first heard the phrase "Black is beautiful, Brown is beautiful, White is beautiful: towards a rainbow culture in a united South Africa." The term was further sealed in the mind of the Nation by Nelson Mandela's (1918-2013) inaugural speech as president of the new South African republic, in reference to the multicultural character of post-apartheid South Africa (Mandela, 1994). While the realisation of the dream of the 'rainbow nation' has seen moments of realisation, these have been transient and difficult to sustain against the long process of transition out of a colonised past in which "the differences of race, ethnicity and class were formative at both individual and social levels" (Hino et al., 2018: 2). Consequently, a difficult discourse has evolved around the myth of the "rainbow nation" and the belief that "rainbow-ism" died with Nelson Mandela (Mdluli, 2017: 79).

Culture is not something that is absolute, but relative, changeable, never static, fluid; derived from one's social environment and only exists in relations (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2015: 21). A core characteristic of cultural identity is that it is a social construct. Despite shifts towards a developing collective South African identity, actual progress has proven more complex than in many other countries as a result of the multiple forms of social differences and identities. According to Hibbert (1997), there is no conventional response to the question of what constitutes a South African identity because this identity is multifaceted, encompassing a range of distinct heterogeneous identities. As stated in its 1996 constitution, South Africa is still a divided country that is far from being "a nation united in diversity" (Hino et al., 2018: 24). Since 1975, the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) has been instrumental in identifying the human costs of apartheid. In the post-apartheid era, the research continues to monitor the shifting patterns of South African's well-being. The study by Hino et al. (2018: 2) claims that South Africa is "struggling to build a nation where its citizens are bound by a sense of common purpose and belonging.

Historically, it has been a customary practice amongst graphic designers to define the concept of *culture* primarily in terms of overarching nationality and ethnicity. This approach generally assumes that all people within a specific national or ethnic group have similar beliefs and values and are often disconnected from specific local cultures (Robelo, 2014: 4). Language, race, ethnicity, and class, as well as sexual orientation, gender, religion, politics, nationalism, geography, and other forms of social differentiation, are all intertwined and manifest on different levels. All these aspects have contributed to the complex state of identity in South African society. Postcolonial South Africa has become one of the most complex nations in the world as a result of these ongoing challenges (Hino et al., 2018: 2). South Africans must, as in any nation with a history of oppression, "challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen, reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things" (Said, 1978: 352). Culture is not "static, frozen, and fixed eternally" but rather "a fluid and hybrid lived experience" (Said, 1978: 208).

3.10. A visual language rooted in Africa

At the Iconograda General Assembly, Saki Mafundikwa (2011: 97) called for an African aesthetic in design. He emphasised that design is not exclusively a Western development but a collective approach to thinking that should be shared and experienced differently in various parts of the world by diverse cultural groups. He advocated for using typography based on an African aesthetic as a method for giving visual form to indigenous language to convey ideas or give form to ideology. Mafundikwa argues for a design curriculum that is relevant to the student's situation, context and environment (Kembo, 2018:8). According to Lange and van Eeden (2016), the emergence of a new visual language in South Africa is a hybrid representation of various cultures that combines imagery from popular culture, everyday life, street signs, vernacular language, and traditional crafts to portray the country's new image. In contrast to Westernised principles of balance and an ordered hierarchy of information, the new approach, which has its roots in Africa, values spontaneity and irregularity (Lange, 2005; Lange & van Eeden, 2014; Fallan & Leemaffei, 2016). Designers must avoid imitating the visual stereotypes that tourism frequently employs to represent "South Africa," like indigenous wildlife and flora, stylistic graphics in the form of "Bushman" art, "ethnic" motifs such as beadwork, and patterns derived from Ndebele design (Moys, 2004: 79; Sauthoff, 1998: 9).

For meaningful development and social transformation to occur in the South African context, indigenised African innovations and knowledge systems must be integrated into the development and implementation of higher education curricula in South Africa (Higgs et al., 2003: 43). Odora Hoppers (2001: 80) stated that "innovations in the curriculum of the academy will involve intensive research, re-thinking and critical scrutiny of existing paradigms and epistemological foundations of academic practice; also, the identification of limitations on creativity when only working in specific frames of reference" (Higgs et al., 2003: 43). Cloete (2019) contends that indigenous African value systems and practices must be restored and refocused to make them more suitable for African contexts, cultures, and societies to replace the historical and contemporary Eurocentric colonial value systems and practices. It would seem more constructive to transcend the Eurocentric-African divide to effectively replace the present, still modernist, reductionist, conflict-driven, and problem-identification-focused approaches that are supposedly inherent in the differences between alleged Western and African models of thinking (Cloete, 2019: 2-4).

3.11. Summary of the chapter

Chapter 3 examines culture and its relationship with language. Hall's theory that culture is embedded in a language lays the foundation for the connection between culture and visual communication. The Kenyan author and postcolonial theorist, wa Thiong'o (1986: 15-16) reinforces the claim that "language as culture" are "products of each other in that communication produces culture and culture carries the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world." The cultural theory that culture is embedded in communication underpins the study's premise that graphic design, which is a visual language that uses systems of representation, should be critically studied and practiced in cultural contexts.

CHAPTER 4

Research design and methodology

How would research methodologies change if we started our work with the premise that we are all connected and that we have a responsibility for ethical work that is respectful of all who came before us, who are here with us (living and non-living), and who will come after us?
(Romm, 2018: 510)

4.1.   Introduction

The transformative paradigm applied in this study is discussed in Chapter 4 (Mertens, 2008; Mertens, 2021:2). A qualitative case study approach facilitates the examination of the findings within their context utilising a variety of data collection methods (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). I describe the sampling method (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013) employed to purposively select participants: two graphic design professionals, a graphic design lecturer, and students from a South African design institution of higher education. I gathered data using qualitative methods, including semi-structured questionnaires, discussions, documentation, and classroom observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Due to my active participation in the research collection process, I am aware that the data analysis may contain subjective bias. For this reason, I also discussed my role in the study and included personal reflections on the data collection and findings from the case studies. According to Mertens (2017: 18), transformative research has the "potential to contribute to both personal and societal transformation." Due to the insights gained from the research findings and the subsequent impact on my teaching practice, I intentionally selected a transformative paradigm to frame the research. Mertens (2017: 18) contends that "the two are intertwined and that personal transformation is a necessary component of research designed to support change at the societal level by furthering human rights and social justice."

4.2.   Researcher's paradigm and position

There is a relationship between the researcher's life experiences that shapes the research interests, concerns and intentions, as well as their engagement with the participants. I am conscious that the researcher's presence and position in the study have an impact on the research design. This position required me to recognise how my worldview, my understanding of graphic design discourse and my ways of designing are built on and sustained by a vast cultural, historical and economic system of power that has dominated the world for over 500 years. As a non-indigenous South African woman working in academia, I am acutely aware of the ways in which colonialism has shaped my worldview. I am situated in "border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power" (Collins, 1996: S29) due to the systemic legacies of colonialism. In the context of South Africa's diverse sociocultural communities, this space has prompted me to consider my cultural identity in relation to "Other" people and within myself. As a white educator in South Africa, I am aware that I am "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (Smith, 2012:1), even though I work actively against it through my profession and this research. My transformative research journey has been heavily influenced by the understanding that post-apartheid South Africa has one of the most complex and diverse sociocultural communities in the entire world (Hino et al., 2018).

Since I have a position in the research and am not removed from the research process and context, I recognise that I am a part of and able to learn from the research journey. While the study started as a linear research journey, it evolved into a personal lived experience and a non-linear transformative journey of new insights and deeper understanding. I developed an interest in transformational research through the desire to understand different design processes and approaches when designing with and for diverse cultural groups in post-apartheid South Africa that were unfamiliar to me. The transformative research journey re-shaped my practice as an educator and as a researcher in graphic design. My experience as a white English-speaking South African graphic designer, formally educated and traditionally trained under Euro-Western hegemonic discourses during the apartheid era and later as a design educator and researcher within a postcolonial society, compelled me to acknowledge that my own position required a paradigmatic shift and a decolonial journey. As a South African design citizen, educated in the context of embedded hierarchical epistemologies in which indigenous knowledge was commonly positioned as inferior during apartheid, I am invested in understanding ways in which different cultural identities are included and represented through

a visual language that acknowledges the cultural integrity of local populations. As an educator and academic in South African higher education, I embrace the diversity of local multicultural and multilingual communities and the contribution indigenous knowledge makes to my academic and teaching practice (Akama, 2017; Fry, 2017; Ansari et al., 2016; Escobar, 2017a; Tunstall, 2013).

I encountered the writings of the postcolonial scholar, researcher, author, educator and important African thought leader, Bagele Chilisa, in the early stages of the research process. Chilisa (2012) authored the ground-breaking textbook, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, which provided invaluable insights. Chilisa's writings lay the groundwork for indigenous research methodologies, epistemologies, and methods. I did not believe it was appropriate to apply an indigenous paradigm to this study as a non-indigenous white South African researcher. However, I found Chilisa's proposal for participatory research and more ethical partnership-based engagement valuable. I am aware of the importance of Chilisa's method for conducting postcolonial research, founded on the postcolonial indigenous theories discussed in Chapter 2. In addition to Chilisa's contributions, I examined texts on methodology, including Smith's (2012) *Decolonising Methodologies* (2008; 2010) and Mertens' *Transformative Research and Evaluation: Transformative Mixed Methods.*

Chapter 2 discusses the significance of a postcolonial and indigenous paradigm. A postcolonial and indigenous research paradigm focuses on the shared aspects of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and research methodologies of marginalised or historically oppressed social groups. Indigenous postcolonial researchers have worked with indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada, the United States of America, and South Africa, as well as in formerly colonised societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson (2008) contends that the research paradigm used by indigenous scholars in Canada and Australia is based on relational ontologies, relational epistemologies, and relational accountability. As a means of hearing non-Western voices and releasing the voices of formerly oppressed generations from the silence imposed by colonialism, the postcolonial indigenous paradigm has grown in recent years (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It offers a way to value indigenous philosophical and knowledge systems (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Indigenous cultures do not place the same value on 'knowledge' as a noun, an object, or an abstracted product. Knowledge is defined as a 'way of being,' a 'way of knowing,' a 'way of living in nature,' a 'sense of identity and belonging,' and a 'collective sense of being' (Aikenhead, 2002). The idea of knowledge as a commodity, something distinct from us, one another, and our wisdom of living in the present, presupposes a view of knowledge that does not exist in an indigenous worldview. From this perspective, the researcher has a role in the research, and concealing or overlooking this distorts our knowledge. The researcher interprets events and creates texts, either consciously or subconsciously imprinting themselves on them. The researcher is not removed from the research process, context, and co-researchers; the researcher is part of the research community and is able to learn from it (Keane et al., 2016: 166). Given that social, cultural, ethnic, racial, political, and economic values construct and shape realities, it follows that power and privilege play a significant role in determining which reality will be prioritised in the context of research.

Initially, an interpretivist paradigm was selected to examine the complexities of the relationship between culture and language within graphic design through the participants' understanding, experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2014; Hammersley, 2013; Pham, 2018). Interpretivism has been criticised by African academics and researchers who have argued that the dominant Western research paradigms have marginalised African communities' ways of knowing, which has resulted in the design of research-driven development projects that are irrelevant to the needs of the people (Escobar, 1995). Indigenous scholars in the West support this argument (Chilisa, 2012; Khupe and Keane, 2017).

As the study progressed, I was motivated to reconsider my research design after reading Mertens' (2009) book *Transformative Research and Evaluation*. The transformative paradigm offers a framework for analysing assumptions throughout the research process that addresses power imbalances, social justice and cultural complexities. In essence, Mertens' transformative paradigm promotes social change by incorporating a critical lens and participatory methodology, which, in my opinion, are inherent when collaborating and working authentically with people from different ethnic groups. I was, therefore, interested in discovering more about the paradigm that would eventually shape my research identity and practice as a lecturer. It was, therefore, of interest to me to examine Romm's (2015) *Reviewing the Transformative Paradigm: A Critical Systemic and Relational (indigenous) Lens.* Romm's (2015: vii) book is valuable because it "articulates a fresh and diverse route to research which distinctively moves

from the conventional ways of performing research." Reading Merten's and Romm's writings reaffirmed that the transformative paradigm aligned with the personal transformation of my perspective and practice of teaching graphic design throughout my research journey.

4.2.1. Decolonising research paradigms and methodologies

Currently, a growing body of literature investigates the rationale and functionality of conducting research at the intersection of indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Scholars who use indigenous and Western methodologies in alternative interpretive research or qualitative teaching methods addressed this (Held, 2019:2). According to Held (2019: 11), indigenous and Western researchers must collaborate to develop decolonised research paradigms. Indigenous methodologies and their relationship to research paradigms are still a relatively new topic of discussion (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014). Indigenous and Western scholars are increasingly integrating their respective approaches, in response to their emancipatory and critical perspectives, with the aim to decolonise academic practices and research in education. integrating indigenous ways of knowing into academia is required for decolonizing research paradigms and methodologies. This is achieved by teaching them, using them in research, and putting them on the same level as Western ways of knowing and making knowledge (Held, 2019: 2).

Multiple paradigms exist in qualitative and social science research (Mertens, 2015). Historically, Western and Eurocentric research paradigms and methodologies have dominated academia. Indigenous research paradigms may have been viewed as research objects in Western universities but have not been acknowledged and respected as co-equals (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Kovach, 2010). The exportation of Western education and imperialist and colonial perspectives from Europe to other parts of the world led to this manifestation of ontological oppression (Dutton, 2005). Since indigenous research is based on a particular indigenous worldview, it can be challenging for non-indigenous researchers to access it. The academic community's diversity of Eastern, African, and indigenous research paradigms is becoming increasingly recognised (Chilisa, 2012; Mertens et al., 2013). In the late 20th century, indigenous academics began to criticise the dominance of Eurocentrism in research and academia. Indigenous scholars voiced their displeasure at being forced to adapt their perspectives to Western categories (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wilson, 2008). By articulating and

reclaiming the research paradigms and methodologies of their people, they demonstrated resistance (Smith, 2012).

There seem to be two schools of thought on how to combine Western and indigenous research methods to decolonize research (Chilisa, 2012; Cram & Mertens, 2015, 2016). First, there is a group of individuals who consider dialogue between the transformative and indigenous paradigms to be worthwhile. This is because, despite the fact that much work remains to be done before a good fit is achieved, they share some assumptions and intentions. The second belief is that there is no way to categorize indigenous paradigms and Western approaches because they are so different from one another. The classification of indigenous and Western research methods within a typology is necessary for their compatibility (Chilisa, 2012; Romm, 2015).

4.2.2.   Transformative paradigm

A transformative paradigm addresses the social, economic, political and cultural contexts which cause social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power imbalance, wherever these may occur. The transformative paradigm has roots in a variety of academic disciplines, allowing it to cross boundaries and be influenced by various theoretical perspectives and philosophies. It shares the objective of liberating, empowering and transforming communities through collective action. The paradigm situates this research in social justice issues by giving voice to the voiceless, the marginalised or previously disempowered. According to this stance, knowledge is created through social interactions within cultural contexts (Mertens, 2009).

The transformative paradigm is not prescriptive in terms of methodology. Transformative researchers are likely to employ mixed methods; however, this is not a prerequisite, according to Mertens (2012: 811). The researcher can employ mixed, quantitative or qualitative methods. When conducting research supported by a transformative paradigm, the methods and how to apply them requires consultation with key stakeholders and the various participants. At the centre of the research, the community needs to be "involved to some degree in the methodological decisions" (Mertens, 1999: 5).

Mertens (2007: 216) explains,

> *the ontological assumption of the transformative paradigm holds that reality is socially constructed, but it does so with a conscious awareness that certain individuals occupy a position of greater power and that individuals with other characteristics may be associated with a higher likelihood of exclusion from decisions about the definition of the research focus, questions, and other methodological aspects of the inquiry.*

According to Guba and Lincoln (1988), as well as Mertens (2015), research conducted within the transformative paradigm has the following characteristics (cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 34):

1. concern about power dynamics within social structures;
2. conscious understanding of the consequences of privileging particular versions of reality;
3. cultural norms must be respected;
4. evaluation of the context and people present in a situation based on social positioning;
5. research methodology that emphasises construction over discovery;
6. make an effort to emphasise the intersections between politics, morality and ethics;
7. efforts by researcher to advance human rights, promote social justice and foster reciprocity;
8. efforts by researcher to address issues of power, oppression and trust among participants;
9. increased praxis dependence;
10. placing knowledge in a social and historical context through the use of ethnomethodology;
11. the application of action research; and
12. the application of participatory research.

Theories that fall under this paradigm are critical and (post)critical theories, post-structural theory, participatory action theory, feminist and gender theory, race-specific theories and postcolonial theories. The contribution of critical social theory is described by Kincheloe and

McLaren (2011: 288) as "concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system." Although this statement captures some of the diversity in the dimensions that serve as the foundation for oppression and discrimination, other theoretical perspectives also contribute to the transformative paradigm. Colonialism and apartheid supported the ideology of power, filtered through the dominant Western research paradigms that marginalised knowledge from other cultures.

Mertens (2010: 11) contends that "knowledge is socially and historically situated" and that "issues of power and trust" must be addressed within this paradigm. The transformative paradigm is founded on the interactive relationship between researchers and participants. Lincoln and Guba (1988: 7) and Mertens (2015: 5) claim that this paradigm supports the axiology and ontology of the transformative epistemological assumption that underlies the requirement that researchers acknowledge and value a community's cultural knowledge and build trusting relationships. Importantly, the researcher applies ethical, moral and political standards to judge situations (Hammersley, 2013:30). This paradigm presupposes a dialogic methodology, an axiology that respects cultural norms, a transactional epistemology in which the researcher engages with the participants, and an ontology of historical realism, particularly in relation to oppression and injustices. To co-create a meaningful reality, dialogue between researchers and their participants is encouraged. To dispel ontological presumptions and comprehend the layers of culture in various communities, it is crucial to establish rapport with the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017: 29, 38). This model is frequently viewed as progressive because it assumes a dialogic methodology and axiology that respect cultural norms when it seeks to alter policies, address systemic injustice, and advance social equity (McIntyre-Mills and Romm, 2019: xiii).

The transformative paradigm contends that social reality has historically been inhibited and is currently undergoing continuous change as a result of social, political, cultural, and power-related factors (Neuman, 2000). The researcher is of the opinion that social reality is dynamic. The deep structures are revealed through theories and a historical perspective. The theory incorporates the facts, and it is consistently made better by connecting it to actual practice (Neuman, 2000). The creation of collective meaning by the people in this context is where true knowledge is found, which can guide both individual and group actions to enhance people's

quality of lives. Knowledge is constructed from the participants' frame of reference. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is not based on a power hierarchy, in contrast to the interpretative paradigm, but it still calls for both parties to undergo change and maintain their independence. In contrast to the interpretative paradigm, where all points of view are valid, some viewpoints will be accurate while others will not. Researchers who follow the transformative paradigm contend that research is a moral and political activity that demands the adoption of a value position. Researchers can become more objective by considering and assessing their values to make sure they are pertinent to the research study decided to use the transformative paradigm to frame my research because it recognizes the importance of social justice and human rights and how social phenomena are rooted in sociocultural contexts. The transformative paradigm aids in the study's objective of examining the innate connection between culture and language and how it relates to visual communication in post-apartheid South Africa (Mertens, 2009, 2015).

4.3.   Research strategy and methodology

To examine graphic design within contexts where cultural considerations play a significant part, the research strategy for this study followed a case study approach (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). For the purposes of the study, the term *strategy* refers to the logical rationale for the study, which is the case study (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014), whereas *techniques* will refer to actual tools used for data collection and analysis, such as interviews, observations and document collection. A qualitative methodology was considered the most fitting for the study as it encompasses numerous disciplines, fields and subject matters (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:3). In transformative qualitative research, the background, values and characteristics of the researcher are understood to be inextricably interwoven with the research and as such form a part of the research process (Kincheloe J. L., McLaren P., & Steinberg, 2011: 440-446). Data were collected from three case studies to analyse various perspectives and experiences across the different cases relative to the study of the relationship between culture and visual communication within the sociocultural contexts in South Africa.

As a researcher who has held all three of the following positions – graphic design student, professional designer, and educator in graphic design – I was able to collect data on the significance of the participant's perceptions and experiences by studying the cases in their historical and social contexts. This made it easier to examine the underlying systems within

which each case evolved. The transformative paradigm differs from the interpretative paradigm in that some perspectives may be accurate while others may not. This is based on the belief that transformative research is an ethical and moral responsibility that requires the researcher to select and commit to a value position. Researchers achieve objectivity by reflecting on and examining their values to ensure they are suitable for the research. Madison (2012: 16) addresses the moral considerations involved in critical inquiry. Researchers have a moral and ethical responsibility to make every effort to improve oppressive and discriminatory social conditions. This is an integral criterion of the practice of ethics in transformative research.

Data collection methods were based on informal interviews with professional graphic designers, observations of students' projects and semi-structured questionnaires (see Appendix A, B, C). Both Yin (2018) and Stake (2006) have been frequently used in recent case-study research. Yin provides organized strategies for carrying out case study research. His methodology is structured, but it is also generic and open to researchers from a variety of fields. In contrast, Stake's writings are based on his innovative case study research, which he conducted in the 1960s and 1970s as an evaluative method for complex educational interventions. In contrast to a manual, his writings read more like a collection of suggestions, advice, and life lessons. Despite Yin and Stake appearing to have divergent epistemological frameworks, neither makes their respective frameworks explicit in their approaches (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Stake's use of terminology, such as the term 'art' in the title of his first book, *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995), is more researcher-friendly. I followed Stake's (2006) evaluative case study methodology to examine the participants' approaches towards designing within unfamiliar cultural contexts. Stake's (2006) approach proposes the collection of insights and contextualised experiences while maintaining a disciplined approach throughout the process.

4.3.1.   Sampling and data collection methods

By gathering information from various sources, the case study method makes it possible to examine complex subjects from a variety of angles. In the qualitative case study research, purpose sampling or non-probability sampling was used to identify and select relevant cases and participants from the graphic design industry and higher education (Patton, 2015; Bryman, 2016). To contextualise the research methods, I used two distinct sampling methods. Firstly, according to Teddlie and Yu (2007: 80), sequential sampling was utilised, which is the gradual

selection of cases in sequential order based on their relevance to the research questions instead of their representativeness. The selection of case studies began with an expert case study and expanded as the examination progressed based on the relevance of the case studies to the research objectives. Case study and interview participants were selected based on their topical knowledge, expertise, and potential to contribute valuable insights based on relevant design experiences (Bryman, 2016). Secondly, Hood (2007 cited in Bryman, 2016) distinguishes between a priori and contingent sampling approaches, which can also be utilised as a mixture of both in a sequential manner. As the research progressed it became clear that the objectives of the study were better served through a sequential combination of these two sampling strategies. A priori sampling was based on sociocultural parameters pertinent to the topic in post-apartheid South Africa and contingent sampling, in which the sampling criteria changed as the research evolved.

Three case studies were purposively selected over the course of 2021 and 2022. I purposively selected professional graphic designers from the industry based on their experience working within specific sociocultural contexts, which required culture-sensitive approaches in their processes and practices. Included in one of the case studies is a renowned South African designer. Their industry experiences are pertinent to the study of culture in graphic design, regarding the inherent relationship between culture and visual communication. In addition, their insights are essential in calling into question the ethical role of graphic designers in the industry and the procedure for establishing industry standards.

The third case study purposely selected two second-year graphic design students from a class of 25 at a design institution of higher education in South Africa. As the lecturer overseeing the second-year students in 2021, the sample was based on the two students' choice of a particular topic from a design brief. The data collection methods employed were in-class observations, discussions, presentations, the brief documentation (see appendix D), and a semi-structured questionnaire (see appendix B). To authenticate the student case study, it was important to include in the sample the perspective and observations of the support lecturer (Table 5.4) who engaged with the students throughout the project brief. Her participation was essential to gaining additional insights into the students' learning of how to approach unfamiliar cultural contexts. The support lecturer data was collected in the form of informal discussions, personal observations and a semi-formal questionnaire (see appendix C). As a custodian of the second-year graphic design curriculum, I was able to validate my observations and insights with the

support lecturer regarding modifications to the project brief for the following year, 2022. To assess the changes to the student brief, I compiled 30 student reflections from the 2022 second-year class and created Word Cloud, and Keyword Links graphs using Voyant.ai tools (see Table 4.5; and Figure. 5.33 to Figure. 5.35). The students' identities are kept anonymous. The purpose was to draw out the primary keywords used by the students as they reflected on their primary research visit to the contextual sites relevant to the brief.

4.3.2. Demographics of sampling

This section describes the demographic characteristics of the case study data set and the sampled participants in tables (Table 4.1 to Table 4.5). I have restricted the information provided to mitigate the risk of compromising the research participants' anonymity.

Table 4.1: Case Study 1: industry graphic designer
Demographics of sampled industry graphic designer in data set 2021 & 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDUSTRY EXPERT DESIGNER			
Participant information	**Total Sample**	**Participant Code**	**Data collection methods**
• Male • White • English first language • Afrikaans second language • Studied graphic design at a University of Technology in South Africa • Professional graphic designer	1	**E1** • coded the designer as an expert; based on: experience & expertise	**email correspondence:** • contact made in 2020 and 2021. • semi-formal questionnaire (via email). • informal discussion (via email) • documentation and photographic images; information booklet; website links.
TOTAL SAMPLING	**1**	**E1**	**1 participant**

Table 4.2: Case Study 2: 2021 second-year graphic design students

Demographics of sampled second-year graphic design students in data set 2021 & 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS OF TWO STUDENTS			
Participant information	**Total Sample**	**Participant Code**	**Data collection methods**
• Male • Black • isiXhosa first language • English second language • Studied graphic design at a Private design Institution • Graduating student 2022	1	**S1** • code for the graphic design student	• data collected from 2021 - 2022 • in class observations, informal discussions, formal presentations • documentation: graphic design briefs; process visual journal; students' reflections-on-practice • email correspondence: semi-formal questionnaire
• Female • White • Afrikaans language • English second language • Studied graphic design at a Private design Institution • Graduating student 2022	1	**S2** • code for the graphic design student	
TOTAL SAMPLING	**2** **(out of 25)**	**S1 / S2**	**2 participants**

Table 4.3: Case Study 2: support lecturer

Demographics of sampled support lecturer in the data set 2021 & 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SUPPORT LECTURER			
Participant information	**Total Sample**	**Participant Code**	**Data collection methods**
• Female • White • Afrikaans first language • English second language • Studied graphic design at a public research University • Lecturer at a Private design Institution	1	**L1** • graphic design support lecturer	• semi-formal questionnaire (via email). • informal discussions.
TOTAL SAMPLING	**1**	**L1**	**1 participant**

Table 4.4: Graphs: 2022 second-year graphic design students

Demographics of sampled 2022 second-year graphic design students in data set 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS IN WORD CLOUD & KEYWORD LINKS			
Participant information	**Total Sample**	**Participant Code**	**Data collection methods**
• Female • White • Afrikaans or English first language • Graphic design student at a private design Institution	**27**	• anonymous second-year graphic design students 2022	• reflections on experience of visiting context: reflect-on-primary research; submitted as a deliverable and assessment criteria for the brief. • created Word Cloud and Word Links graphs: see Figure. 5.33 to Figure. 5.35
• Male • White • Afrikaans or English first language • Graphic design student at a private design Institution	**3**	• anonymous second-year graphic design students 2022	
TOTAL SAMPLING	**30 (out of 30)**	**anonymous**	**anonymous**

It is clear from the demographics that promoting cultural diversity is essential, as black students and students of colour are underrepresented at private design institution. Without exposure to cultural diversity through diversity in the student body, this will influence the perspectives and narratives being reinforced. It is critical that postcolonial and intercultural studies form part of the students' design curriculum.

It is not clear whether the participant group are already exposed to this or whether you are recommending, in advance of your findings, that modules on these topics should be included.

Table 4.5: Case Study 3: professional graphic designer

Demographics of sampled graphic designers in data set 2022

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SUPPORT LECTURER IN SAMPLED CASE STUDY 3			
Participant information	**Total Sampled**	**Participant Code**	**Data collection methods**
• Female • Person of Colour • Afrikaans first language	**1**	**P1** • professional	• semi-formal questionnaire (via email).

		• graphic design	• informal discussions.
• English second language • Studied graphic design at a Private design Institution • Professional graphic designer			
TOTAL SAMPLING	**1**	**P1**	**1 participant**

4.4.   Data collection

Three case studies were presented and discussed: two involving professional graphic designers, one involving graphic design students, and a lecturer at a design institution of higher education. I intentionally selected the three case studies based on the study's underpinning themes: heterogeneous cultures, transformative practices, and postcolonial indigenous theories relevant to graphic design education and practice in post-apartheid South Africa.

The research methods employed semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, informal and formal discussions and documentation. Data was collected and analysed from semi-structured questionnaires with graphic design professionals, graphic design students, as well as a support lecturer who was also engaged in the student observations and discussions over a two-year period from 2021 to 2022.

The sampled participants' perceptions and experiences were linked to the theoretical framework outlined in previous chapters. In post-apartheid South Africa, postcolonial theories on racial identity and culture, as well as visual representation, were discussed in the context of graphic design. The objective was to assess whether intercultural knowledge and culture-centred design processes should be a requirement of the graphic design curriculum to strengthen sensitive awareness, empathy and understanding of ethnic diversity. The goal was to examine the design processes that result in an appropriate and suitable visual representation of a heterogeneous societal culture in South Africa.

4.4.1.   Interviews in the study

In qualitative research, interviews are the most preferred data collection method. Interviews are exchanges in which participants in a study are asked questions and give replies. Most qualitative research interviews are semi-structured, lightly structured, or in-depth, as no

research interview is without structure (Mason, 1994: 89-110). It is usual to differentiate interviews according to the level of structure used by the researcher to determine the flow of the interview based on their pre-existing thoughts, research questions and resultant questions in the interview process. Interviews are usually differentiated as structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Edwards & Holland, 2013; 2020; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Due to the unrestrictive nature of the open-ended questions, I used semi-structured and lightly structured methods to facilitate a greater flow of information. Using this method, I was able to determine the participants' understanding of the topic. This informal approach enabled participants to actively guide the process to their liking, sharing content as they felt comfortable.

The data captured from the semi-structured interviews, discussions and self-reflections are discussed in the next section. Given the informal nature of the contact and engagement with students in graphic design practice, informal interviews and discussions were employed as the framework for the inquiry into the significance of the relationship between culture within visual communication in graphic design. The interviews were deliberately designed to be flexible. The informal character of the questionnaires ensured that the participants felt comfortable with the researcher receiving data that was rich in context and insights. This is because participants were not obligated to take part in a question-and-answer session where they may feel constrained by a timeframe or the questions posed.

Henning (2013:57) contends that researchers who conduct interviews are co-constructors of meaning (the data), whether they intend to be. Henning (2013: 57) states that the "non-standard" style of interviewing in which "talk as a social action" (Baker, 1997: 130) enables the researcher to obtain in-depth, detailed information offered by the participant. This approach underlines the significance of the interaction between the researcher and the participants. The participant and the researcher contribute significantly to meaning-making through discursive discourses, a natural outcome of a semi-structured interview. This method was used in the data collection with the student participants. Henning's explanation of this approach is twofold, structured and unstructured. The questions are designed to guide the discussion and are unstructured in the sense that they are neither binding nor convincing, permitting a reasonable amount of flexibility for the participant (Grix, 2010: 28).

The study was conducted using a semi-formal approach because a formal approach may give participants the impression that only the information contained in the questions is significant

and that information obtained in other ways is irrelevant (Calfee & Sperling, 2010:105). Despite its informal nature, the semi-structured and informal interview gives the researcher the opportunity to make sure that important questions are covered by connecting the questions with the respondents' answers. Using a formal interview format has the disadvantage of training the mind to wait for the next question once the first question's details are finished. Important information may be left out during the process (Calfee & Sperling 2010:106).

The interview's conversational style makes sure that all of the participants are at ease and at ease during the interview. It was intended that they would feel comfortable enough to talk without fear of being implicated by their responses. In addition to helping to establish trust and confidence that all the information shared remained private, the regular interactions with them after the discussion sessions also aided in this process. When interviewing the expert designer, E1, after receiving the initial answers, I was able to email back queries and insights from the answers. This led to a natural back-and-forth informal discussion that took on its own life and direction. I told all the participants that the initial questions were there as prompts but that they could respond to any "prompts" in any way they felt comfortable. I made it clear that they could share information in any way they felt comfortable.

4.4.2. Interview with an industry expert (E1)

The research was prompted by my desire to understand the role of culture in visual communication and how graphic designers in the industry approach designing for sociocultural target audiences different from their own culture. In order to understand where visual communication aimed at specific sociocultural audiences fails or succeeds, it was important to gain perspectives from the industry to recognise and correct shortcomings within graphic design approaches and processes. Furthermore, I sought to understand whether graphic design, as a language that operates through visual representation systems, should be critically studied and understood in cultural contexts.

The industry expert assisted in providing insight on creating visual communication for contexts unfamiliar to one's own. The industry expert shared useful insights from the perspective of the industry on the challenges faced when working with clients. His expertise is necessary for curriculum development that considers the challenges of designing within a culturally diverse society.

The semi-structured interview questions are appended in Appendix A.

4.4.3. Interview with the support lecturer (L1)

The support lecturer's participation was essential to gaining additional insights into whether graphic design, as a language that functions through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts within the graphic design curriculum. The support lecturer is referred to as L1. As the in-class support lecturer throughout 2021 and 2022, the support lecturer served as a significant informant. She also functioned as a significant informant due to her interdisciplinary experience in visual studies theory and has industry experience as a graphic designer and visual curator. L1's in-class observations with the second-year graphic design students aided the inquiry into whether graphic designers require cultural knowledge when working in South Africa's culturally diverse markets. The support lecturer's involvement in the research applied to teaching approaches, class and group discussions, student reflective practices, and understanding of the students' requirements. This also included discussions around the need for design briefs in the curriculum to produce suitable opportunities for intercultural learning in the second year. Throughout the research, I would discuss my in-class observations, concerns and issues to facilitate differing perspectives and limitations regarding student learning.

The discussions with the L1 followed an informal conversational approach, however, there were times, for instance, during the curriculum planning meetings, when the engagement assumed a more intentional approach regarding modifications to the briefs to include humanity-centred and primary research opportunities within the curriculum briefs. As the lecturer overseeing the second-year graphic design students, I had 12 hours of contact practical class with the students weekly. I was able to observe the students, track their progress and engage in discussions, along with the support lecturer, including lecturers from different disciplines. These conversations, which are neither formal nor recorded, may occur in the classroom, staff room, cafeteria, or corridor. Swain and King (2022:3) refer to these "informal discussions as participatory conversations." I would frequently, either before or after class, discuss with L1 what she had observed in class the day before. The objective is to gather background information to gain a better understanding, confirm an observation or form an opinion.

Swain (2022: 3) employs "participatory conversations" and "observed conversations" to generate data during fieldwork that will appear in the final research. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), argue that these informal interviews are still interviews. The term *informal conversations* has several synonyms: Bernard (2011) refers to them as "natural conversations," and Patton (2002) refers to them as "unstructured" interviews. Swain and King (2022: 9) claim that they have made meaningful distinctions between "observed conversations" that occur during the researcher's observations and "communal or "participatory conversations" between two or more people, as well as between "accidental moments" and "opportunistic moments" in the researchers' observations. Although field-noted observations of conversations have a long history in social research, in their experience, they are rarely included and interrogated as a source of data in academic articles. In certain instances, the conversations can contribute ideas for further research and make a significant contribution to the study. Swain & King's (2022: 9) research on informal conversations in qualitative research was relevant to my engagement with the students and support lecturer during the two years of the case study research.

The sample interview questions are appended as Appendix C.

4.4.4. Interviews and observations with students

While the interview with the lecturer was based on her student observations and perspectives on the integration of cultural learning in the curriculum, the students' role was to reflect on their learning experience as it related to a specific project, as well as their growth over their second and third year of studies. While there were 25 students in the second-year class in 2021, two students were purposively interviewed due to their specific topic selection. The data-collecting methods include semi-structured interviewing, observation, informal discussions and documentation. As part of the data collection, I included the two students' responses to the project brief, which related to designing for cultures and contexts familiar and unfamiliar to their own, and finally, their views on their personal growth as empathetic and culturally aware designers.

As an educator at an institution of higher education for design, student participation was crucial because the insights directly impacted my practice as a lecturer and researcher. Their perspectives and experiences were valuable when developing lesson plans and the curriculum on how to incorporate primary research and intercultural knowledge into project briefs. An

important consideration has been the preparation of graphic design students to become culturally sensitive and aware industry professionals with the potential to influence the South African graphic design industry.

The student interviews with second-year students are appended as Appendix B.

4.5.　　Data analysis

The various data collected were coded for anonymity to protect participants' information and arranged in three case studies. Central to my analysis was identifying patterns and themes in the data collected based on the study's premise that culture and language are not two separate entities but are interconnected and mutually shape one another and people's sociocultural identities. When analysing the data, I sought to understand and present the responses of the participants in a way that would explain how the participants related to the context of the study. Along with the interview questions collected, a few questions were asked to gather demographics and background information.

In applying the transformative paradigm, the case studies would need to be analysed through the lens of race, culture and ethnicity. The social constructions of the latter would assist the participants in making sense of their own experiences concerning the topic of culture in graphic design, which is the focal point of the study. I sought to comprehend how respondents perceived their role within the multicultural contexts in which they worked. The questions needed to be sufficiently open-ended for respondents to provide information that would help answer important research questions freely. I was interested in determining how their cultural backgrounds and experiences had influenced their current perspectives on working with and for diverse cultures and unfamiliar contexts. In an effort to comprehend the participants' experiences, connections were identified in the data that informed the emerging themes, and the case study layout was structured on these themes. There were commonalities among the themes that emerged, despite the fact that case-by-case and participant-by-participant differences existed in the specificity and comprehension of the themes.

The visual diaries and journals of the students were essential components of the document analysis as they served as explanations of the decisions made in creating the visual communication. Because they reveal the "raw" and "unadulterated" view of their visual world,

the students' reflective practice was crucial for understanding their visual learning journeys (Darby, 2009: 45). While the visual journal documents student process, it is also a record of how the students perceive and represent the world. Guidelines or briefs do not govern them, nor are they limited to what is taught in the classroom. It was also important to observe how students' cultural preferences are reflected in their design processes. Another crucial element in the document analysis was the students' design rationales, which entail the reasoning and arguments that lead to the final decision of how the design intent is achieved. The expected effect or behaviour the designer intended the design object to achieve to fulfil the required function is defined as *design intent* (Carroll, 2013). Design rationales include not only the reasons behind a design decision but also the justification for it, the alternatives considered, the trade-offs evaluated and the argumentation that led to the decision (Lee, 2004).

4.6.   Data validity

Validity is broadly defined as the state of being well-grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, logical, conforming to accepted principles or the quality of being sound, just, and well-founded (Merriam-Webster, 2016). The aim of this section is to outline further the integrity in which a study is conducted and ensure the credibility of findings in relation to qualitative research. To authenticate the research, it was important to include the support lecturer's perspective and observations of the graphic design students in the sample so as to authenticate the material that emerged during the in-class observations. In research, it is essential to draw attention to any conflicts of interest, especially when the researcher conducts the study within a familiar setting or with participants or colleagues, they are familiar with. Making this information transparent allows the researcher to address certain potential "perceived" biases. As the researcher, I became a part of the data collection process to ensure that my participation kept me within the moment of the research. I made a conscious effort to take the necessary steps to ensure the authenticity of the data collection processes and procedures and that data accurately reflects the practices and insights gathered from the participants' active involvement and feedback in the case studies and interviews (Yin, 2014).

Table 4.7: Data collection methods and validity

Method name	Purpose	Process
Prolonged engagement	Credibility	Researcher spent an adequate time in class with students. Data collected over a two-year period to observe outcomes
Purposive sampling	Transferability	Purposive sampling or non-probability sampling: applied combination of two sampling strategies priori and contingent sampling
Triangulation	Confirmability Credibility Dependability	Data collection utilised multiple qualitative methods; namely, interviews, observations, discussions and documents
Participant checking	Credibility	Multiple cross-checking data collection: discussions, semi-formal, questionnaires, observations, presentations, documents
Employing moderator	To overcome personal bias	Self-reflection throughout the research process. One-on-one discussions with co-lecturer. Analysing the data collected
Thick description	Transferability	A comprehensive description of research methods used in this study was given, including direct quotes
Journal	Confirmability Authenticity Credibility	Reflexive approach: the researcher's self-awareness and self-disclosure contributes to the authenticity of the research

4.7.   Ethical data protection

All reasonable precautions were taken to ensure the protection of the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality in accordance with the *Protection of Personal Information Act* (POPI Act), *No. 4 of 2013*, which came into effect 1 July 2021. Any information provided is only used for the purposes for which it was provided within the scope and duration of this study. While consent was obtained from the research participants to use their data for current research purposes, personal information regarding participants has been collected and processed lawfully and in a reasonable manner that does not compromise their right to privacy. Despite having permission to publish the expert graphic designer's name in this study, and the act that the expert designer's work is published and well-known in the South Africa industry, I opted to use a pseudonym-coded system consistently across all case studies and participants in accordance with the POPI Act. The student participants were informed with their signed consent that I had access to their design projects, which was uploaded onto the design institution's academic database and that all documented information will remain confidential. Information regarding the purpose and use of the research was communicated to the participants to ensure transparency, convey responsibility and demonstrate mutual respect.

At CPUT's inaugural virtual Annual Research Ethics Day, held via Microsoft Teams under the theme "Responsible Research Practices: Old and New Challenges," Dr Hester-Mari Burger (Des, 2021), Manager of Research Integrity in the Research Directorate, made the following comments:

> *As researchers we are constantly engaging in decision-making, considering the impact of research, the positive as well as the negative, identifying and managing conflicts of values and interests between stakeholders (other researchers, users of the outputs, research participants, society, and future generations), finding the best solutions to these conflicts and carefully balancing harm and benefit in favour of benefit. We need to ensure strong ethical values and conduct to make research trustworthy, reproducible, and sustainable.*

4.8. Reflexive principle

The reflexive principle is applicable within this study as I recognise my position before attempting to understand another's. There exists a mutual influence between the researcher and the research process, and I concur with Patton (2002) in acknowledging that this relationship enhances the credibility of my research. The researcher's self-awareness and self-disclosure contribute to the authenticity of the research. In writing about research, Carter, Lapum, Lavallee and Martin (2014: 362) argue, "researchers need to begin with their own story as they seek to understand the stories of others." The researcher is appropriately part of the research process and in relationship with research participants. In a constantly evolving and multicultural society, a transformative research approach that seeks to understand people within cultural contexts enriches transformative learning and practice theory. The method for gathering qualitative data was non-linear due to the research being fluid and ever-evolving. According to Assmussen and Creswell (1995: 119) it is important to allow the phenomenon to guide the research rather than following a rigid structure of how the process needs to unfold. Therefore, I allowed the process to direct me and the journey to follow its course. The changing nature of the research process necessitated periodic pauses to interrogate significant issues relevant to the research focus of the embedded relationship between culture and language in graphic design in South Africa.

In this context, Rose (2012: 17) contends that reflexivity is best characterised as thinking about "how you as a critic of visual images are looking" and "thinking carefully about where we see from" to inform how we perceive. It also highlights the "inseparability of personal and professional identities" (Pink, 2012: 42), rejecting positivist views of objectivity. Due to the importance of the researcher's position within the research's context, a reflexive strategy was necessary for this study (Keane, Khupe, & Muza, 2016). This brings to the forefront of the research process the significance of my position as an educator as well as my experiences as a visual communicator within a heterogenous society in South Africa after apartheid. I recognise the impact my identity and background as a white South African researcher and educator, who was educated during apartheid in South Africa, would have on the study.

The transformative approach encouraged participatory processes as an essential element of the research process and as an additional method of addressing subjectivity to reduce personal influences and biases. The participants are involved in the process of participatory design,

which gives them a voice and increases levels of engagement and verification (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013: 20). Whilst conducting my research, I aimed to achieve "empathetic neutrality," a position that recognises that research cannot be value free but which advocates that researchers should make their assumptions transparent" (Ritchie, et al., 2013.:13). This means that in data collection, interpretation and presentation, every effort is made to avoid obvious, conscious or systematic bias. There is no such thing as "neutral" or "objective" information, due to the fact that the researcher constantly impacts research. In this context, I intend to reflect on my role and the effect of my perspectives and actions on the research process. Although research provides information on the validity and reliability of qualitative data collection and findings, researchers are seldom required to state their beliefs and values explicitly. As a result, it is essential that the researcher assesses potential bias factors and reflects on them, along with the data collection of a study.

As the sole researcher, I am responsible for all data collection and interpretation aspects. My point of view does not assume absolute truth. Instead, my position in the study is to encourage discussion that challenges established ways of thinking about and practising graphic design in a heterogeneous society. As a result, what I value and consider meaningful does not outweigh what I do not value. I have occasionally stepped back rather than assume the subject's expert role and evaluate the circumstances encountered. This is to allow the situation to evolve and unfold naturally, as it would without my intervention. To validate my observations and concerns, I would discuss them with colleagues. I valued how various perspectives supported my assumptions or offered fresh perspectives and insights on how to proceed. Journaling throughout the process allowed me to reflect on my involvement in the research process. This reflective process was revisited frequently. Examining my role in the research process does not assume a binary between researcher and "researched," i.e., that the former has power and the latter does not.

At times my role moved between the following:
- an observer of others and their practice by placing the research in context to gain other perspectives;
- a researcher of others through reflection and analysis of practice and interviews with others; and lastly as
- a self-observer through awareness of personal views in the gathering and interpreting of the data collection process.

4.9.   Summary of the chapter

Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology applied to examine the inherent relationship between culture and visual communication in South African graphic design. A transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2016) was deemed appropriate for the study. As the researcher is placed in the study, I have a position in the research and am not removed from the research process and context; therefore, I am a part of and able to learn the research journey. The research design followed Stake's (2006) qualitative case study approach, applying the participants' purposive or non-probability sampling (Patton, 2015). Data was acquired using qualitative methods involving semi-structured interviews, observation and document collection. Ethical processes were followed to ensure the protection of the participant's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

CHAPTER 5

Data presentation and analysis

Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savour their songs. I again realised that we were not different people with separate languages; we were one people, with different tongues (Nelson Mandela, 2008).

5.1.   Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the data and analyses of the critical findings in three sections, obtained from three case studies, which included semi-structured interviews, observations, documentation and supporting participant interviews. The first case study documents the design approach and process of a graphic design industry expert who served as a key source of information for the study topic- and industry-related matters. The custom-designed typeface for the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, is analysed in relation to the cultural context. The second case study examines the design approaches of two second-year graphic design students in response to a specific brief through classroom observations, classroom discussions, and interviews. Each student's design process is described, highlighting the key insights observed when designing for familiar and unfamiliar cultures. Presented are interviews with second-year students and an educator who served as primary curriculum informants for graphic design. The third case study focuses on the experiences of a professional graphic designer who works in diverse cultural fields. The professional designer was a key source of information regarding the research topic of cultural diversity in design practice.

5.2.   Case study participants

As a graphic design lecturer at a design Institution for Higher Education offering a three-year BA in Visual Communications in South Africa, I have been involved in the first, second and the graduating third-year classes. The interviews, observations, discussions and reflections with the selected participants were conducted over a two-year period between 2021 and 2022.

My experiences as a professional graphic designer and lecturer assisted in contextualising the case studies and identifying the participants' purposive sampling. The five participants were grouped into two roles: two industry graphic designers and three participants in higher education: two graphic design students and one graphic design support lecturer.

This section discusses the findings of interviews with two graphic design professionals, two design students, and one lecturer. I connected the participants' perceptions and experiences to the theoretical framework outlined in the preceding chapters. I discussed postcolonial identity theories in relation to visual culture and representation. This study examined the design processes by which visual representation in South Africa's culturally diverse society is appropriate and perceptible to its intended audience. The research questioned whether it is necessary to incorporate cultural knowledge into the design curriculum in order to increase sensitivity and awareness of cultural diversity.

5.3.   Case study 1: expert graphic designer

5.3.1.   Background information on expert graphic designer (E1)

I purposively included the industry expert to demonstrate the value of placing context, cultural identity and place at the centre of visual communication throughout the design process. The perspective of the expert graphic designer (hereafter referred to as E1) is critical to this inquiry into whether graphic designers should adapt their design approach when designing for a cultural context unfamiliar to them. Based in Durban, E1 is an accomplished South African designer, photographer, publisher and archivist.

5.3.2.   The design process (1): background to the design brief

Following the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, Former President Nelson Mandela inaugurated the Constitutional Court and 11 Court Judges on 14 February 1995. The Constitutional Court, South Africa's highest court, was established in 1995 as a result of the country's first democratic constitution. The 11 Court Judges were appointed to defend the rights of all South Africans from a historically significant structure on Johannesburg's Constitution Hill. Every detail of the complex's interior and exterior was put out to public tender for redevelopment. The architects' brief stated that the Court building should be

functional, reflect a sense of warmth, openness and pride among all South Africans, and be aesthetically restrained and elegant while retaining a distinctively South African character and identity. The Constitutional Court Judges commissioned E1 to design the public signage for use throughout the Court building and the greater Constitution Hill precinct. The clients requested the custom design of a distinctive typeface that captures the core principles guiding the development and transformation of the Court buildings. Given the diversity of post-apartheid South Africa's cultural and linguistic communities, this case provides a framework for discussion and contextualisation of current design practices.

By walking through and analysing the expert designer's process, the following section discusses the significance of the designer visiting the location during the inception stage to gain a deeper understanding of the history, environment and cultural context as an essential component of the design cycle. The case study draws from email discussions and semi-structured interviews with the expert designer, his personal notes, photographs and documentation of the Constitution Hill precinct, including the working drawings that show the evolution of the final design, academic articles (Sautoff, 2006), a publication (Walker, 2003-2004) and the Constitutional Court website.

This custom-designed display typeface would be applied to the exterior, interior and public way-finding icons. The client's brief to the designer specified a 'unique font' that embodied the core values underlying the building's transformation and that "related to the citizens of our nation" (Sauthoff, 2006: 5). The design of the typeface must be contextual and convey both a sense of "the journey" and "the character" of the site. The typeface needed to be sensitive to the site's history, an extension of the structure's history in the same way the Court building was built with bricks from the demolished Awaiting Trial Block. The typeface design had to be a reflection on the past and a remembrance of what previously existed. The clients did not want a formal typeface but rather a design that embodied unique, expressive and 'humanist' letterforms, 'friendly,' including playful letters. The typeface would be used as a display font applied to signage and not for text. Whilst the typeface must be reflective of a modern high-tech nation, the letterforms must consider legibility to aid low levels of literacy.

E1 states that he was tasked with designing a typeface for signage for a building still under construction whose history with which he was unfamiliar. He lived 560 kilometres away and had never visited the site.

E1 questioned, *"Why didn't the Judges make things easy and just use Helvetica Condensed?"*

Considering the client's 'specific' request for a custom-designed typeface that is both sensitive to and an extension of the site's history, E1 travelled to Johannesburg to see the location for himself to acquire an in-depth understanding of the context and history.

5.3.2.1. The site's context and history

The Old Fort complex was built in 1893 as a military prison to control the foreigners who came to the Witwatersrand gold fields. The original Fort prison housed white male prisoners until 1904, when the Native Gaol was built to house black male prisoners. In 1906, Mahatma Ghandi and supporters of his passive resistance movement were detained in the Old Fort. Both the Awaiting Trial Block for Black males and the Women's Prison for Black and White female inmates were added in later years. After the 1948 elections, the Nationalist government enacted apartheid laws, and the Fort complex was used as a detention centre for the growing number of "political" prisoners. From its establishment until its closure in 1983, the Old Fort prison complex held some of South Africa's most famous and infamous inmates. In actuality, the list of individuals detained for attempting to contest or subvert the political system at the time forms a traceable timeline of South Africa's political history.

During the 1950s and 1960s, South Africa saw a dramatic increase in the number of political prisoners incarcerated. In 1956, a total of 156 people, including African National Congress leaders and veterans, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Joe and Ruth Slovo and Lillian Ngoyi, were arrested and detained at the prison complex for two weeks before being transferred to Pretoria Prison for the Treason Trial. The Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960 saw additional prisoners incarcerated, among them Robert Sobukwe, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu. The Old Fort represented a time of fear and injustice. After the closure of the Old Fort prison complex in 1983, various proposals were considered for its use. However, the structure gradually deteriorated into a shelter for vagrants.

5.3.3. The design process (2): research and contextualisation sources

E1 started the project by familiarising himself with the historical context of the site. "Three locations in the Old Fort precinct served as the primary sources of inspiration for the design of

the typeface: the cast concrete architrave above the main public entrance to the Court building, the prison cells in the Fort and the prison administration buildings" (Walker, 2003-04).

Figure 5.1: archival material: the three remaining prisons: the 'native gaol', the Old Fort and the woman's prison (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

E1 drew from five sources as reference material and inspiration:

1. archival material, including historical photographs;
2. the cast concrete architrave above the main public entrance to the Court building;
3. the prison cells in the Old Fort;
4. the prison administration buildings; and
5. the numerals found in various places on the precinct.

5.3.3.1. Archival material

E1 paid particular attention to archival material, historical photographs, national symbols and emblems that had previously been used to identify the political character and purposes of the site at various times.

5.3.3.2. Cast concrete architrave

The opening sentence of the new constitution is engraved on the cast concrete architrave above the main entrance by the 11 Court Judges in each of the 11 official languages of the country

and Braille. E1 found the visually impaired Justice Zakeria Yacoob's "poorly handwritten" line in South Sotho to be particularly interesting. From the start, he was certain that it had to be integrated into the final typeface design in some form.

5.3.3.3. Prison cells in the Old Fort

E1 found a wide variety of visual content produced by the Old Fort building. The letterforms reflected the history of the structures as well as the people who lived in them. The Rand Light Infantry left behind military signage, a plaque from 1896 listing the ranks and responsibilities of ZAR functionaries, and remnants of manufacturer's marks, all of which served as reminders of the formal and official presence of political forces at various points in the Fort's history. On the other hand, the scratched graffiti on the walls of the prison cells revealed impromptu marks reflecting a range of emotions from despair to humour and hope.

5.3.3.4. Prison administration buildings

The Administration Building served as a frame of reference that told a different story from the prisoner cells. Compared to the letters generated by the prisoners, the lettering rendered by prison guards on notice boards and recreational signs in the prison wardens' offices depicted a system that privileged positions of access, education and authority. The social and political hierarchy, with its different statuses and education levels, can be discerned in these samples. Functional responsibilities could be identified by the "official" typography of the prison authorities and the informal notices that had been hastily scrawled on various surfaces.

5.3.3.5. Stylistic applications of numerals

The fifth source of inspiration for E1 was the stylistic range of numerals found throughout the precinct. A definitive resource for E1 was the use of numerals throughout the precinct. Hand-painted "stencil" numbers that marked the doors to the prison cells evoked a different mood than the smooth silk-screened boards. E1 documented the contrasting aesthetics of shapes, colours, textures, surfaces and materials, including the various production techniques that could be integrated into the final design solution.
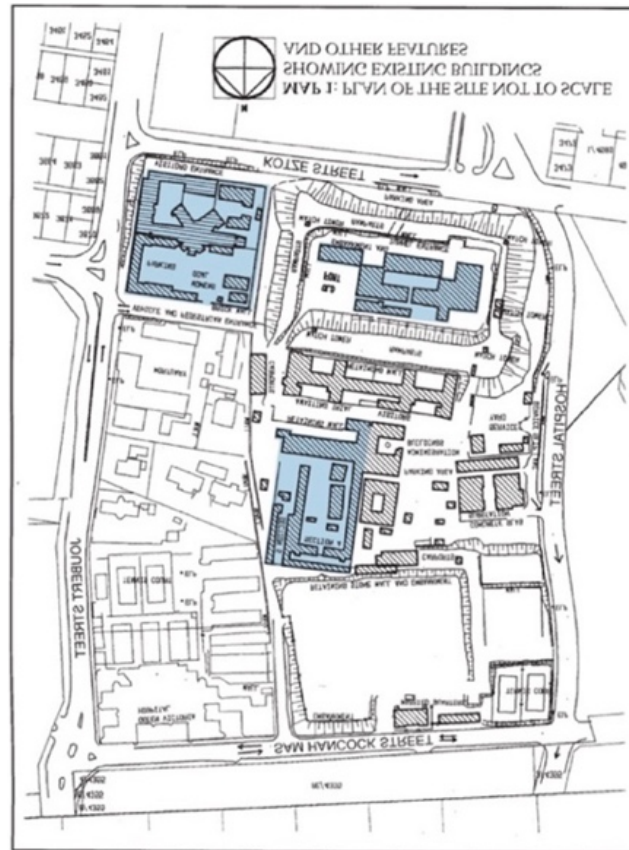
**Figure 5.1: Constitution Hill site map and archived photographs showing the three remaining prisons: the 'native gaol', the Old Fort and the woman's prison. (Documentation received from the interview with E1, 2021).**

5.3.4.   The design process (3): documenting the typographic record

A search for "apartheid era" letterforms in the surrounding location proved unsuccessful, and E1 turned to the prison buildings for inspiration. Walking through what remained of the buildings on Constitution Hill, the three remaining prisons (Figure 5.1) would provide the typographic record that would serve as the foundation for the design of the Constitutional Court's typeface. A brief inspection of the prisons revealed that, as state wards, the prisoners had little need for signage. Surfaces illustrated the narrative: faded floor tiles, bureaucratic-beige walls, and the remains of government furniture served as historical references. E1 observed that, as with any building with a colourful past, the structure retained a sense of history in the rooms.

E1 recounts ascending the stairs, like the countless prisoners before him, to the cells on the top floor of the Old Fort, where he stood in complete darkness, looking at the walls of cell after cell, finding nothing. All of a sudden, something scratched into the wall caught his attention. E1 recalls: *My heart stopped. Here were the words of someone I'd never know, forever engraved on the grey cement. I knew I had to use them.*
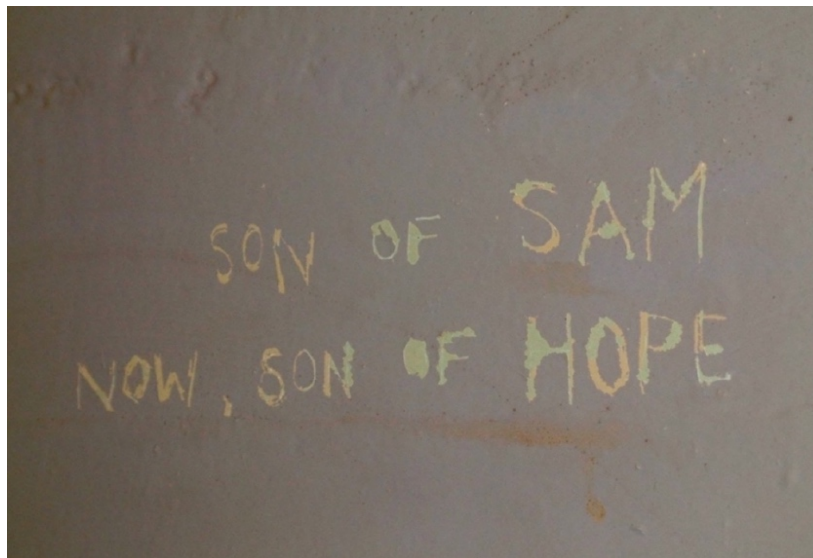
Figure 5.2: 'Son of Sam, now Son of Hope' lettering scratched into a cell wall by a prisoner (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).
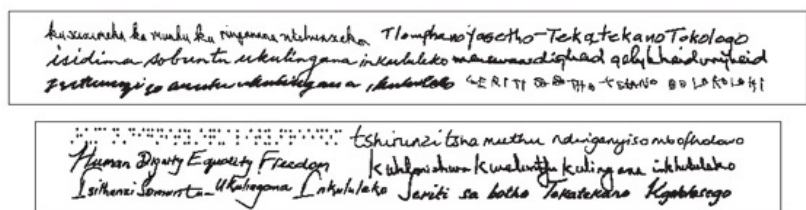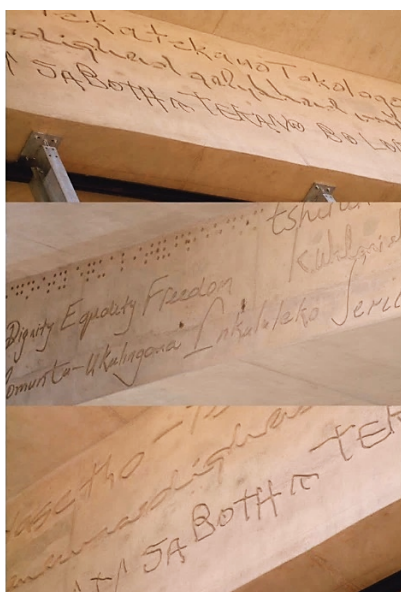
Figure 5.6: Sample handwriting of the 11 court judges' on the cast concrete architrave above the main entrance of the Constitutional Court (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

South Africa's Constitution is widely regarded as one of the most progressive and liberal constitutions in the world; it exemplifies the country's distinctiveness and progress. The opening words of our constitution are inscribed in the architrave above the main public entrance to the Constitutional Court. In contrast to the past, the building is now governed by "Human Dignity, Equality, and Freedom." This juxtaposition encapsulates the country's transformation. Written in the handwriting of each of the 11 court judges in Braille and the 11 official languages of South Africa, these words greet everyone who enters the building. The spirit of the building and the letter of the Constitution embody the nation's history, diversity, and identity (Walker, 2003-2004: 21).

E1 documented the various "found "apartheid-era" prison letterforms and compiled a comprehensive photographic record of all existing hand-lettering and typographic applications from the buildings and the premises on the precinct. This record included sidewalk trader signage, prison wayfinding signs, wall graffiti, numerals, road traffic signs and municipal street signs" (Walker, 2003-04).
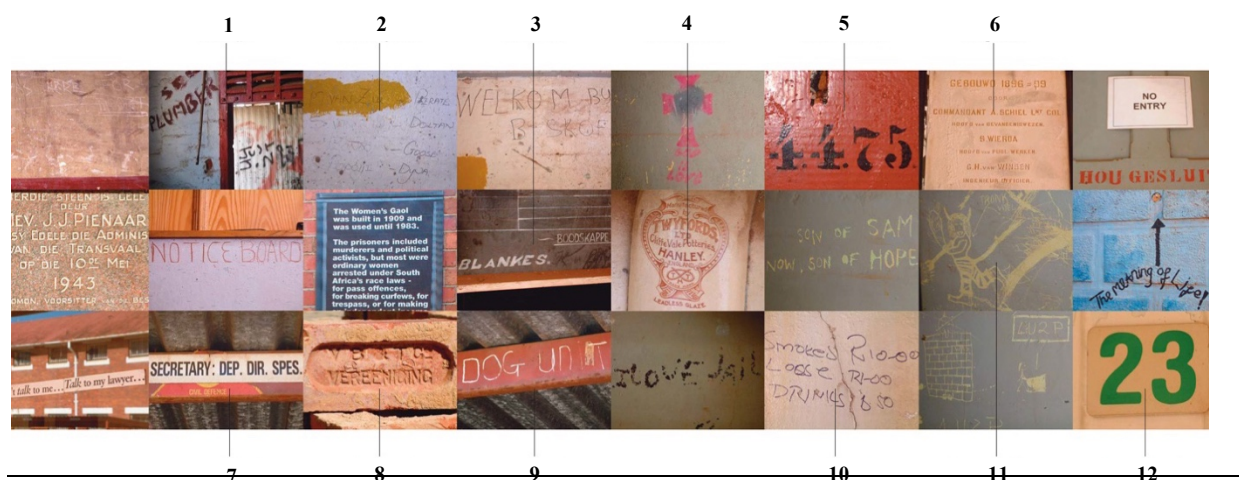
Key: 1. prisoner ablution block wall graffiti; 2. prison gang names; 3. apartheid-era prison administration notice board; 4. Victorian branding on the ceramic urinal; 5. prison cell number; 6. commemorative plaque from the Old Fort inauguration; 7. prison administration signage; 8. recycled brick from demolished awaiting trial block; 9. correctional services 'dog unit' signage; 10. prison 'commerce'; 11. prison cell wall graffiti; 12. prison administration office number.

Figure 5.3: found lettering from the three prison buildings, including interior and exterior signage: the 'native gaol', the Old Fort and the woman's prison (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.5: Selected lettering: the 'thick & thin' letter strokes scratched onto cell walls created letterforms with a distinct 'personality' (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

1	2	3

Key: 1. handwriting of a blind judge expresses the 'humanism' of the court; 2. letters created with 'thick & thin' letter strokes conveying a 'distinct personality'; 3. the smooth edges and rounded corners assist in ease of production

Figure 5.4: Final selected lettering: narrowing down selection and focusing on specific letters (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.5. The design process (4): selection and letterform exploration and development

Returning to his studio, the designer's first task was identifying lettering with development potential and selecting letterforms that could prove useful. "The variety of shapes and forms lacked a common typographic thread, despite their origins and historical connections. The precinct's limited series of unrelated letters and numerals, the architrave lettering of the visually impaired Justice Yacoob, and the decision to use letterforms with varying letter stroke widths in a 'unicase' font provided the primary building blocks for the typeface" (Walker, 2003-04). The starting point for design development was crafting the letter 'B' taken from Justice Yacoob's writing.
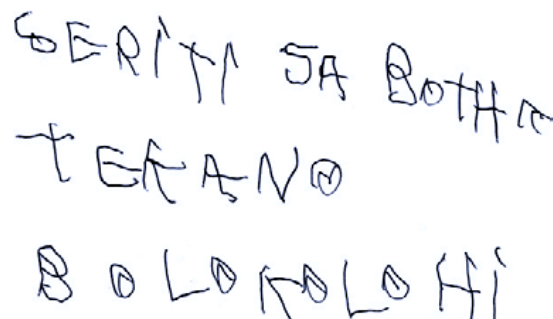
Figure 5.8: Handwriting in the South Sotho language by the blind court Justice Zakeria Yacoob (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.11: Selected letterforms for the foundation of the typeface design (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.6. The design process (5): digital crating of typeface design
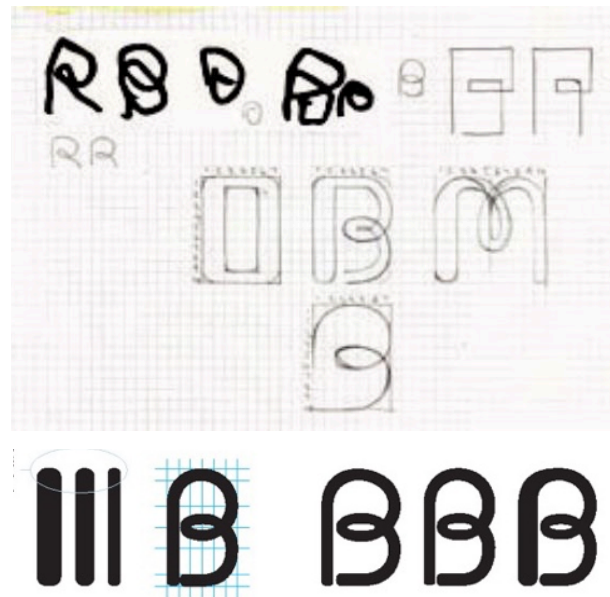
Figure 5.9: Development of the letter 'B'; showing the initial graph-paper sketches, and the exploration of alternative weights, width variations and character thicknesses. (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).
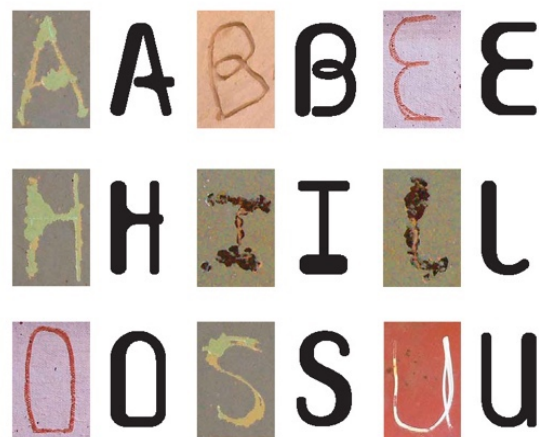
Figure 5.12: Font character construction based on selected prison references: the handwriting of Justice Yacoob and variable letter strokes from the 'son of Sam' lettering. (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

"Following this, letter A was drafted with its form based on the 'Son of Sam' graffiti and its pronounced letter strokes. Letter by letter, all 26 letters were systematically matched to appropriate and key characteristics of specific letters identified in the purposively selected

sample of reference material. Each letter was then refined to arrive at a stylistically coherent alphabet and, and to adapt the letter for laser cutting of the master template. This involved ensuring that the counters or centres of letters such as B, O, P, Q and R would not drop out of the template" (Walker, 2003-04).
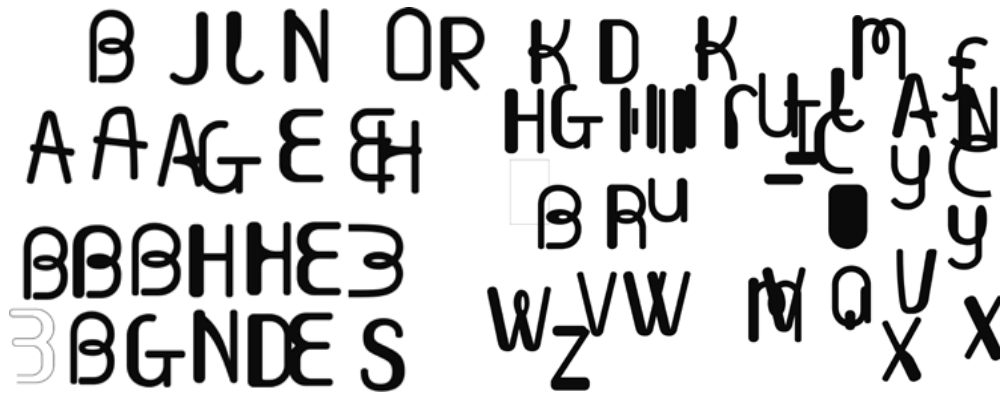
Figure 5.13: Sequence of design development (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.14: Exploration of characters to imitate design elements of the handwritten letter 'B' (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.15: Development of letterforms (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.7.   The design process (6): the crafting of the final "stencil" typeface design

Figure 5.16: Refinements and adjustments suitable for laser cutting from sheet metal (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.18: The final approved typeface, to be applied across the Constitutional Court's internal and public signage (Documentation received, interview with E1, 2021).
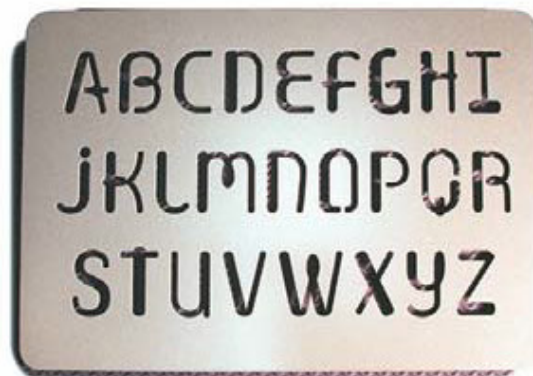
Figure 5.19: Lasercut character set in aluminium sheet (Documentation, interview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.20: The typeface applied to Court interior signage. (Iinterview with E1, 2021).

Figure 5.22: The typeface applied to Court exterior signage. (Iinterview with E1, 2021).

As one approaches the Constitutional Court, the typographic signage applied directly above the building's entrance is one of the most noticeable features. The distinct typeface announces the building's identity in all 11 of South Africa's official languages. The architrave above the main public entranceway to the Constitutional Court is cast in the handwriting of each of the

11 court judges and written in the 11 official languages, including Braille. Infused with a message, every person entering the building receives the opening words of our constitution. Hailed as one of the most progressive and liberal worldwide, the constitution is a statement of our transformation and individuality. "Human dignity, equality and freedom" now presides over the building, where once the contrary held true: this juxtaposition now defines the citizens of South Africa (Sautoff, 2006). Our history, our diversity and our identity, distinctly unique across the world, are encapsulated in the spirit of the building and the letter of the constitution. E1 asserted, "It had to be a retrospective, a testament to what had been" (Documents received from the interview with E1, 2021).

Although E1 was only responsible for the design of the typeface, he attributes the smooth and uncomplicated development of the type to the meaningful working relationships established with his clients, the architects and Constitutional Court judges. These partnerships transcended professional and disciplinary borders, characterised by mutual respect for professional and technical expertise and participants' open-minded engagement in constructive discussion.

5.3.8.   Interview with the expert graphic designer

The expert graphic designer participated in a semi-formal interview and discussion from September 15 to September 22, 2021. Also included in the section below is the initial email exchange between February 20 and February 25, 2019. The informal interview consisted of an initial email questionnaire followed by additional email questions and dialogue to explore certain topics in greater depth. The discussions related to the research focus on the significance of understanding the role of culture in the graphic design profession.

5.3.8.1. E1's views: value of intercultural knowledge in graphic design in South Africa

E1 insists that intercultural understanding is critical for South African graphic designers due to the country's multiple ethnicities and languages. E1 reaffirms his long-held interest in *"what makes me South African – and what does that look like?"* This is especially pertinent to his personal work, which explores his own South African identity and the questions surrounding it.

My commercial work is more influenced by Euro-Western trends found in "London, Paris, or New York" because that is what his clients prefer. He felt that "in reality, we are fighting a losing battle with the dominance and influence of Western culture in the era of social media. Young designers "want to follow social media trends," which is a "dumbing down" and most likely "American-ish, not South African. Young designers are unprepared to create designs appropriate for different cultural contexts (Interview with E1, 2021).

Given the timeframe and opportunity, the graphic design industry has not changed sufficiently over the last 10 to 20 years to adequately represent South Africa's cultural diversity. Having said that, E1 acknowledges that some brands in specific categories, such as fast food, personal care and cell phones, have transitioned. Graphic designers must adapt their design processes more to meet the needs of culturally diverse audiences.

The problem remains – what is "typical South African" – considering the difference in race, age, sex, and demographics? Once we understand that, we can develop a language to address that audience. In 'marketing' to our audience, it all appears to be trial and error or potluck. If we look at Japan, in terms of design and how they have created a hybrid of Japan meets the West, we end up with a unique fusion of the two. China is also doing well in this area. Both cultures look outward. South Africa is more inward-looking, almost tribalistic, not as in Zulu or Xhosa, but more regionally, culturally and economically (Interview with E1, 2021).

After almost 30 years of democracy, after the call in the early 1990s for the graphic design industry to transform, E1 confronted the idea of a "typical South African identity:" A typical "South African" identity would have materialised by now if one existed. South Africa cannot support one since there is no typical identity. To create a visual identity representative of South Africa's multicultural society, it will need to be fluid and hybrid to reflect the nation's diversity of cultures, ages and other attributes (Interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.8.2. E1's views: designing for a different culture

E1 states that he has been involved in many projects aimed at cultures other than his own, including South African Zulu, European, South American, Indian, Scandinavian, American, Eastern and Asian. In some cases, he explains he was required to design as "an African looking at 'Korea' rather than accurately representing 'Korean design'." While he is more interested in

the brief's specifications and the culture of the audience than in his own, E1 recognises that his understanding of what distinguishes visual representation in another culture, such as Korean or Japanese, is limited. He emphasises the importance of researching what is culturally appropriate for the target audience and the specifications of the brief.

Designers must take into account the diversity of cultural identities found in local communities. This requires hard work, perseverance, commitment and a willing, supportive client. Graphic designers must alter their design process to create more culturally appropriate and visually effective communications. It is challenging and problematic for graphic designers to shift their design process to produce visually meaningful and compelling content when constrained by the client (Interview with E1, 2021).

E1 raises a relevant concern regarding the client's role, which requires attention. In addition to taking the designer's role in the design process seriously, clients must be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to address unfamiliar cultural contexts.

While it is critical for graphic designers to investigate visual representation suitable for a particular local audience, the challenge is in the collective consensus among all parties as to what is local and relevant. It is essential that graphic designers are equipped with the knowledge and tools for researching and addressing cultural diversity (Interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.8.3. E1's views: ethical role of a graphic designer

E1 contends that the role of a graphic designer should be more important than it is in the industry. This issue highlights the graphic designer's purpose and ethical role in the wider industry.

The issue starts when designers do not take themselves seriously enough. In Europe, graphic designers have more credibility, but in South Africa, professions such as finance, law and big business still carry more weight. However, graphic designers assist people in navigating through an increasingly complex world. They are involved in everything from an infographic or an app to a toilet door icon. Clients frequently appoint graphic designers at a later stage in the project. This opens speculation as to why the designer was not assigned earlier during the

initial research stages. For clients to take designers seriously, there needs to be more dialogue about the designer's role in addressing change and societal issues from the initiation of a project. This raises a number of significant issues regarding the role of a designer in practice, which affects the final communication and design outcome. This is a problem that South African designers will increasingly have to grapple with: how to engage and balance these dimensions are matters that need to be raised in professional forums or discussions of the relationship between culture and visual communication in South African graphic design (Interview with E1, 2021).

E1's opinion concerning the essential traits of a designer are:

Honesty, truth, and intention – as well as hard effort. Hard work and more hard work (Interview with E1, 2021).

5.3.9. Analysis and reflections on the case study with the expert graphic designer

As an educational tool and learning model, I presented and demonstrated E1's approach to the custom-designed typeface for the South African Constitutional Court. This case study provides perspectives and insights into how a designer approaches designing for unfamiliar and sensitive cultural contexts.

The "Face of a Nation" typeface was not designed arbitrarily by E1. Informal and formal documentation of letterforms originated within the prison complex. The initial step was for the designer to familiarise himself with the history and context of the site. Three locations in the Old Fort precinct purposively served as the primary sources of data collection for the final design of the typeface: 1. the cast concrete architrave above the main public entrance to the Court building; 2. the prison cells in the Fort; and 3. the prison administration buildings (Interview with E1, 2021).

From the frieze moulded over the Old Fort's entrance, engraved with the 11 Court Justices' handwriting on the concrete panels, in braille and in the 11 official languages of South Africa, to the historical graffiti on the cell walls, the typeface threads through the country's history and captures the spirit of what makes us South African. The three locations completed a symbolic circle, as E1 initially derived all the letterforms from the judges, prisoners and gaolers. Each set of letterforms represented a human dimension and the intimate personal connection between

the lettering and the writer to a specific time and circumstance related to the site's context and history.

E1 reflects,

> *My brief was to design a typeface based on the history of the Hill. When I finally got to see my font in the colours of the national flag on the Court's front facade, I hoped that all South Africans would understand why Helvetica Condensed wouldn't have been right. The font looked great in the interior too, as it was installed to be seen in relation to the Court's amazing art collection (Email correspondence with E1, 2021).*

The typeface represents a multilingual and multicultural society that embodies political and practical considerations for applying typographic treatment. Considerations concerning how to balance these concerns are rarely addressed in professional forums or debates on South African design identity. According to Sautoff (2006), the formal and connotative qualities of the distinctive typeface could have been more effectively explored had a typographic specialist been involved in the signage project's application, production and installation phase.

To demonstrate the value of placing context, cultural identity, and place at the centre of visual communication throughout the design process, I purposefully selected the industry expert designer. To address colonial legacies of aesthetic stereotyping, E1 developed a typeface that communicates the visual language of the site's troubled history (Sauthoff 2006). The design was created against the contextual background of South Africa's complex socio-political and historical landscape, which engendered complex cultural identity issues during apartheid. Eurocentric views of dominance and oppression framed racially prejudiced perspectives on the identity of the self and the "Other" during colonialism and apartheid that failed to acknowledge the "Others" cultural identity or socio-political interests. These views dominated the graphic design sector prior to democracy.

The Constitutional Court Judges commissioned E1 to create a distinctive typeface that captures the core principles for the development and transformation of the Constitutional Court buildings in Johannesburg. In other words, the designer was tasked with designing a typeface for a site he had never visited, a building still under construction and whose complex and sensitive history he was unfamiliar with while living 560 kilometres away. Given the

challenges facing the designer, E1 poses a critical question: "Why didn't the Judges make things easy and just use Helvetica Condensed?" Given how much easier it would be for the client and the designer, why do clients not ask for Helvetica, Helvetica Condensed or Times New Roman? Can design reveal a place's cultural identity? Does culture influence typography? Can a typeface embody the core values underlying the transformation of a space? Why should a designer go to the trouble of creating a unique typeface design that represents a specific space? In the context of this study's focus, and in the case of the Constitutional Court typeface, it is crucial to interrogate why the clients, the Constitutional Court Judges, in this case, requested the design of a "unique" typeface and, by extension, a distinctive design that embodies the fundamental values underpinning the complex national democratic transformation. The brief specified that the design needed to be contextual and sensitive to the site's history (Sauthoff, 2006: 5).

According to Cambell (2009: 39), all typography, when viewed in a critical light, engages culture and history to greater or lesser extents. E1 understood the significance of the Constitutional Court brief and the importance of creating a language that captured the history of the prison and represented South Africa's transformation to democracy. In response to the client's request for a custom-designed typeface sensitive to the nation's history, E1 travelled to Johannesburg to understand and experience the site's context and history first-hand. While visiting the site, E1 studied the archival material, including investigating the spaces for historical signage, the prison officers' and wardens' handwriting and forms, and graffiti that prisoners had scratched into the prison walls. Before proceeding to develop the design, E1 thoroughly researched and documented what he observed at the site. Then E1 had to analyse all the researched information before he proceeded to select specific letterforms from which he could construct the visual vocabulary.

Depending on the brief's specifications and requirements, the designer should examine relevant archives and documents and interview applicable stakeholders and persons knowledgeable of the sociocultural context to gain relevant insights applicable to the research and brief. The built structure retained a sense of history in the rooms, and every "apartheid-era" letterform tells the story of the history scratched into the prison walls. Ellen Shapiro (2011) comments that E1 described,

wandering around three abandoned apartheid prisons on the site where the court was to be built and photographing all kinds of lettering: crude notice boards, "whites only" signs, and graffiti etched into the dirt walls of cell blocks where political prisoners had been held. "I had lettering from both the captives and their captors" (Shapiro, 2011).

E1 designed a unique typeface for the Constitutional Court by selecting historically significant letterforms from the documented found prison letters and incorporated them into a custom-designed typeface (Willemse, 2014: 71). The unique letters that would become the Court typeface originated within the prison complex. The typeface was created by combining the stylistic and connotative characteristics of the various letterforms found at the site. By using letters found at the site, the design represents the site's complex and sensitive history. The historical significance of the found letterforms documented within the old prison complex were transformed into a re-imagined typeface-design applicable for the use at the newly built Constitutional Court building. As it became known, the 'Face of the Nation' typeface speaks for the entire nation, as those imprisoned in South Africa's past will be remembered and upheld by the Constitutional Court's values and structures. E1 approached the development of the typeface with deliberation and intention and "[u]tmost respect for the site and its history. A 'democratic' front based on the typography of the 'Hill'" (Willemse, 2014: 72). The approach of the expert designer challenges the South African graphic design industry to include more diverse voices and cultural histories.

Figure 6.1: The "Faces of the Nation" typeface in South Africa's 11 official languages.
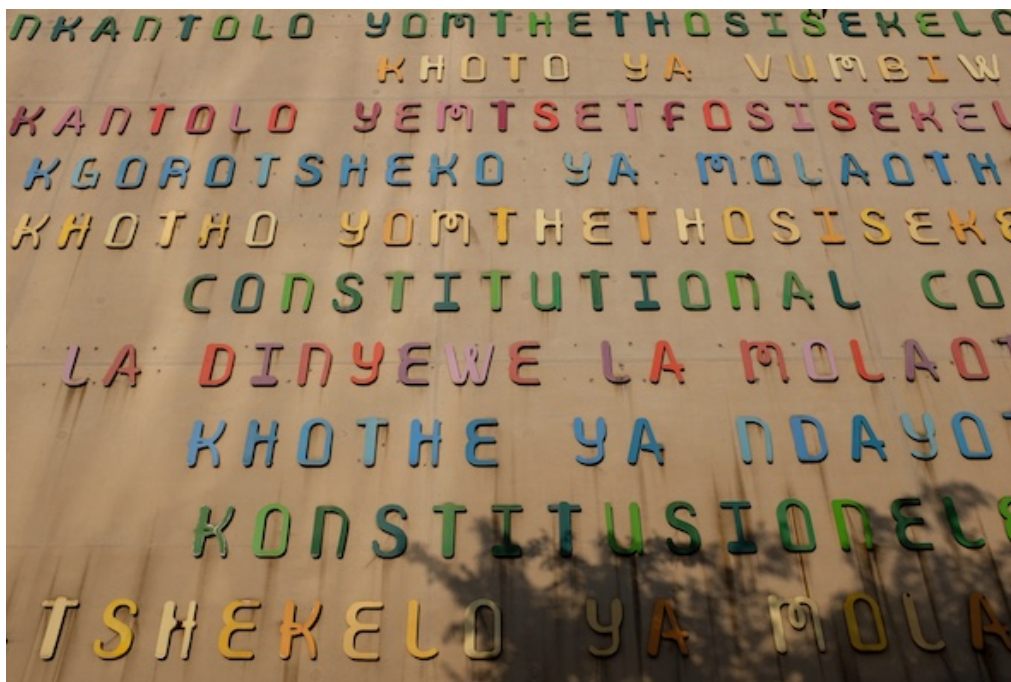
Figure 6.2: The words "Constitutional Court" are written in all 11 official languages.

At the entrance of the Court building (Figure 6.1), the distinct 'Faces of the Nation' typeface announces the Constitutional Court's name in all of South Africa's 11 official languages. South Africa's Constitution recognises 11 separate official languages equally. While certain

languages may be more commonly spoken in South Africa, the Constitution does not strive to create a single uniform language.

The unique typeface interpretation reflects the spirit of the new democratic South Africa as a multilingual country. According to Albie Sachs (1994: page), "The language question is a question of communication, but it is also a matter of identity on the one hand, and of empowerment and disempowerment on the other. In keeping with equality, reconciliation and nation-building principles, the new language dispensation has to promote the idea of achieving equal status between all languages." Juxtaposed to the celebration of the 11 official languages, it is important to interrogate why designers feel the need to create a unified visual language representative of all South Africans when the local population's sociocultural backgrounds are so diverse.

Table 5.1: E1's approach and design process

	Expert designer's approach and design process:
1	• did not rely solely on his knowledge, skills, and experience
2	• recognised the need to visit the site and the historical context, which was unfamiliar to him.
3	• conducted on-site primary research to draw from references within the site complex.
4	• became acquainted with the buildings' historical context and significance in South African history.
5	• searched for relevant "apartheid era" letterforms in the prison complex buildings that preserved a sense of history.
6	• relied on the archivist's knowledge and expertise regarding archival documents and photographs.
7	• recorded the found-letterform references he discovered at the site.
8	• selected specific letters that held significant meaning for the site.
9	• experimentation and development of characteristics of each letter, referenced from selected letterforms
10	• digital crafting and refining of letters
11	• final crafting of the "stencil" typeface design
12	• application of custom-designed typeface to the Constitutional Court's interior and exterior signage

5.3.10. Sites of Conscience

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a worldwide network of places dedicated to remembering sites of past struggles for justice and addressing their present-day legacies. *"Sites of Conscience,"* like Constitution Hill in South Africa, promote public discourse on social justice issues to establish long-lasting cultures of human rights" (Pharaon, Wagner, Lau & Caballero, 2015: 61). In The Public Historian, Sarah Pharaon and her co-authors (2015: 62) describe a site like the Constitution Hill as favouring the use of spaces and historical narratives that might be classified as a "safe container for 'dangerous memories'." They describe it as a place "addressing their contemporary legacies while allowing for the remembrance of past struggles for justice" (Pharaon et al., 2015: 61). Above all, these spaces serve the primary purpose of giving communities a secure setting to discuss critical social issues. They actively aid in emulating democratic ideals by fostering the notion that civic discourse on contentious issues is crucial to advancing democracy.

At the opening ceremony on 14 February 1995, Former President Nelson Mandela proclaimed,

> *The last time I appeared in court was to hear whether or not I was going*
> *to be sentenced to death. Fortunately for myself and my colleagues we*
> *were not. Today I rise not as an accused but, on behalf of the people of*
> *South Africa, to inaugurate a court South Africa has never had, a court*
> *on which hinges the future of our democracy (Mandela, 1995).*

The decision by the Court Judges to develop the new Constitutional Court building on the site of the Old Fort complex served as a powerful symbol of the nation's transformation to democracy. All 11 members of the Constitutional Court actively participated in the selection of this location, which set the tone for the project and served as a symbol of the Judges' desire to build a just future out of the memory of oppression. This "vision is reinforced" by Mandela's (1999) words in his address at the special debate on the "Report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town, 25 February 1999."

> *We recall our terrible past so that we can deal with it, to forgive where*
> *forgiveness is necessary, without forgetting; to ensure that never again*
> *will such inhumanity tear us apart; and to move ourselves to eradicate*

a legacy that lurks dangerously as a threat to our democracy (Mandela,
1999).

The Constitution Hill complex is intended to be a vibrant urban space, in contrast to the authoritarian and imposing views adopted by other high-profile public buildings during the colonial and subsequent apartheid eras. By doing so, the Constitution Hill complex radically breaks away from a historical aesthetic that demonstrates the power of the colonial nation-state or of the bureaucratic apartheid-state. Democratic values have been integrated on multiple levels, representative of the openness and accessibility of the Constitutional Court. The Court environment, consisting of a group of public spaces, facilitates a diverse variety of conversations that introduce a new judicial system. The themes of transformation, forgiveness, and reconciliation pervade the space as a permanent reminder of the values that aided the transition following the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of democracy. Dismantling systemic injustices evolved from a national effort to heal internal and external wounds to transforming the physical space and context in which all South Africans live.

The reimagining of the historic site was opened to all persons and institutions locally and internationally, regardless of whether they were registered architects or professional graphic designers. At the ceremony to announce the competition's winner, Former President Nelson Mandela "reinforced the space's foundational ethos and social justice ideals."

The Constitutional Court building, indeed, the entire Constitutional
Hill precinct, will also stand as a beacon of light, a symbol of hope and
celebration. Transforming a notorious icon of repression into its
opposite, it will ease the memories of suffering inflicted in the dark
corners, cells and corridors of the Old Fort Prison. Rising from the
ashes of that ghastly era, it will shine forth as a pledge for all time that
South Africa will never return to that abyss. It will stand as an
affirmation that South Africa is indeed a better place for all (Mandela,
1998).

5.3.11. Visual representation in South African graphic design

The fact that groups of people reflect different cultural traditions and economic and social backgrounds should challenge the myth of the universality of human experience and the social relationships, cultures and values that emerge from it. The fact that the "myth" of a "South African rainbow nation" has not held, speaks to the complexity of diverse languages and sociocultural demographics which must be acknowledged (Hino, et al., 2018). In a powerful, reciprocal manner, an intercultural communication process designed to facilitate a positive approach to globalisation would cultivate sensitivity and care among individuals. Culture shapes a person's perception of the world (Barnwell, 2021:9).

This study critically examined the limitations of communication design as currently taught and practised. The study argues that cultural identity is fluid, inconstant, variable and unpredictable and has to be repeatedly reconstructed instead of a uniform, nationalist concept of identity. Graphic designers following a universal Euro-Western culture fail to consider the wider diversity of cultural identities within South Africa's local communities. An in-depth and insightful understanding of the authentic variances of culture is a primary requirement within the discipline; designers need to discard the simplistic and stereotypical view of culture as only nationality and ethnicity. Against this background, it is critical for contemporary graphic design practice to advance beyond the modernist assumption that design is universal and instead explore relevant local visual languages that communicate directly to a particular audience. Understanding local cultural identities can promote equality and respect for others determining the success or failure of communication. This requires graphic designers to alter their design process to create more culturally appropriate and visually effective communications (McMullen, 2015:21).

In every culture, symbols have meanings that structure and shape how people in that culture see the world. It is hard enough to understand how anthropological, sociological, historical and cultural forces interact with each other. In multicultural communication and intercultural dialogue, this is exponentially more problematic. The modernist approach to communication design does not support intercultural communication because it disregards globalisation's culture-destructive forces, which infiltrate and eradicate indigenous languages, eliminate customs and ceremonies, and alter indigenous cultural values, social relationships and forms of expression.

5.4. Case Study 2: second-year graphic design students

5.4.1. Background information on second-year graphic design students' project (S1 & S2)

This student case study was chosen because it addressed the research question of whether cultural knowledge should be a requirement for graphic designers working in post-apartheid South Africa's diverse society. The observations, reflections and insights from this case study in 2021 were pivotal to the transformation of my practice as a lecturer and researcher. The student case study involved two student participants from a class of twenty-five students. Data collection included in-class observations, class discussions, semi-structured questions, and the students' self-reflections during and on their process. The students were observed during practical classes, student class presentations, consultations and critique sessions. The duration of the event was a four-week period. As the supervising and second-year lecturer, I observed the participants throughout the event. There was a support lecturer participating in class throughout the event. The observations and insights from the 2021 event informed the revisions to the event brief for the following year, in 2022.

5.4.2. The design brief: second-year graphic design project

In 2021, I was the lecturer supervising 25 second-year graphic design students. The students were tasked with developing a visual identity system for one museum selected from a list of different museums. The brief required the students to conduct research on the specific museum of their choice to gain an understanding of the background and purpose of the museum. The research needed to be relevant to the design of a visual identity system for the selected museum. Their research must help shape the intended communication goal, which must be appropriate for the target audience.

The secondary research would inform the development of the visual identity system. The secondary research included online visual imagery, photographs, reviews, articles and documents. The students were required to research and develop a new visual identity system for one of the museums listed in the brief. The deliverables included designing a brand identity guide, a logo with custom-designed lettering, a business card, an information guide, and a map.

5.4.3. The design process: researching the site's context and history

From a class of 25 graphic design students, only two students selected the Museum of Man and Science situated in Johannesburg's central business district. While not technically a museum in the Euro-Western context, the traditional medicine shop has been in operation for more than 60 years and stocks over 1900 indigenous medicines prescribed by *inyangas* or traditional healers. The Museum offers insights into the traditional customs of indigenous African cultures that were oppressed by colonialism and the previous Nationalist government in South Africa. Due to the students' geographical location in a different region of the country, they were unable to visit the physical space in Johannesburg as a component of their research. The students' main source of information and knowledge was limited to secondary resources such as a few online articles with museum photographs. Both students had access to the same online information and photographic material.

During the Museum brief, the 25 students were required to present their research and findings to their lecturers and the class. It was apparent when S1 presented his research about the inyanga or sangoma, the "King of Muti" that this traditional indigenous information was not promoted online about the Museum space. As the lecturer overseeing S2, I realised that I had missed this critical information, along with the student S2, partly because we both came from different cultural backgrounds to S1.

Figure 5.23: The Museum of Man and Science

5.4.4. Student 1 (S1): observations and documentation of S1's project

Being from the Xhosa culture, S1 immediately recognised the cultural significance of the "King of Muti," an *inyanga*, an *isangoma*, or traditional healer, referenced on the external signage in the photograph (Figure 5.23). For primary research, S1 was able to interview a family relative who practices as an *isangoma*. S1 centred on the museum as an educational environment where visitors could learn about and participate in the isangoma's indigenous healing and divination practices.

According to S1's research and cultural knowledge, the proprietor will take the person to the *isangoma*, in the back room when a visitor requests a diagnosis. The *isangoma* is in a back room that is divided from the store's front by a curtain. The *isangoma* will roll the *amathambo* (bones) for the visitor. 'Bone throwing' is a traditional spiritual technique used by an *isangoma* to consult with their ancestors. The bones – from goats, sheep and cows – represent the only physical evidence left behind by those who have crossed over: the person's ancestors, family members and other significant people. In addition, stones, shells, dominoes, dice and coins are included. The dominoes and dice' numbers and colours represent life's different phases. By 'throwing the bones,' the *isangoma*, uses these tools to diagnose patients and devise treatment plans under the guidance of their *izinyanya* (the ancestors). Based on the positions in which the bones land, the *isangoma* will be able to point towards a remedy in the store to treat the problem.

S1 used his indigenous knowledge to handcraft his typography using objects representing *amathambo*. For his process, S1 threw the objects, looking for the letterforms created by the objects, which he photographed to form the letters to create the custom-designed typeface for the word 'Museum'. These custom-designed letters formed the unique logotype for the Museum.

Figure 5.24: Student 1: letterforms constructed from objects representing *amathambo* (bones)

Figure 5.25: Student 1: a black and white digital vector of the custom-designed typeface

The student S1 selected a turquoise colour palette to represent the balance between the *isangoma*, *izinyanya* (the ancestors) and patient. The colour was inspired by the organic freshness of *umuthi;* for its representation of spiritual purity, calm and cleansing. The word *muti* is derived from the Zulu /Xhosa word *umuthi*, meaning "tree," whose root is -thi. In South Africa, *muti* is commonly used as a slang word for medicine in general

Figure 5.26: Student 1: blue-green colour palette

Figure 5.27: Student 1: final colour logo

5.4.5. Interview with the student (S1)

I re-interviewed S1 the following year, at the end of his third year of study in graphic design. I was interested in whether he felt he had gained new insights into designing for a culture other than his own and if he would approach the second-year museum project differently.

At the beginning of the second year, I did not have much knowledge when it came to designing for a culture unfamiliar to me, and in reference to the museum project, my research was not as extensive, and I also held on to the fact that I knew quite a bit about the culture, not considering the fact that what I knew was not necessarily relevant or even the right information to be put out there. And I could see the growth in my third-year project, where I had to design an editorial for a Chinese artist; my approach to the project was way more different. The research was extensive, the consideration of colours, the medium on which the editorial was printed, and the use of Chinese lettering were all research-driven, and I believe that was what made the project strong and relevant. (Interview with E1, 2022)

Since South Africa is a multicultural country, S1 believes graphic designers will encounter challenges when briefs demand consideration of unfamiliar cultures. Cultural understanding enforces graphic designers to be sensitive, erase what they know about a particular culture and trust in the magic of research, particularly primary research, and finally, be empathetic. An example of this is a project I worked on in my second year, which required me to design a visual identity for a museum of South African traditional healer (isangoma).

In reference to the museum project, my research was not as extensive, and I also held on to the fact that I knew quite a bit about the culture, not considering the fact that what I knew was not necessarily relevant or even the right information to be put out there. Because I was familiar with the culture but not necessarily a part of that culture, I had to erase what I knew about the culture and strictly rely on research, and primary research, as I didn't want to be culturally insensitive or come out as problematic. I could see the growth in my third-year project, where I had to design an editorial for a Chinese artist; my approach to the project was way more different. The research was extensive, the consideration of colours, the medium on which the editorial was printed, and the use of Chinese lettering were all research-driven, and I believe that was what made the project strong and relevant. (Interview with E1, 2022).

S1 spoke on whether he thinks there is a difference in the design approach and process when designing for a familiar culture versus an unfamiliar culture.

Designing for a familiar culture doesn't necessarily require a very extensive amount of research compared to when designing for an unfamiliar culture. It does not just end with research when designing for an unfamiliar culture, as you have to be empathetic to make sure

that everything is appropriate because, as already mentioned above, you don't want the designs to be problematic. Even with research, you have to make sure that the information you get is valid (Interview with E1, 2022).

And S1 gave his opinion regarding the role that empathy and ethics play in his design approach.

Empathy and ethics together humble me in my design practice and I have seen that in my third-year Human-Centred Design project, where we had to design a visual identity for food vendors in Kayamandi. In as much as I was familiar with the culture, I still had to be humble, which allowed me to learn more things about the culture that I didn't necessarily know before. Empathy also just helped me to better communicate and understand the women as I had to put myself in their shoes (Interview with E1, 2022).

5.4.6.   Student 2 (S2): observations and documentation of S2's project

As a result of the neglect of online articles to mention *isangoma* or "King of Muti," S2 missed this critical information. S2 was unfamiliar with traditional and indigenous African customs because she was from a white Afrikaans culture. As the lecturer overseeing S2's process and coming from a white South African English culture, I also missed the critical information about the "King of Muti." S2 focused her research and concept on the photograph of the interior of the Museum (Figure 5.28) as an educational and exhibition space displaying the rows of different indigenous herbs.

Figure 5.28: Student 2: Reference image of interior of the Museum of Man and Science

S2's practical development of her concept was well-considered. The letterforms were handmade and were inspired by traditional printmaking. All the materials used to create the custom-designed typeface were naturally sourced from vegetation associated with traditional indigenous herbal and homoeopathic remedies. The paint was made from starch, water, plant materials and spices, like beetroot (maroon), blueberries (blue-black), turmeric (yellow), rooibos tea (light brown) and paprika (copper-brown). The stamps were cut from potatoes. The colour palette was a mix of earthy colours, typical of Africa's vegetation and representative of herbal remedies.

Figure 5.29: Student 2: process work s paint made from natural products and potato stamps

Figure 5.30: Student 2: final hand-printed typeface and black and white digitised typeface
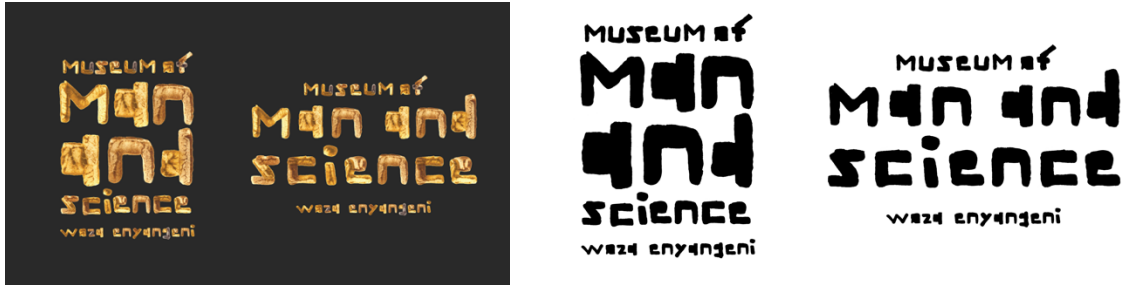
Figure 5.31: Student 2: final colour logo and black and white logo

5.4.7.　Interview with the student (S2)

At the end of their second year (2021), I asked the graphic design students to reflect back on the year: what they had learnt and what stood out for them. S2 highlighted the skills and knowledge learnt in the human-centred design projects:

The most valuable lesson I learned this year, without a doubt, is how to use research to inform your insights and design. It is a skill that I didn't realise the worth and power of before this year, and it is something that I will utilise in all future projects. Being exposed to human-centred design (HCD) changed my approach to every single project this year. I loved thinking about human-centred design throughout my projects and value how much depth and character it adds to any project. HCD has become the most important and critical part of the design process for me. I do not see myself going into a field that does not heavily focus on HCD, and I would love to learn as much about it as I can and challenge myself to really focus on this in new and innovative ways next year. The most significant part of the HCD process for me is that the design almost comes alive and speaks to the target audience in a much different, more tangible, and direct way to (Interview with S2, 2022).

The following year (2022), at the end of their third year in graphic design, I asked S2 if she would approach her second-year museum project differently. I was interested to know if she felt she had gained new perspectives on designing for a culture different from her own. S2 responded as follows:

I think this is one of the most valuable lessons I have learned during my studies. When looking at the project I did at the beginning of the second year, designing for an unfamiliar culture,

and then at the end of the third year, my approach completely shifted. The most important lesson I've learned is that you will only ever fully understand your point of view. And you will rarely design something with only yourself as the target audience. I have learned to approach each project, or at least try my best to approach each project, with the knowledge that I won't be able to understand the target audience without engaging with them. And at the very best, most culturally intuitive projects are created through collaboration. It enables the designers to create clear messaging in a visual language the recipients will understand and relate to (Interview with S2, 2022).

S2 spoke of the importance of cultural understanding for graphic designers practising in South Africa.

If you think about the work of graphic designers as 'Visual Communication', you will start to understand the importance and complexity of the Visual Language they use to communicate concepts visually. To design with a visual language that can be understood by the often diverse and heterogeneous target audience in South Africa, you need to have a cultural understanding of whomever you are intending to reach and 'speak to' with your design. A cultural understanding enables graphic designers to do work that is relevant, intentional and personal (Interview with S2, 2022).

In terms of whether there is a difference in the design approach and process followed when designing for a familiar culture versus an unfamiliar culture, S2 responded definitely.

Yes, absolutely. The most important difference lies in the way a designer needs to approach their research. A big part of doing research for a design project is learning the language of the person or people for whom you are designing. When designing for a familiar culture, you often know and understand the language well. Although there might be a couple of specific 'words' you need to iron out before starting to design, the approach is much more intuitive and inherently unbiased. You have a naturally deep understanding of the nuances of the target audience's cultural contexts. More than learning completely new information and applying it to your design, your research helps you confirm and highlight important facts (Interview with S2, 2022).

On the other hand, secondary research is often not sufficient when designing for an unfamiliar culture. Learning, understanding, and applying this unfamiliar 'language' without making assumptions is almost impossible without collaboration. This became evident to me during a group project at the end of my third year. We were tasked to design a visual identity for an isiXhosa food vendor from Kayamandi. Our group consisted of four members, one of whom was an isiXhosa male who lives in Kayamandi. It was incredibly insightful and eye-opening to experience the process of designing for an unfamiliar culture with a group member who is incredibly familiar with the culture. The insights he would bring to the table were always incredibly specific and nuanced. Although we were intent on not making assumptive design choices, he would often point out things we misinterpreted, misunderstood, or neglected to take into account (Interview with S2, 2022).

Concerning the significance of empathy and ethics in her design philosophy, S2's gave her view.

Designing with empathy requires me to approach each project with humility, curiosity, and the willingness to identify my lack of understanding and knowledge. I start my design process by acknowledging how little I know about the people I am designing for. The second step in my process is to identify how I can bridge that gap in my knowledge in order to use a visual language that the target audience will relate to and feel understood. Sometimes this involves having conversations with people who have the cultural knowledge I lack; other times, it requires collaboration and integration with someone from the target audience and cultural background (Interview with S2, 2022).

When asked whether cultural design knowledge (CDK) should be a requirement for graphic design students to understand the cultural context in South Africa, S2 responded with certainty.

Absolutely. Just like the many different languages and countless dialects spoken in South Africa, there are countless cultural contexts and understandings that need to be taken into account to speak in the target audience's visual mother tongue. Without CDK, you run the risk of making harmful assumptions that could result in disrespectful and tasteless design choices. Even with CDK, you are never assured to be 100% culturally sensitive and specific. But it does open up the possibility of creating intentional design with clear messaging. In my opinion, collaborative designs that are in touch with the culture it is speaking to are much more

interesting and engaging than homogenous designs. South Africa's rich and vibrant culture should be embraced with all its many nuances. Although this is a near-impossible feat, even attempting to have thorough cultural design knowledge before, during and after the design process will result in much more interesting and appropriate work (Interview with S2, 2022).

5.4.8.   Support lecturer (L1): observations, questions and insights

I taught a second-year graphic design class with the assistance of a support lecturer. In 2021, there were 25 students, and in 2022, there were 30 students. The co-lecturer is referred to as L1. In addition to supervising Visual Studies tutorials for second and third-year classes, the co-lecturer has industry experience as a graphic designer and curator. L1's observations in class with second-year graphic design students aided the research inquiry into whether graphic design students need cultural knowledge and experience to prepare them for working in South Africa's diverse markets.

In discussion with L1 throughout the museum project, and with particular reference to the different approaches of the two students, L1 stated that "it was valuable to see how working with S1 informed S2's approach and understanding. S2's insights would have been more interesting if she could have visited the museum and gained more perspective from different viewpoints." L1 believes that it is important that students gain an understanding of the complexities of cultural representation in the graphic design curriculum to teach students the value of cultural collaboration. In a multicultural society such as South Africa, it is nearly impossible to espouse a deep understanding of all cultures in South Africa. Simultaneously, graphic designers are expected to create effective visual communication for various audiences who are often vastly different from themselves. Therefore, the willingness to research, observe and explore various cultures in service of visual communication and the intended audience is imperative.

L1 acknowledges that the introduction to critical theory and postcolonial studies provides graphic design students with a solid foundation for becoming more effective communication design practitioners in multicultural communities in South Africa. However, this should be combined with practical opportunities to explore and collaborate with various cultures. The involvement of the support lecturer in Visual Studies theory enriched the cross-disciplinary education of the graphic design students. As a practical design lecturer, I observed how the

involvement of the support lecturer in Visual Studies theory contributed to the cross-disciplinary learning and education of graphic design students. On the question of whether a student's cultural background influences their designs, L1 believes that it may or may not, that it depends on the student and the point of reference. In this regard, L1 adds that primary research is particularly important as it offers students the opportunity to gain insight into the space and information as a visitor, users and observers.

5.4.9. Modifications to the design brief: based on observations and insights

Based on the insights gained in 2021, I revised the Museum brief for the 2022 second-year graphic design students in discussion and consultation with the support lecturer. The students were tasked with creating a visual identity system for a local South African museum. I recognised the critical need for the students to visit the museum spaces and environs to experience and learn about the cultural context and the distinct lived experiences first-hand. For the project, I settled on three museums in Cape Town: the District 6 Museum, the Isiko Slave Lodge and the Isiko Bo-Kaap Museum. Each museum has its own distinct cultural history and narrative. The 30 second-year graphic design students, divided into three groups of 10, were assigned to a museum. As part of the project, the students were required to observe, interview and document the museum space and surroundings. According to L1, modifying the 2022 museum brief to allow students to visit the museum context "made it easier for students to work with a space that they could visit, engage with, understand and relate to" (Lecturer interview in 2022).

A further modification to the 2022 brief was the decision to invite the Visual Studies lecturer to lead a discussion with the students after the museum visit. The graphic design project coincided with the second-year Visual Studies learning unit on the connections between postcolonialism, visual culture and power. The students were challenged to think critically about the relationships between important historical events (colonialism and postcolonialism) and the production, analysis and critique of contemporary visual culture. They were expected to critically engage with historical and contemporary visual culture from the South and its connections to power and identity. Additionally, students needed to value multicultural perspectives because they would inform their ethical and social responsibilities in the production of visual communication.

For a design brief, like a museum brief, L1 believes that a multidisciplinary approach is invaluable for student learning. She believes it was beneficial to invite a lecturer from another discipline, such as Visual Studies theory, to discuss cultural context and space with students because it not only bridges subjects but provides additional perspectives and insights. She adds that students are growing wary of exploring and representing cultures other than their own as a result of the rise of cancel culture, polarisation and a broader understanding of cultural appropriation. As South African designers, students will need to represent or target different cultures in the industry at some point. As a result, it is critical to equip students to collaborate and represent different cultures ethically and to encourage cultural collaboration and exchange.

The insights gained by the (2022) 30 students visiting the three different museums were documented in their written reflections in their visual journals throughout the research and design process of the project. Written reflections are a requirement of each student's projects. The written reflections of the 30 students were applied to Voyant.ai to generate a keyword word cloud (Figure 5.32) indicating the key terms used by the students. The terms were collected from 7,308 total words and 1,396 unique word forms. The top keyword terms used by the students included district, people, museum, visual, slaves, different, Noor, slave, research, identity, concept, community and apartheid.

Figure 5.32: A Word Cloud indicating the keyword terms used by the 2022 second-year students in their research and design process reflections for the Museum brief (generated by Voyant.ai, 2022)

Figure 5.33: Linked Keyword Usage assigned to the 2022 second-year students' reflections throughout the Museum brief (generated by Voyant.ai, 2022)


Figure 5.34: Linked Keyword Usage assigned to the 2022 second-year students' reflections throughout the Museum brief (generated by Voyant.ai, 2022)

5.4.10. Analysis and reflections on the case study with the student project

One of the insightful moments came during S1's research presentation to the class, when he shared the significance of the traditional practice of the *inyanga* or *sangoma*, the "King of Muti," in the context of the space. The only reference to the "King of Muti" was a photograph of the front entrance signage (Figure 5.23). The online articles did not promote this traditional knowledge and indigenous custom about the Museum of Man and Science. It was apparent that both the student (S2) and the lecturer (myself) had overlooked this crucial indigenous knowledge because we both came from different cultural backgrounds.

After the students presented their research, S2 approached S1; it was valuable to see how S1's inside knowledge informed the collaboration and peer-to-peer learning that occurred thereafter between the two students. It became clear that this "inside" cultural knowledge about the central role of the *inyanga* religion and practice in the Museum space was not apparent to me, the lecturer supervising S2, or the student S2. While student S2's research, gathered from online resources, was not wrong as she drew from the information on "herbal and homoeopathic remedies," it was apparent that her understanding of the traditional African culture in this context and space was limited. Both S2 and I did not connect the cultural meaning of the language on the external signage outside the entrance, "The King of Muti," to the traditional practice of an *inyanga* inside the space.

I agreed with the support lecturer that it would have been more valuable for the students to have visited the museum to gain a deeper understanding of the historical and contextual background of the space. Understanding the culture and the target audience will result in more appropriate aesthetic decisions. S1 was also able to relate more directly to the cultural context because of its familiarity, whereas S2 was unfamiliar with it and had to rely heavily on secondary information from the internet throughout the project, otherwise known as information-driven design. As a consequence, students often make less informed and uncertain decisions during the design process. This can result in students unconsciously substituting their personal perceptions and influences for a thorough knowledge of an unfamiliar culture.

It was interesting for me to see the transformation of the students and the realisation that their frame of reference requires shifting to accommodate different modes of visual perception. By becoming aware of their cultural preferences and biases, students will be better equipped to

engage with increased sensitivity and empathy toward diversity and different cultural contexts. Only then will designers be culturally sensitive and willing to alter their designs accordingly. S2's reflection in 2022 on whether she would approach the project differently at the end of the third year was insightful. S2 believed that the most valuable lessons she learned during her studies was her approach that completely shifted to designing for an unfamiliar culture. She was able to apply her new-found awareness, knowledge and growth to her 3-year projects. She learnt new ways of approaching projects especially when she did not understand her target audience. She stated that collaboration with stakeholders and members of the community who could inform her was very important.

Chilisa (2020) contends people can no longer disregard how cultural values influence their work and they are required to research cultural contexts to gain deeper insights, certain agreed principles and a growing understanding of its components. Intercultural competence, according to Fantini (2000: 27), requires the ability to build and maintain relationships with community stakeholders; the ability to communicate adequately and appropriately with minimal error or misrepresentation; and the ability to develop conformity and acquire collaboration with others.

5.4.11.   Analysis and reflections on the case study with the support lecturer

I co-taught the second-year graphic design class with the support of another graphic design lecturer. The co-lecturer is referred to as L1. The support lecture's in-class engagement and observations with the second-year graphic design students were valuable for the examination of whether cultural knowledge should be a requirement for graphic design students in preparation for working within heterogeneous South African markets.

During this project, the student (S1) shared his cultural knowledge with the co-lecturer. Furthermore, student S1 was able to have a discussion with a family relative who is an *inyanga* about her religion. He understood that an *inyanga* would be present in the space, in a room behind a curtain, not visible to the visitor walking in. This cultural understanding and insight led to the development of a custom-designed typeface and visual identity system that was contextual to the traditional African religion, culture and space.

For the museum brief, all the students were required to present their research and findings to the class. It was apparent when S1 spoke about the *inyanga* or *sangoma*, the "King of Muti,"

during the presentation of his research, that this particular information and insight was not promoted in the Museum-space online. As the lecturer overseeing S2, I realised that I had missed this critical information, along with student S2, partly because we both came from different cultural backgrounds than S1.

With S1's process and insight into his culture, I realised the significance and critical importance of graphic design student exposure to local and indigenous cultural knowledge when designing for an audience or client who originates from a cultural context different from their own. Clearly, online research and photographic imagery were not enough to inform students about the cultural context. With Hofstede's (2003: 1) theory that "cultural values exert an influential role on almost all aspects of human life," it can be concluded that graphic design, a component of human life, is similarly influenced by culture. With the understanding that culture is embedded in language (Hall, 1976; wa Thionga, 1986), it is apparent that designers require a deeper understanding of culture and how to design with and for different cultures. It was clear that design students and professionals cannot effectively represent another culture when they do not have inside knowledge of the culture for which they are designing.

S2 focused on the "Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies," missing this critical information presented on the signage above the entrance, "The King of Muti," and the cultural significance of the space. It can be contended that S2 focused on an aspect of the Museum's offerings, the indigenous herbal remedies, and S1 focused on a different aspect, the *inyanga* and religious practices. However, I would argue that the direction selected by S2 was based on a partial and not holistic understanding of the indigenous cultural customs offered within the space.

5.5.   Case Study 3: professional graphic designer (P1)

5.5.1.   Background information on the professional graphic designer (P1)

I included the perspective of the professional graphic designer (hereafter also referred to as P1) to gain her insights on the importance of cultural understanding for graphic designers in South Africa. Classified as coloured, she prefers being called a 'person of colour' (PoC) or 'mixed race'. She is bilingual in Afrikaans and English. P1 completed a BA in Visual Communication Design, majoring in Graphic Design and an Honours in Visual Communication Design.

5.5.2. The significance of culture in graphic design

According to P1, cultural sensitivity is essential for graphic designers in South Africa. Creating spaces for understanding and collaboration among different cultural groups is a major challenge for multicultural societies. P1 believes that when designing for people from different cultural backgrounds, we can constantly improve and choose collaboration. Concerning whether young designers are adequately prepared to design for different cultural communities, P1 explains that she could only speak for herself and that she feels prepared as a young designer. However, co-creation and collaboration are skills P1 believes she was not fully prepared for. She believes this process is fluid and will always change depending on the specific project. In her view, her lived experience and education have equipped her with the necessary toolkit to think and investigate critically, especially when it comes to designing for those with different backgrounds. Visual communicators must critique the colonial and apartheid mindset of prejudice and harmful preconceptions which persist in the South African context today. The perpetuation of racism and oppression of Black people and people of colour must stop the perpetuation of colonial and apartheid power legacies and imperial histories that still exist today. This sentence does not make sense. Decisions that benefited the dominant white power in South Africa have come at the expense of the Black South African populace.

On whether her cultural background influences her practice as a graphic designer in South Africa, P1 believes that because of the precarity of PoC people in South Africa, she is extremely cautious of how she designs, especially for those whom society has wronged in the past or continues to wrong.

> *I try to be extremely cautious of stereotypes because I feel Afrikaner*
> *Nationalism propaganda greatly focused on stereotypes of PoC and*
> *Black people. I also think being a part of a minority group, that does*
> *not have the kind of financial means of white South Africans, makes me*
> *aware of the relationship between ideas of race and financial means.*

Despite advances in the graphic design industry over the last five to 10 years, P1 claims that not enough has changed to represent South Africa's cultural diversity adequately. As a result, she believes that forming diverse teams is the most effective way to design for diverse

communities. On her 11-person design team, P1 is the only person of colour. White South Africans hold two of the three leadership positions, six of the 11 team members are white, and again, P1 is the only person of colour. Meanwhile, the population of South Africa is 80% Black, 9% coloured (PoC), 8% white, and 3% Indian. In P1's opinion, the design sector is responsible for representing South Africa's diversity visually and within its work teams. P1 added that she had only ever worked in non-profit organisations and that, in her experience, designers adapt quite well to diverse cultural contexts. However, she believes this is due to the collaborative and non-competitive nature of her work. She was unsure of the extent to which graphic designers in the commercial sector had adapted their design processes sufficiently to meet the needs of culturally diverse audiences.

5.5.3. The design brief: MenConnect

P1 was involved in the development of promotional material and posters to promote 'MenConnect' at the taxi rank. MenConnect is the development of a specifically targeted, insights based and researched WhatsApp chat that speaks directly to men on HIV care and treatment specifically. Research reveals that men want a personalised service, which WhatsApp enables. MenConnect, powered by MINA, restructures men's relationship with HIV. Men, in particular, face difficulties accepting their HIV status and may face several social and behavioural challenges. Men may not see themselves in the healthcare setting, believing that clinics are only for women and children. The insights show that men may have had negative experiences in the clinic that drove them away.
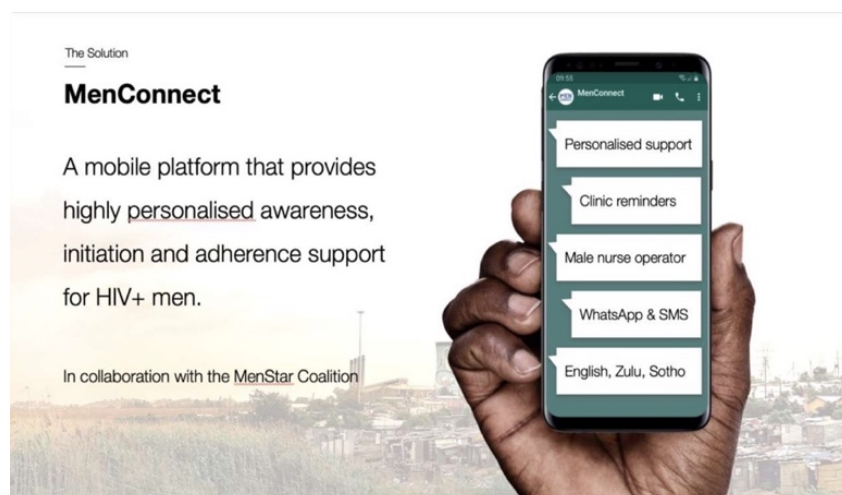
Figure 5.35: MenConnect is mobile platform service that supports men living with HIV

A mobile platform is an innovative approach to empowering and supporting HIV-positive South African men with their treatment by engaging them through their phones with WhatsApp or SMS. The primary goal is to improve men's HIV treatment experiences and understanding. The emphasis is on HIV awareness, testing, treatment initiation and follow-up among men living with HIV. Users receive messages that are personalised for their psychographic traits, showing that South Africa has made significant progress in HIV testing, treatment and lifelong care for people living with the virus.
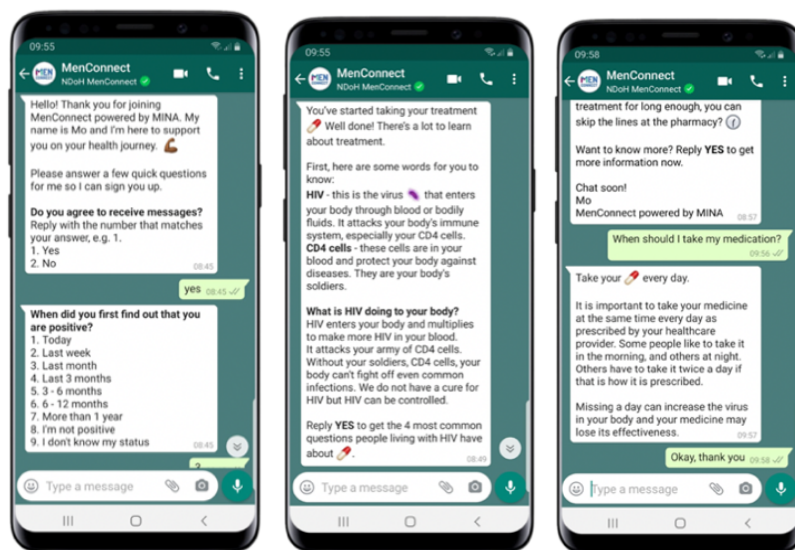
Figure 5.36: MenConnect is a personalised WhatsApp chat service that speaks directly to men

Before beginning any design process, P1 explains that she tries to draw from memories, emotions and learning from lived experiences. She shares that she has experienced a stigmatised illness, which helps her to draw on her personal experience as a starting point for researching and developing multiple profiles of the targeted users. The target demographic consists primarily of Black and PoC men from all South African cultural groups. One of the significant challenges that P1 encountered was that, as a woman of colour, she was an outsider in this project, neither male nor Black. P1 acknowledges that the target audience, being primarily patriarchal and masculine by nature, definitely affected her design choices. During this process, while updating the WhatsApp FAQs, P1 sifted through 10,000 questions submitted by male users of the service. Questions that were repeatedly asked were eventually added to the FAQ menu. P1 had the idea to use these questions as the headlines for the poster

series. She decided to incorporate her understanding and insights gained from the questions men asked on the WhatsApp service into her visual communication. These questions were written to catch the attention of people who had knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

P1 explained that they only had time for secondary research, however, she already had a lot of pre-existing primary research. She reinforced that her preference, though, is to conduct primary research as well. She claimed that it provides her with insights into the general emotional state of the intended users. It also assists her in framing the user experience she wants when the audience interacts with a design touch point. Knowing how difficult it is for the target user to be vulnerable and open, informed P1's design choices. One of the difficulties P1 encountered during the design process was that the posters needed to be translated into several languages. She was never certain of how much, if at all, the content would change. Working with experienced translators who not only understand the language but also the cultural nuances of the language helped to overcome these challenges. From her research, P1 also became aware of the general visual representation of poverty and HIV/AIDS. She decided to visually subvert this stereotypical perception by using pictures of men who would be considered to be "white-collar" workers.

> *From the research, I believed the existing corporate identity of the partner was not well-suited to South Africa's overtly masculine and patriarchal society. I included stronger geometric shapes. I also replaced the purple shade in the colour palette and used a monochromatic blue palette with only yellow highlights.*

Figure 5.37: MenConnect colour palette and visual imagery applied to all platforms

Figure 5.38: MenConnect colour palette changes to the logo

When designing for a culture different to her own, P1 contends that the process is not much different, but one thing for sure, on this project, is that she spent more time researching and checking her assumptions, biases and general truths, which she uncovered throughout the research. P1's view is that sometimes when designing for another culture, it is really not our place to design for a specific group of people, especially if they are a minority and previously disadvantaged. In her own experience, she has in the past turned down jobs and made referrals to individuals she thinks are better suited. However, she added that this is a luxury, so if she needs to do the work she tries to collaborate and co-create as much as possible and do as much primary research as she possibly can. She gets advice and reviews from as many relevant people as possible.

5.5.4. The ethical and social role of a graphic designer

P1's opinion is that the role of any content creator (visual or otherwise) is important because history is vastly intrepid through the content we create.

According to P1, the ethical responsibilities of a graphic designer in South Africa are as follows:

1. To design as inclusively as possible.

2. To always be aware of our visual history so not to play into past negative stereotypes.

3. To take current issues into consideration and try to contribute positively if an opportunity arrives, e.g. not making use of visual patriarchal tropes in a country riddled with IPV/GBV.

P1 follows the following ethical rules:

1. Design consciously (think of the people and create a sustainable design).
2. Be conscious about your stance in society and privileges.
3. Above all, be inclusive.
4. Learn from visual history and do better.
5. If you can focus on the positive, do it! (I think media today has a tendency to follow negative narratives, excluding the positive completely).

P1 considers that the graphic design industry's contribution to a multicultural society is as follows:

1. To include more people of colour in the design industry and into positions of leadership.
2. To help create a visual style which is unique to our context and which focuses on the hope and potential of the country.

5.5.5. Analysis and reflections on the case study with the professional graphic designer

P1's insightful and instinctive awareness of the role of culture in visual communication immediately struck me. She was honest and open about her experiences as a graphic designer in South Africa, admitting that her marginalised cultural background had affected her graphic design practice in South Africa. When one's lived experience is inherently shaped by one's culture, due to the precarity of people of colour in South Africa, P1 contends that she designs with extreme caution, especially for those whom society has wronged in the past and continues to wrong. It was interesting to observe how, over-and-above her education, P1 believes her lived experience has equipped her with the necessary toolkit to think and investigate critically,

especially when designing for those from different backgrounds. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 15), "Postcolonial thinking challenges the hegemony of Northern knowledge and scholarship, as it calls for knowledge to be democratised, de-hegemonised, de-westernised and de-Europeanised" (cited in Chasi, 2019: 106). Coming from a background of being culturally marginalised has sensitised P1 to cultural contexts and situations in opposition to someone who has not had to deal with cultural stigmatisation and stereotyping. According to Bhambra (2018: 2), in the broader politics of knowledge creation, postcolonial theory is an important lens for addressing the colonial power structures created by European empire. As a result of imperialism and colonialism's influence on the colonised, it is the "process of exposing and challenging the predominance of Western knowledge while opposing exploitative and discriminatory practices" (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007: 1171).

P1's feedback on whether she felt prepared to design for different cultural communities was helpful. While she felt prepared, she did not feel fully prepared through her design education with the tools for co-creation, participation and collaboration. However, she understood that each project has a different set of requirements which makes the process fluid. She says the process needs to adapt to the project's specific requirements.

Due to P1's cultural sensitivity, she was aware that creating spaces for understanding and collaboration among different cultural groups is a major challenge in a multicultural society. P1's opinion is that not enough has transformed the design sector and that there must be more diversity in the industry. The industry transformation issue is raised in the next section (6.3. Postcolonial critique). Within the design industry, there is a need for increased representation of people of colour and Black creatives in positions of leadership. Black creatives are significantly underrepresented compared to their white counterparts. A room full of qualified, diverse and socially conscious creatives will provide a range of perspectives and ideas for any strategy discussion. Creative work aims to push limits and create meaningful experiences, not to create visual communication that is disconnected from the intended audience.

African civilisations and cultures predate Euro-western paradigms in South Africa. Black South Africans do not conform to the western binary of "right" or "wrong" because they are distinct persons with nuanced experiences and particular cultural contexts. Their narratives cannot be disregarded from the discussion due to a lack of documentation from the colonial era. Two complainants told the South African Human Rights Commission's national racial and

advertising discrimination inquiry that Clicks Will a reader outside of SA understand what this is? Not an actual "click"! was unjust to Black women. The women testifying before the commission claimed that the Clicks advertisement and Unilever not only Explain. had a personal impact on them, but Black women throughout South Africa. Furthermore, they questioned the ethos of visual communication that appears to everyone, which should accommodate all races and exclude none. Alternative lived experiences of indigenous and black Sometimes you capitalise race and ethnicity and other times not. South Africans are relevant in opposition to the neo-colonial and hegemonic globalisation systems and structures. Finding the "indigenous" voice within the patriarchal colonial archive and using visual communication as a form of activism can de-construct the historical archive by re-envisioning a narrative that affirms equity and inclusivity.

Labour Department's Mokgadi Pela states, "Slow pace of transformation cuts across all industries, advertising is just one of many." He explained that representation is key in all industries to reflect the views of wider audiences. If the industry were going to transform, it would have to do so urgently to avoid "missing the mark" (Makhathini, 2017). According to Simbongile Ndlangisa, the current co-founder and head of brand relations at Beyond Influencer Marketing, advertising is "embarrassingly untransformed," which explains the unimaginative and out-of-touch content that appears untransformed by the industry (Makhathini, 2017). Masemola, a digital copywriter and editor, claims that there has been little effort to develop fresh representations of Blackness that accurately capture the nuanced complexities of African people's lived experiences. The historically gimmicky and caricature-like depictions of Black people in advertisements who sing and dance to everything must be replaced (Makhathini, 2017).

The issue of transformation in the industry was raised, as well as the need increased representation of people of colour in the design industry and in positions of leadership. Black creatives are significantly underrepresented compared to their white counterparts. Marketer, author and entrepreneur Musa Kalenga contends that transformation in the South African advertising industry is the typical iceberg: on the surface, what needs to be changed seems straightforward. Below the surface, however, there are several factors that should not be underestimated, including ownership structure, capital legacy and human relations. Musa raises a valid point about ownership and the lack of transformation at the top levels of industries.

According to Musa, we cannot expect to see diverse and creative work if straight, white men predominantly make critical decisions. Hiring a diverse team to collaborate will curtail offensive and discriminatory visual communication. Having a room full of qualified, diverse socially aware individuals will provide any brainstorming session with a variety of opinions and perspectives. Creative work should push boundaries and evoke considered responses, not create work that is out of touch (Makhathini, 2017).

Terms referring to people, especially terminology of social categories, are political instruments and not merely objective labels in the same class as the taxonomies of fishes or stars. Researching sustainable packaging for a student project in 2020, I came across packaging branded "Bantu Vegan" on the social media platform Behance. "Bantu Vegan" is a not-just-for-profit vegan company based in Tanzania, Africa. Furthermore, "Bantu Vegan" states that the brand is committed to promoting and empowering communities through an ethical, cruelty-free, sustainable industry. I also discovered that the designers are based in Los Angeles, California, and Copenhagen, Denmark. In South Africa, the term "Bantu" is deemed a derogatory and discriminatory word. The term 'Bantu' is an example of the way in which a label for a social category follows social practice, in contrast to the assumption underlying the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that practice follows language. In 2018, the popular Swedish clothing brand H&M apologised after pictures showed a Black boy wearing a hoodie that read "coolest monkey in the jungle." In South Africa, people took offence and labelled it racist, and protests turned violent at stores. The word *monkey* was deemed unacceptable as it had been used against Black people derogatively to dehumanise them. H&M issued an apology.

It is critical that visual communicators join with other scholars to document and advocate for the historical counter-stories of marginalised individuals, to refine and add to their approach to the output of their visual communication. The telling of these narratives is a tool for exposing the inequalities and oppression of the colonial systems as well as a method of honouring and learning from the resistance of individuals who lived inside these systems.

5.5.6. Ethical standards in the graphic design industry

After almost three decades of democratic transition, as an educator in graphic design, I find it disconcerting that the visual communications industry continues to produce offensive visual communications that favour homogenous Eurocentric narratives. As designers reflect the

diversity of human cultures in their designs, they are responsible for portraying information in a meaningful, responsible and effective manner. Multiple parties hold graphic designers accountable: designers owe contractual commitments to clients, stakeholders, co-workers, their work, and, ultimately, society. This raises the important question of whether graphic designers are ultimately responsible for their work's influence on the lives of "Others." What purpose do graphic designers serve? Do they present problems in people's lives, or do they make an impact? Where and how do graphic designers draw the boundary lines?

Moral challenges are rarely black and white, which stirs concern in individuals about moral ethics and what constitutes 'good' design. **What is this? Strange term.** Good is defined as "of excellent quality or of an acceptable standard" by the Oxford English Dictionary. **Cite.** But what is an "acceptable standard" in graphic design, and how do we judge the worth of a "good" design? In considering how to approach ethics in design, we recommend that the potential of an 'internal' rather than an 'external' approach should be examined further, how pragmatic methods of questioning and reasoning about care, harm, consequence and responsibility emerge and how these can be explored from within the practice of designing. Such investigation may also respond to the demand for an approach that empathises with designers' sensitivity, like an ethics view that participates with design practice and appeals to designers' ability to be sensitive, informed, and responsive to emergent ethical issues: a 'designerly' way to confront ethical issues that are deeply connected to the specific ways in which ethical questions arise and are encountered within a design. These are the primary responsibilities of the visual communications sector.

Responsibility is a further prerequisite, involving inclusion, diversity and representation. The graphic design industry and academics must investigate what constitutes "responsible" and "effective" visual communication in postcolonial South Africa and how this translates into practice. In this context, graphic designers must critically consider the colonial archives and imperial histories that persist in postcolonial South Africa, as well as what this implies for their design practices. To erase the power discrepancies that support hegemonic colonial narratives, it is also crucial to comprehend the connection between how students are trained in design institutions and how their education shapes their future practice. When formulating strategies and making critical decisions, graphic designers must consider the current sociocultural and political context.

Graphic design education has evolved over time to reflect technological advances and contemporary culture, but ethics courses remain limited and do not provide an in-depth examination of all relevant issues (Kane, 2010: 7-9). The current curriculum at the South African higher education institution where I lecture offers courses in entrepreneurship, business practices and social responsibility, and while aspects of ethics are covered, there is no prerequisite course that covers the subject in detail. Design professionals must question the "appearance of ethical activity" to provide a rich discourse on nurturing ethical and socially responsible frameworks in the design field (Scherling & DeRosa, 2020: xvii). Educators in graphic design are calling for students to be critical and strategic thinkers. An ethics course, as a requirement, will provide graphic design students with a solid framework to practice their profession responsibly, ultimately developing their critical and strategic thinking skills (Kane, 2010: 7).

Due to the integration of social media into everyday life, consumers can now connect directly with companies. As a result, offensive branding decisions are instantly and publicly condemned, and brands risk cancellation, incurring long-term damage to their reputations. Participation of people from diverse sociocultural backgrounds in the creative process will make it easier to prevent visually problematic representation. Considering that visual communication is for people and specific audiences, human-centred design methods and ethical design discourses should be integrated. Graphic designers must improve their practice so that its significance is recognised, acknowledged and respected by all those who support design's future goals.

5.5.7.   Personal competencies of a graphic designer analysis

The personal competencies expected of a graphic designer rely mainly on job descriptions found in current advertisements of graphic design positions, as well as the analysis of international professional associations' codes of conduct. Although the literature analysed made vague mention of these competencies, namely job descriptions and professional codes of conduct, they confirmed their importance (Burger, 2017: 172). These competencies, therefore, represent the personal characteristics needed by an individual to be a successful graphic designer. In addition, they may serve as a guideline for current graphic designers to ensure adherence to the professional and ethical behaviours expected in this discipline.

Many disciplines of design in South Africa have developed their professional organisations, such as the BCSA, the Brand Council, or the Graphic Design Council of South Africa (Burger, 2018:166). Additionally, the Design Education Forum of Southern Africa (DEFSA) is a professional organisation of design educators employing dynamic approaches to promote and support design education in South Africa (Burger 2017: 167). However, as I could not retrieve a code of conduct from the BCSA's website, making comparisons with other associations was impossible. Codes are the personal characteristics and professional and ethical behaviours required of graphic designers. These competencies will influence the approach to design process, as professional associations dictate professional and ethical behaviours.

A professional designer demonstrates respect for the profession, colleagues, customers, audiences or consumers, and society as a whole by adhering to values of integrity. These criteria describe the requirements of a professional designer. In enforcing an acceptable code of ethics that regulates all advertising and design organisations, they also ensure that people who experience injury or prejudice as a result of irresponsible advertising have redress (ASA Companies Act 71, 2008: 5).

5.6.   Summary of the chapter

Chapter 5 presented the data and critical findings obtained from three case studies, which included semi-structured interviews, observations, documentation and supporting participant interviews. The first case study documents the design approach and process of an industry expert graphic designer who served as a key source of information for the study topic- and industry-related matters. The second case study presents insights from the cultural insights and design process of two second-year graphic design students taken from in-class observations, self-reflections and interviews. This specific student case study was included for the purpose of demonstrating the importance of primary research and intercultural design knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of the subtle cultural nuances and context. The third and final case study addressed the experiences of a professional graphic designer who works in culturally diverse fields. The designer served as a key source of information related to the study topic of cultural diversity in design practice.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion, recommendations and reflection

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 summarises the insights and findings from Chapter 5, framed by the research questions. The discussion in Chapter 6 centres on the research questions and the analysis of the relationship between culture and language and what this means for graphic design within the heterogeneous cultures of post-apartheid South Africa. The following section addresses the key themes from Chapter 5 case studies regarding the embedded relationship between culture and language. The connections between case study insights and the theoretical findings have informed and guided my transformative learning process as an educator in South Africa. The literature and theoretical themes and perspectives discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 reinforce the understanding that graphic design is a language that operates through visual representational systems and must be studied and practised in cultural contexts. The study also examined whether intercultural knowledge should be included in graphic design curricula so those practising graphic designers could better understand cultural diversity. In addition, the study addressed whether ethical standards in the graphic design industry are inclusive and representative of the diversity of a multicultural society in post-apartheid South Africa. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and their transformative implications for research, education and social activism within the South African graphic design industry and higher education curriculum.

6.2. Summary of findings

This section presents a summary of the insights and findings gained from the literature review and the data collected from three case studies over the course of the research journey. Any study of culture, especially within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, cannot be approached lightly. The concept of *culture* is multifaceted, multi-layered and embedded with the histories of dominance and oppression. The further I examined *culture*, the more layers I discovered, rendering this examination of culture in relation to visual communication increasingly challenging and complex. Due to its complexity, *culture* in relation to graphic design in South Africa requires further addressing. I presented a compilation of various design

models, approaches, and theories intended to inspire an open-minded approach to re-evaluating the cultural context to include more equitable and just systems. I have not provided solutions to these societal design challenges, rather, in exploring ethical design, I want to develop critical perspectives that will encourage designers to address current societal challenges.

The research contributes to the wider discourse of humanity-centred design within the practices of visual communication in graphic design. The study, established on Edward Hall's (1961: 186) theory that "culture is communication and communication is culture," examined how this concept relates to visual communication and whether cultural values are integrated into a South African designer's practice. Compelling information about the inherent relationship between culture and graphic design was identified in the literature and theoretical frameworks in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Understanding that culture is inherent in language and that graphic design is a form of visual language reinforces the notion that visual communication cannot disregard cultural contexts. This leads to the deduction, that if culture is inherent in language, then graphic design, which functions through systems of visual representation, should be critically studied in cultural contexts. When designing for a culturally diverse audience, sociocultural knowledge is equally as important as design skills and expertise. It is critical for designers to be equipped to work within diverse cultural communities. Yes, nicely linked deduction.

The findings of this research indicate that individuals working in South Africa's diverse markets – professional graphic designers, educators, and students – need to be better equipped to deal with cultural diversity from the outset. The data collected pertains to whether graphic designers should adapt their design approach when designing for unfamiliar cultural contexts. The data demonstrated a relationship between culture and visual communication in graphic design. In addition, it addressed the need for ethical standards in the post-apartheid graphic design industry in South Africa. The data revealed that designers must consider cultural issues to reach a particular sociocultural audience. Designers can reinforce false representations based on insensitive and discriminatory perceptions if they do not address cultural issues appropriately. The findings indicate that if the cultural context is ignored and disregarded, visual communication will continue to favour a Euro-Western approach while ignoring the majority of South Africa's heterogeneous population. The data also revealed that graphic designers practising in post-apartheid South Africa's diverse communities require intercultural

knowledge and sensitivity. Today brands are at risk of cancel culture if their visual representation and communications continue to perpetuate insensitivity towards their intended audience.

Chapter 1 describes the focus of the study and the research intentions. Recent years have seen an increase in demand for designers who can design for users and audiences from unfamiliar and diverse cultural backgrounds. The rise of globalisation and the interconnectedness of the digital world has created a demand for culture-focused research. According to research, the impact of designers' and users' cultures on particular designs and the overall design process has received limited attention thus far.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review for the theoretical framework, which addresses the study focus on the interrelatedness of culture and graphic design through a postcolonial and indigenous theoretical lens. The study traces the impact of colonisation and apartheid of exclusion, marginalisation and homogeneity on the visual representation of the vast majority of the South African population. Almost three decades into democracy, we continue to encounter the perpetuation of the dominant Euro-Western paradigms through inappropriate and insensitive visual representation of brand communications in the South African design industry, on designs and the design process applicable to graphic design practice in a heterogenous society in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 3 critically examined the innate relationship between culture and language and the implications of this interconnectedness for visual communication in graphic design. This examination was built on Edward Hall's contribution to the discourse of culture with his theory that "culture is communication and communication is culture." The role of culture in design and the design process was analysed in the case studies. The analysis of the case studies revealed that knowledge and insights into the cultural context surrounding the design projects played a significant role in the designer's awareness of designing for the unfamiliar or for different cultures.

Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology applied to examine the inherent relationship between culture and visual communication in the field of graphic design in South Africa. A transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2008; 2016; 2021) was deemed appropriate for the study, guided by a qualitative case study approach (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018) that facilitates

the examination of the findings within its context using a variety of data. As the researcher in the study, I have a position in the research and am not removed from the research process and context; therefore, I am a part of and able to learn from the research journey. As I was actively involved in the research collection process, I am aware that the data analysis may contain elements of subjective bias, and for this reason, I openly discussed my position in the study and included personal reflections on the case study data collection and findings. I also validated my observations through multiple discussions with the support in-class lecturer. I described the purposive sampling applied (Ritchie et al., 2013) in the selection of graphic design professionals and graphic design educators and students within a design institution of higher education in South Africa. The research design followed Stake's (2006) qualitative case study approach, applying the participants' purposive or non-probability sampling (Patton, 2015). Data were collected using qualitative methods through primary and secondary sources, involving semi-structured questionnaires, observations and documentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ethical processes were followed to ensure the protection of participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

Chapter 5 presents the data and analyses of the critical findings in three sections, obtained from three case studies which included semi-structured interviews, observations, documentation and supporting participant interviews. The first case study documents the design approach and process of a graphic design industry expert who served as a key source of information for the study topic- and industry-related matters. The custom-designed typeface for the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, is analysed in relation to the cultural context. The second case study presents insights gained from the design approaches of two second-year graphic design students taken from in-class observations, discussions and interviews. An account of each student's design approach is described, highlighting the key insights gained relevant to designing for a culture different from one's own. Furthermore, additional interviews with second- and third-year students are presented, including two educators who serve as key informants for the graphic design curriculum. The third and final case study addresses the experiences of a professional graphic designer who works in culturally diverse fields. The professional designer served as a key source of information related to the study topic of cultural diversity in design practice.

Chapter 6 discusses the primary insights and findings from the theoretical framework findings in Chapters 2 and Chapter 3 and the data collected from the three case studies described in

Chapter 5. The discussion in Chapter 6 is framed by the research questions on the relationship between culture and language and what this means for graphic design within the heterogeneous cultures of post-apartheid South Africa. The connections between the case study insights and the theoretical findings have informed and guided my transformative learning process as an educator in South Africa. The literature and theoretical themes and perspectives discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 reinforce the understanding that graphic design is a language that operates through visual representational systems and that it must be studied and practised in a cultural context. The case study examines the value of situating context, cultural identity and place at the centre of visual communication throughout the design process. Designers' cultural experiences and backgrounds, as well as information provided about the target user, influence the design process. These findings emphasise the importance of designers thoroughly understanding the perspectives of their target consumers to create more appropriate designs. Based on the findings of the case studies, designers and students must have a solid understanding of the culture of the target consumers through direct interaction or other means. Exposure to and familiarity with the particular culture bring knowledge and insights beyond what user information documents provide, which benefits the design. Integrating intercultural knowledge in graphic design curricula facilitates a more in-depth understanding of cultural diversity in graphic designers. This is especially relevant if designers do not generate research about the target audience themselves.

To practice intercultural design, designers must recognise the validity of "Other" cultures and languages and the importance of the role of participation and collaboration with key stakeholders in the process. By taking into account their personal cultural biases and preferences, designers will be better equipped to engage with increased sensitivity and empathy toward diversity and different cultural contexts. Only then will designers be culturally sensitive and willing to alter their designs accordingly. The concept of mindfulness is important as it refers to the practice of keeping an open and accepting mind rather than relying on a "familiar frame of reference, old, routinized designs or categories, and customary ways of doing things" (McMullen, 2016: 26). For graphic designers to be interculturally competent, they will need to shift their frames of reference to accommodate different modes of visual perception. Consequently, designers need exposure to a variety of different design approaches, depending on the focus and purpose of the visual communication required and the cultural context of the target audience.

6.3. Contributions and Recommendations

This study has been framed within graphic design in post-apartheid South Africa, taking into account the sociocultural diversity of the South African population. The study aims to contribute towards intercultural design discourses and initiatives visually representing and including cultural diversity's nuances. Table 6.1 encapsulates the significance of the contributions made by the research, as well as indicating how they could or should influence graphic design praxis.

Firstly, the study aims to contribute to the cultural discourse in South African graphic design. The study contends that graphic design, as a language that functions through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts.
I expect this section to indicate the contribution as a given, not a future aim. So, "The study contributes to the cultural discourse in SA GD by… doing something"
You have already affirmed the SA GD context. Becomes repetitive below.

Secondly, the study aims to contribute to the postcolonial discourse in South African graphic design. The study determines that colonial hegemonic ideals continue to frame current design practices and perspectives. The idea of a globally homogenised design culture is disrupted. Different design methods are described that acknowledge visual representations of cultural differences. Insights are presented into alternative methods for re-framing the creative production of local and indigenous cultures through humanity-centred and collaborative processes. Inclusion and collaboration with key community members is crucial for designers to have their design processes validated by various stakeholders.

Thirdly, the study aims to contribute to indigenous discourses in South African graphic design. The study acknowledges the importance of indigenous cultural knowledge in support of the decolonial struggle for inclusion and representation. The participation of diverse local and indigenous knowledge and processes contributes critical insights and understanding that strengthen the visual representation of South Africa's distinctive heterogeneous ethnicities.

Fourthly, the study aims to contribute to South African graphic design's social and ethical responsibilities. Sasaki (20110) contends that graphic designers have a significant ethical and social role in shaping cultural identity, social structures, economies and environments. This

research challenges South African graphic designers to reassess their understanding of the sociocultural contexts they contribute to their design practice.

Fifthly, the study aims to contribute to discourses on heterogeneity in the South African graphic design industry and education. Current and future generations of graphic designers need to be equipped with the tools to employ alternative approaches to unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Table 6.1: the study contributions and considerations

	Study contributions	**Considerations for graphic design**
1.	contributes to the cultural discourse in South African graphic design	• graphic design, as a visual language that functions through semiotic representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts.
2.	contributes to the postcolonial discourse in South African graphic design	• different design methods are required that acknowledge visual representations of cultural differences. • alternative methods for re-framing the creative production of local and indigenous cultures through humanity-centred and collaborative processes. • consideration of inclusion and collaboration with key community members and stakeholders is crucial for designers to have their design processes validated.
3.	contribute to indigenous discourses in South African graphic design.	• recognition of the importance of indigenous cultural knowledge in support of the decolonial struggle for inclusion and representation. • participation of diverse local and indigenous knowledge and processes would contribute critical insights and understanding that strengthen the visual representation of South Africa's distinctive heterogeneous ethnicities. • intercultural knowledge is essential for designers working in multicultural communities

4.	contribute to South African graphic design's social and ethical responsibilities	• graphic designers have a significant ethical role in shaping cultural identity, social structures, economies and environments. • challenges South African graphic designers to reassess their understanding of the sociocultural contexts they contribute to their design practice. • South African graphic design's social and ethical responsibilities.
5.	contribute to discourses on heterogeneity in the South African graphic design industry and education.	• promote discourses on heterogeneity in the South African graphic design industry and education. • current and future generations of graphic designers need to be equipped with the tools to employ alternative approaches to unfamiliar cultural contexts

The study's theoretical and case study findings lay the groundwork for further research into the inherent relationship between culture and graphic design. Any research involving culture, race, identity and citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa must recognise the complexities of expression, representation and influence. The study contends that designers, educators and students practising in South Africa must be equipped with cultural knowledge, particularly the discourses around postcolonial and indigenous perspectives, and knowledge, from the outset, to engage authentically and with sensitive awareness with the heterogeneous communities.

While the examination does not claim to reflect the views of all South African graphic design professionals, students, and educators, the intention is to add to the body of knowledge in the South African graphic design industry and academia. The purpose of the study is not to answer all of the questions raised but rather to add to the discussion and growth of critical knowledge in the field of graphic design. The findings highlight the need for further investigation of design approaches and processes that include intercultural knowledge from the initial research phase and throughout the design conceptualisation stages. The study contends that there is a strong need for the development of effective tools and methods to understand target users' perceptions of visual representation across different cultures. These design tools must be sufficiently user-

friendly to motivate designers and students to incorporate them throughout the design process. The goal is to equip designers, educators, and students with the user-friendly knowledge of various processes and tools they need to engage in cultural awareness and sensitivity from the initiation of any project. The objective would be to equip designers and educators with the knowledge necessary to comprehend the significance of culture in visual communication and to facilitate cultural engagement throughout the design process. Then, they would be able to evaluate the efficacy of the design process and whether the final visual communication product was suitable for the intended audience.

To understand the level of cultural influence on graphic design outputs, additional research is required on the effect of culture on visual communication across cultures. There must be a neater way of stating this without the uncomfortable "culture" duplication. The study demonstrates the significance of educating designers and educators about the inherent role of culture in visual communication. In addition, formal standards of ethics must be established in the graphic design industry to quantify culture's ethical engagement in design. This would contribute to evaluating the design process and, by extension, create culturally integrated design models. These developments would provide designers with a greater understanding of the cultural considerations necessary when designing for an unfamiliar culture. Furthermore, these advances can be incorporated into resources and systems, increasing the amount of information and empathy available in the development of humanity-centred design output. In addition to the proposed changes, the future research scope can now be envisioned from the designer's and the researcher's perspectives.

6.4. Final reflections

Personal transformation is an essential component of research aimed at promoting societal change, and this study shows that they are inextricably linked. It takes the form of promoting social justice and human rights (Mertens, 2016). This study discusses how ethical assumptions can be analysed through a transformative framework. It is fitting to conclude the study with reflections on the transformative research journey. The context of the research is situated in post-apartheid South Africa, where citizens from all cultures and languages are entitled to participate in political, economic and cultural activities lawfully. The inclusivity standards of culture and language outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, where

citizens from all cultures and languages are entitled to participate in political, economic and cultural activities lawfully, calls into question the graphic design industry's ethical role.

As the study is framed by social justice and human rights within a democratic society, it was necessary that my research was designed to address issues of social justice and discrimination, which facilitated the potential for personal and social transformation. In addressing issues around cultural diversity and differences in post-apartheid South Africa, I was confronted by my whiteness and the privilege it affords me. I was impacted by the insights gained throughout the research as I became increasingly aware of its impact on my design and educator practice. Initially, I drew from the interpretivism paradigm as the most suitable research frame to interpret the study and discover meaning through the appropriate tools and methods (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). However, as the research shifted from a linear historical examination to…, the study transitioned into a non-linear transformative journey of new-found insights and meaning. Transitioning to a transformative framework, I examined the relationship between culture and language and what that relationship means for visual communication in graphic design.

The framing of the study is built on Edward Hall's (1961:186) theory that "culture is communication and communication is culture," which asserts that culture is inherent in language. The seminal writings of the leading Kenyan figure in postcolonial studies, wa Thiong'o's (1986; 2003) central idea of the dual nature of language – as a means of communication and a vehicle of culture – supports this theory. Furthermore, wa Thiong'o (1986) argues that although a particular language can connect people through communication, distinct culture is not universally transmitted through language. Instead, it is transmitted through language in a way that distinguishes it as the language of a distinct community with a specific history. In a public lecture delivered at the Wits University National Institute for Humanities and Social Science, wa Thiong'o (2017) argued that language is at the centre of decolonisation and warned, "Use English but don't let English use you" (Chatora, 2017). He argued that knowledge of English without knowing your mother tongue is equivalent to enslavement. wa Thiong'o also asserted that to preserve their social, cultural and linguistic heritage, Africans must continue to press their governments to include their languages in educational institutions (Chatora, 2017).

"Language cannot exist without culture," asserts Kim (2003: 12), emphasising the indistinguishable boundaries between language and culture. Fundamentally, whether language impacts culture or vice-versa, the loss of one results in the loss of the other. This idea of the embedded relationship between culture and language applies to graphic design as a form of language that functions through visual representation. This idea of the embedded relationship between culture and language applies to graphic design as a form of language that functions through visual representation. Successful and effective visual communication requires an in-depth understanding of culture; in the same way, understanding culture requires knowledge of how people communicate.

As the researcher in the study, I am aware that I have a position in the research and am not removed from the research process and context; therefore, I am a part of and able to learn from the research journey. The critical theory of the inherent relationship between language and culture has challenged and transformed my practice as a visual communication educator. According to Merten (2017:18), the possibility of personal and social transformation increases if we plan our research to address issues of oppression and discrimination explicitly. A transformative paradigm was deemed appropriate for the study to examine the relationship between culture and language. Transformative research has the potential to support personal and societal change. Personal transformation is an essential component of research aimed at promoting societal change, and this study shows they are inextricably linked. It takes the form of promoting social justice and human rights. This study discussed how ethical assumptions could be analysed through a transformative framework. Researchers can use this framework as a reference when addressing both the individual and societal levels of transformation. From an ethical standpoint, researchers must consider their identity and their role in their work community. This process moves beyond self-reflection to a critical examination of the cultural blinkers that might prevent us from making useful contributions.

Two of my personal experiences stand out when I contemplate the idea that transformation necessitates intertwining the personal and the societal within my practice as an educator in graphic design. The first was the project by the expert designer (E1) who designed the Constitutional Court typeface. In the context of South Africa's transition to democracy and equality, I wanted to examine the role of graphic designers in developing a visual language that effectively represents the diverse sociocultural identities of their target audiences. A critical starting point for the study of the embedded relationship between language and culture is the

understanding that visual communication is always aimed at a target group or audience. I contend that graphic design, as a visual form of language, requires to be critically studied and understood in cultural contexts. According to Hino et al. (2018), any understanding of culture, race, identity and citizenship must recognise the complexities of their expression, representation and influence. Given the country's diverse ethnic groups and languages, graphic designers in post-apartheid South Africa will encounter intercultural challenges. Thomas and Inkson (2004) state that diversity in society poses various challenges and threats to individuals unfamiliar with the information embedded in cultural cues.

Consequently, individuals can be divided into two groups: first, those who embrace new challenges and strive to master the new social field, and second, those who resist learning and hold fast to their conventional values (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). Deal and Prince (2003) assert that communicators today need to communicate effectively across cultural differences, understand how to negotiate complex social situations, and be familiar with cultural traditions and norms. As visual communicators, graphic designers need to be cognisant that their target audience has multiple perspectives and expectations based on their diverse backgrounds.

The research began with the examination of whether the graphic design industry in South Africa has undergone a transformation following the country's first democratic elections in 1994. The 1990s 'call' emanating from the graphic design industry, prompted by socio-political discourses on transformation, nation-building and national identity, was voiced out of concerns about cultural identity and representation. The call voiced the critical need to redress the predominantly Eurocentric design aesthetic that had flourished in South African higher education and industry during apartheid as the starting point (Moys, 2004: 88, 103). I was interested in understanding how the design community and academic institutions had responded to the call for the re-evaluation of "a defining South African visual identity and style" that is representational of an inclusive "new South Africa" (Moys, 2004: 103; Sauthoff, 1998: 9).

In 2001, Dr Frene Ginwala, a South African journalist and politician and Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa from 1994 to 2004, stated that a "South African visual identity" would be universally understood and accepted since it would generate "new ways of representing South African-ness" (Moys, 2004). Concerns about the homogeneous domination of cultural representation, which excluded South Africa's Black majority in favour of the white

minority, prompted the call for transformation, nation-building, and national identity (Moys, 2004:71, 101). The debate over a reimagined visual language for South Africa directly addressed the graphic design industry's cultural and social responsibility for national building (Kurlansky, 1992; Wolfaardt 1997; Ginwala, 2001; Lange, 2006a, 2006b; Moys, 2004:72).

According to Moys' (2004:2, 77, 84) research, findings revealed that in the 1990s, the graphic design industry thought it was possible to unite South Africa's diverse cultures into a style emblematic of a "unique South African design language." While the graphic design profession continued to emphasise and acknowledge the need for transformative change, Moys' (2004:103) research indicates that its discourse never advanced beyond the superficial. By the end of the decade, there was little indication of meaningful change in mainstream practice. Subsequently, design discussions revealed a lack of engagement, with insufficient consideration given to whether South Africa's diverse cultures could be merged into a specific visual language (Moys, 2004). The call, which was prompted by socio-political discourses on transformation, nation-building and national identity, was voiced out of concerns about cultural identity and representation.

This call for a "definable South African visual identity and style" failed to address how it would not be based on African design stereotypes while avoiding the establishment of new stereotypes to be recognised as a South African design language (Sauthoff, 1998: 9; Walker, 1989; Moys, 2004: 103). To address critical issues around transformation, the discourse needed to build on the notion that meaning is created through a visual language that shapes South Africa's public space, culture and heritage. Sauthoff (2004) observed that 10 years after South Africa's first democratic elections, the graphic design industry had failed to promote "an understanding of its wider sociocultural role or to adequately address issues related to the totality of its national environment and culture" (Sauthoff, 2004: 48). Sauthoff (2004: 49) notes that the industry needed to conduct further research into the development of "a local discourse that allowed for a deeper engagement with social context" that "interrogates cultural meaning."

Similarly, Deidre Pretorius' (2015) found evidence that the transformative challenges within graphic design education and the industry had been slow to respond to the call to transform beyond the dominance of the Euro-Western aesthetic. Twenty years into South Africa's democracy, Pretorius' (2015) historical examination of South African graphic design education and industry provided additional evidence for the need for a paradigm shift following the end

of apartheid. With the ongoing imitation of Euro-Western design practices acclaimed at design conferences and awards, the graphic design industry has continued to identify with and retain the dominant established aesthetic. Pretorius (2015) reports that little had changed during this time regarding the prerequisites and expertise required to incorporate intercultural knowledge in the education curriculum outside of conventional frames of reference.

According to the research and findings, additional research was required by the design industry into the establishment of a "local discourse that allows for a deeper engagement with social context" that "interrogates cultural meaning" (Sauthoff, 2004). Transformation in democratic South Africa's design education curriculum and professional industry has been gradual and insufficient during this period (Pretorius, 2015). With these insights, the focus of the research shifted to the understanding that the visual representation of diverse cultures and heterogeneous communities is a continuous and complex process that necessitates extensive research and discourse on the visual representation of diverse cultural identities. From this point, the study transitioned from a linear historical investigation into a non-linear research journey, a meaningful personal journey of fresh insights and understanding that transformed my practice as an educator.

Mertens (2017) contends that transformative research has the potential to support personal and societal change. Over the course of the study, my design and teaching practices evolved significantly, resulting in a transformative research and practice journey. This experience has made me more aware of my values as well as ways to develop a multiculturally-aware design practice. This is because it takes into account the values of others. My research findings have significantly changed the way I engage with culturally nuanced projects, and with student-engagement on these projects. My research journey has provided a deeper, multifaceted understanding of what *culturally-informed* or *culturally-centred* design entails in communication design. Within *humanity-centred design*, the study supports the rights of all people, all living things and the surrounding environment. I contend that sociocultural knowledge is as significant as design skills and expertise when designing for an audience whose sociocultural context differs from the designer's (Muir, 2017: 181).

The visual communications industry must encourage critique, opposition, expansion and inclusivity to transition to effective and purpose-driven visual communication that connects to the intended target audience. Visual communicators must call for scholars to join them to

advocate for refining their approach concerning the output of the communication. The telling of the historical counter-stories of marginalised individuals is a tool for exposing the inequalities and oppression of the colonial systems as well as a method of honouring and learning from the resistances of the individuals who lived inside these systems, for recognising the privilege of our positionality and the power that it affords us to make embodied methodologies a norm in the field. African civilisations and cultures predate Western concepts in South Africa. The narratives cannot be disregarded from the discussion if there is a lack of documentation from the colonial era. Finding the 'indigenous' voice within the patriarchal colonial archive and using visual communication as a form of activism can deconstruct and decolonise it. In visual communication, it is irresponsible to disregard the sociocultural context of the intended audience. I argue that this should not occur at the expense of the historically oppressed and marginalised. The advertising industry's continued disconnect from the consumer has been called into question. We should not underestimate the power of visual communication and graphic to transform perspectives, as it has the potential to contribute to inclusive and democratic nation-building.

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Appendix A: Sample Questionnaire for Graphic Design Professionals

Questionnaire and Background to the research

This Questionnaire is part of the research process for a Master of Technology in the Faculty of Graphic Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, with the title:
An exploration of South African visual culture and identity: Case studies in graphic design

Background to the study

As a result of South Africa's democratic socio-economic and political transformation, the design process has become multicultural and multilingual, bringing together designers, users and other stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. Working within diverse cultural contexts is the current reality for South African graphic designers. Consequently, graphic designers are challenged to recognise and understand heterogeneity in design. Designing for an audience from a different cultural background than one's presents challenges for graphic designer since the process is less intuitive and more prone to assumptive reasoning. Designers must be aware of their own biases, stereotypes and prejudices in order to gain valuable and relevant insights from the audience's reality. Intercultural design calls for constant validation of design decisions by the specific target audience in order for the visual communication to be relevant and appropriate for the specific target.

The call for a uniquely South African design language emerged in the early 1990s, following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. The challenge was for graphic design professionals to explore what it visually means to be South African – rather than predominantly Eurocentric – in an attempt to innovate a new and inclusive visual design language. The study examines whether the design language developed by graphic designers is representative of the socio-cultural identities of their target audience within post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, the study is looks into whether intercultural knowledge is a requirement for graphic designers working in South Africa's heterogeneous society. The study acknowledges that a more equitable representation of cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa is a complex process that requires further examination and inquiry.

<u>**Questionnaire with industry professional:**</u>

Please feel free to answer the questions you are comfortable with and to add any relevant information, concerns or issues that may be helpful in building an understanding of intercultural collaborative and creative practices.

<u>**The following questionnaire divides the questions into 4 sections:**</u>

1. Background information
2. Cultural understanding within graphic design
3. Reflection on designer's approach and process
4. Ethical and social responsibility of graphic designers in South Africa.

A. <u>Background information</u> (5 questions)

1. Your name:

2. Where do you currently live and work?

3. Did you study after school, and where?

4. How long have you been involved in the graphic design industry in South Africa?

5. How do you identify your cultural background and what languages do you speak?

Understanding of culture in graphic design (5 questions)

1. How important is cultural understanding for graphic designers in South Africa?

2. How does your cultural background influence your practice as a graphic designer in South Africa?

3. Are young designers adequately prepared on approaches to designing for different cultural communities when starting to work as a graphic designer?

4. Do you think enough has changed within the graphic design industry to adequately represent the cultural diversity in South Africa over the past 5-10 years?

5. Have graphic designers adapted their design process enough to meet the needs of culturally diverse audiences? Do you think more needs to still change to meet this requirement in South Africa?

Reflection of designers on their process of designing for a target audience with a culture other than their own (4 questions).

Case Studies. If you have worked on a relevant project, please supply information and images of the project.

1. Have you ever been involved in projects that were targeted at an audience other than your own?
   a. What was the design brief?
   b. Which culture/s did you design for?

2. What is your approach to understand the specific culture of the target audience? Where you are an outsider to the cultures?

3. How did you incorporate the understanding and insights gained into your visual representation/strategy/design?
   a. Were you affected by your own cultural background?
   b. Did you find the process different from designing for your own culture?

4. What were the challenges affecting the design process when designing for another culture?
   a. If so, can you please give examples?
   b. And, how do you overcome these challenges?
   What do you see as most important in designing across cultures?

B. **The ethical and social role of a graphic designer** (4 questions)
   1. Would you describe the role of a graphic design as important in society?
   2. What are a graphic designer's ethical and social responsibilities in South Africa?
   3. Are there ethical rules you follow?
   4. How can the graphic design industry contribute in a positive way to a multicultural democratic society in South Africa?

Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire for Graphic Design Students

Questionnaire and Background to the research

This Questionnaire is part of the research process for a Master of Technology in the Faculty of Graphic Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, with the title:

An exploration of South African visual culture and identity: Case studies in graphic design

Background to the study

As a result of South Africa's democratic socio-economic and political transformation, the design process has become multicultural and multilingual, bringing together designers, users and multiple stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds. Working within different cultural contexts is the current reality for South African graphic designers. Consequently, graphic designers are challenged to recognise and understand heterogeneity in design. Designing for an audience from a different cultural background than one's presents challenges for graphic designers since the process is less intuitive and more prone to assumptive reasoning. Designers must be aware of their own biases, stereotypes and prejudices in order to gain valuable and relevant insights from the audience's reality. Intercultural design calls for constant validation of design decisions by the specific target audience in order for the visual communication to be relevant and appropriate for the specific target.

Following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the call for a uniquely South African design language emerged from within the industry in the early 1990s. The challenge was for graphic design professionals to explore what it visually means to be South African – rather than predominantly following Eurocentric influences – in an attempt to innovate a new and inclusive visual design language. The study examines whether the design language developed by graphic designers is representative of the socio-cultural identities of their target audience within post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, the study looks into whether intercultural knowledge is a requirement for graphic designers practising in South Africa's heterogeneous society. The study acknowledges that a more equitable representation of cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa is a complex topic that requires further examination and inquiry.

A. <u>Questionnaire with graphic design student:</u>

The following consists of semi-formal questions. Please feel free to answer the questions as you feel comfortable. In addition, please add any relevant information, concerns or issues that may be helpful in building an understanding of inter-cultural collaborative and creative practices.

<u>The following questionnaire divides the questions into 2 sections:</u>
A. Background information
B. The influence of culture on graphic design

A. <u>Background information</u> (5 questions)
1. Your name:
2. Where do you currently live and study?
3. Did you study after school, where and for how long?
4. How do you identify your cultural background and what languages do you speak?

B. The influence of culture in graphic design (5 questions)
Please make reference to any relevant work during your 2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ year of studies.

1. How important is cultural understanding for graphic designers practising in South Africa?

2. Is there a difference in the design approach and process followed when designing for a familiar culture versus an unfamiliar culture?

3. Should Cultural Design Knowledge (CDK) be a requirement for graphic designers practising in South Africa to understand the cultural context?

4. Would you approach a project differently at the end of 3ʳᵈ year, from how you may have at the beginning of 2ⁿᵈ year? ie. do you think you have gained new perspectives on designing for a culture unfamiliar to your own?

5. What role do empathy and ethics play in your design approach?

Appendix C: Sample Questionnaire for Support Lecturer

<u>Questionnaire and Background to the research</u>

This Questionnaire is part of the research process for a Master of Technology in the Faculty of Graphic Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, with the title:
An exploration of South African visual culture and identity: Case studies in graphic design

<u>Background to the study</u>

The call for a uniquely South African design language emerged in the early 1990s, following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. The challenge was for graphic design professionals to explore what it visually means to be South African – rather than predominantly Eurocentric – in an attempt to innovate a new and inclusive visual design language (Moys, 2004:2, 77, 84).

As a result of South Africa's democratic and socio-economic transformation, graphic designers today are expected to work with and within a variety of socio-cultural contexts. Multicultural and multilingual design has become a reality, bringing together designers, users, and other stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds. When designing for an audience from a culture other than their own, Akama (2008:13) alleges that "designers need to think more critically about what they do and the cultural, social, and environmental conditions they contribute to," as the design process is less intuitive and more prone to assumption. Intercultural design calls for designers to be conscious of their biases, stereotypes, and prejudices while gathering insightful data to ensure that visual communication is appropriate and relevant.

Sasaki (2008) contends that graphic designers significantly influence social structures, economies, environments, and cultural identity through visual language. Within this framework, the study aims to contribute to South African graphic design discourse by examining whether graphic design, as a language that functions through visual representation systems, should be critically studied in cultural contexts. The researcher acknowledges that a more equitable representation of cultural diversity in post-apartheid South Africa is a complex process that requires further examination and inquiry.

Please feel free to answer the questions you are comfortable with and to add any relevant information, concerns or issues that may be helpful in building an understanding of intercultural knowledge in the discipline of graphic design.

General Questions: understanding of culture in graphic design education
5 questions

1. How important is cultural knowledge and understanding for graphic design students in South Africa?
   a) If so, how important is cultural studies in the graphic design (visual communication) curriculum?

2. How does a student's cultural background influence their designs?

3. To what extent is the current curriculum adequately preparing students to be effective communication design practitioners in multicultural South African and global contexts? ie. are young designers adequately prepared for approaches to designing for different cultural contexts when starting to work in the South African industry?

4. What are the effects that diversity of cultures of students has on teaching and learning in Graphic Design?

5. What is the role of industry in determining standards for socio-ethical design practice for students and, therefore, in influencing the curriculum and pedagogic needs of design institutions?

B. **Specific student related questions: how have students applied cultural knowledge in their projects**
3 questions

1. **2021 Museum brief**::
   a. what were your in-class observations of the different approaches by the 2 students' to their selected Museum?

    b.   in what way did cultural knowledge influence the students' respective design approaches?

    c.   how important is primary research to gather insights and an understanding of the cultural context?

2. **2022 Museum brief**: changes made to the brief:

    a.   did you find the changes to the brief's design approach beneficial for the students' learning?

         i.   what student learning did you observe take place?

    b.   how important is primary research for students to visit the Museum space and context in person?

    c.   was the cross-disciplinary approach beneficial for the students' learning?

         i.   Was it beneficial to have a lecturer from another discipline discuss the context with the students?

3. Any additional observations or comments?

Appendix D: Design Brief 2021

MAJOR: GRAPHIC DESIGN 2
MUSEUM + VISUAL IDENTITY

Ev.Nr 01

Deadline: Tuesday, 16th February 2021 (AERO)

Expected Outcome:
By the end of this event students should be able to:

- translate and apply intermediate design principles and elements to design solutions;
- develop and consistently apply creative, relevant concepts, which take cognisance of the intended communication goal, relevant media and client and target market expectations;
- conduct independent (process documents) and self-reflective analysis and synthesis of visual, verbal and textual information (research) with the aim of solving design problems;
- utilise visual communication strategies, design thinking, and design history in the production of design solutions;
- utilise relevant media, mediums and technology in the execution of project events including software skills and techniques, 2D print and production solutions as well as creating 3D mock-ups of a variety of packs.

Objectives for this Event:
By the end of this event students should be able to:

- conduct research around a specific visual identity, while contextualising findings within the scope of the brief;
- develop and consistently apply creative and relevant concepts, which take cognisance of the intended communication goal, relevant media for visual identity branding;
- design a logo that represents a brand, and applying the unified visual identity across all visual elements, i.e. stationary, collateral, marketing material;
- utilise relevant media, mediums and technology in the execution of a brand identity including software skills and techniques, 2D print and production solutions as well as creating 3D mock-ups as specified by the brief;
- develop skills in computer software Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to execute concepts and techniques relevant to corporate identity branding
- upload all work onto the various platforms in the correct format as specified by the brief.

Search tags:

Please make use of the following search tags and keywords to aid you in your research and make your final project execution successful:

Visual identity system: identity guidelines

Logotype; logomark; flexible (dynamic) logo

Typeface: typeface designers; type foundaries; type anatomy

Handlettering: Jessica Hische; Louise Filli; Martina Flor

Visual cultural sensitivity: cultural appropriation

South African designers/illustrators: Karabo Poppy Molet-sane; Garth Walker; Maaike Bakker; Studio MUTI; Kirsten Townsend (based in USA)

International designers/illusrators/studios: Michael Beirut; Paula Scher; Pentagram

A museum is ... an institution that cares for a collection of artifacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, cultural, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary.

The Brief

Develop a new visual identity system for one of the museums below. Choose one to create a typographical logo signature (logotype and tagline) for.

South African Museums:
District Six Museum
Medical Morphology Museum
Museum of Natural History
Museum of Man and Science
Robben Island Museum

International Museums:
Bicycle Heaven
International Spy Museum
International UFO Museum & Research Center
Salt and Pepper Shaker Museum
The Voodoo Museum

RESEARCH:
Research the museum of your choice. Visit the website and make notes on what your museum embodies. Gather visual reference: existing imagery, photographs, etc. Search for museum reviews or articles and include those in your process as well.

Create a visual idea board for the museum that will inform your logo and development of the visual identity. This can be organized in Milanote. Document images with links, thoughts, etc. directly to your Milanote process.

Include the following:

- Pertinent business information: existing identity/ branding system, location, contact info, any tag lines, mottos, sub titles, secondary names, etc.;
- Business history, mission statement;
- Summaries/reviews of recent exhibitions, articles, visitor reviews;
- Images of interior/exterior, any other existing imagery you can find;
- Existing Design as Inspiration;
- Illustration/Photography references;
- * The more research and visuals you have the better

Brainstorm: Make a mindmap and/or create lists of everything you associate with the museum that can inform your initial typographic and logo sketches.

CUSTOM-DESIGNED TYPEFACE

- explore a variety of different typeface and lettering options;
- sketch at least 10 ideas or more for your concepts.

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TYPOGRAPHIC LOGO EXPLORATION

• Explore a variety of different logo ideas in thumbnails;

• Sketch at least 10 ideas based on the workshop (27/01).

TIPS FOR GENERATING LOGO THUMBNAILS

• The more research and material you set down initially, the more options you have to explore.

• Work in an unconfined pictorial space – do not start by working in a square or rectangular field.

• Scamp directly on paper. Do not start by working on the computer.

• Work with line and shape only. Continuous tone is not permitted. If you want to create a sense of light and volume do so by using hatching, cross-hatching, stippling, etc.

Remember that logos are seen in many different ways – very small (on stationery) and very large (on signage). The style you use to create the images should work well on any scale. The sort of subtle detail you might use in an illustration will not always work in a logo. SIMPLIFY!

CUSTOMER TOUCH POINTS

The visual identity must be extended to customer touch points – stationery (business card, letterhead, envelope), merchandise, and advertising poster.

EXERCISES AND WORKSHOPS

Complete exercises on AERO according to the schedule.

MILANOTE PROCESS DOCUMENT

You will be required to document your creative making process on your **Milanote Board**.

NOTES:

1. create and upload screenshots/scans/photos of your process to Milanote as you work. Make this a habit now and you will never need to go back and update to meet the weekly process deadlines.

2. Label your boards with your names for identification.

3. Invite all lecturers to your Milanote Board, using their email address, before the end of class on the first day of the event briefing.

REFLECTIVE CYCLE

Apply the following questions to direct your reflective cycle process. Document your reflective cycle on your Ev01 **Milanote board** in your final process document hand in.

Reflect-in-action: *Communication*

1. Whose work did I explore regarding typeface design and what did I discover about their method and technique?

2. Whose work did I explore regarding logo design and what did I discover about their method and technique?

3. Has my research informed my making, how?

4. What have a learnt about visual metaphors and meanings?

Reflect-in-action: *Technical*

1. What typographic/lettering skills did I explore? What did I discover by applying these skills?

2. Did I apply skills learnt by referencing other designers and illustrators?

3. How did I apply typography and image to creating a typographic ogo?

4. What technical skills did I explore in logo design?

5. How have I applied my CDP skills in my creative process?

6. How have I applied the logo and assets to create a wholistic visual identity for a Museum?

Reflect-on-action: *Introspection*

1. What did I struggle with? Why?

2. How could I do this differently?

3. Did I apply any self-learning by accessing online tutorials? Was this beneficial and how?

4. Did I struggle with my CDP skills? if so, how should I address this challenge?

5. Did I learn anything from my peers?

SETTING YOUR GOALS FOR THE BRIEF

Apply the following questions to direct your goal setting process at the beginning of each brief. Document your goals at the launch of the brief on your Ev01 Milanote process document hand in.

• What are my personal expectations for the brief?

• How will I manage my time effectively?

• Have I met the brief requirements?

• What is my work ethic?
  e.g. arrive on time, preparation, respect rules and repercussions.

• What self-learning will I apply?

• What can I learn from my reflective cycle process?

HAND-IN REQUIREMENTS

Apply the tutorial on compressing files for the AERO final hand.

1. Physical Hand-in: *consider materials and printing*
Visual journal: include all original illustrations, artwork and exercises.

  • Business Card/Letterhead/Envelope

  • Typographic Poster

2. Digital Hand-in on Aero:
Unpacking board: *example supplied*

  • Custom-designed typeface

  • Final assets; ie. illustrations; photographs

  • Final Logo/Logotype with Tagline

  • Business Card/Letterhead/Envelope

  • Typographic Poster Advert

  • One additional collateral item that would be sold at a museum gift shop + gift bag

  • Milanote process document

Important Note: correct format must be applied to work for digital hand in of all work (labelling, jpeg, pdf etc.).

Save: all final documents must be saved into **one zipped folder.**

  Label folder: eg. E1_JouS.zip

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Week Process

By following the weekly schedule will ensure that you stay up-to date with your class preparation and will allow you to finish the project in time.

Week 1

Day	Date	Activity
Wed	20 Jan	**briefing** **workshop**: type/lettering set up Milanote board & send link to lecturers by end of day **HOMEWORK**: research and concept exploration; type exploration scamps
Fri	22 Jan	**consult:** concept research/visuals/midmapping; type exploration scamps / sketches based on concept **HOMEWORK**: refine typographic concept **REFLECTION**

Week 2

Day	Date	Activity
Wed	27 Jan	**consult** **workshop**: logotype options explore custom-designed typeface illustrations/imagery **HOMEWORK**: refine typography and imagery; scamps of logotype
Fri	29 Jan	**consult**: scamps of logotype **crafting refinments:** custom-designed typeface: illustrations/imagery; combine type and image **HOMEWORK**: refine & digitise custom-designed type; refine logotype options; scamps of typographic poster layouts **REFLECTION**

Week 3

Day	Date	Activity
Wed	3 Feb	**class crit:** crafting of custom-typeface **consult:** logotype options; A2 poster layout concepts **HOMEWORK**: refine logotype explore paper/specialised print process-es, ie. embossing; transfer etc. refine poster layout
Fri	5 Feb	**class review:** logotype **consult** **crafting refinments:** logotype typographic poster layout **HOMEWORK**: finalise logotype; finalise typographic poster layout; scamps of stationary (3 elements), *and* scamps of one museum gift shop item, *and* gift bag **REFLECTION**

Week 4

Day	Date	Activity
Wed	10 Feb	**consult**: explore, develop, refine ideas **craft:** stationary (3 elements); one museum gift shop item *& gift bag* **HOMEWORK**: refine stationary and collateral
Fri	12 Feb	**consult**: final overview of all elements **craft:** refine stationary (3 elements); refine one museum gift shop item *& gift bag* **HOMEWORK**: unpacking presentation production and printing **FINAL REFLECTION**
Tues	16 Feb	**Deadline:** digital upload to Aero
Wed	17 Feb	**Deadline:** physical hand-in before 9am

Assessment criteria:

You will be evaluated on the following criteria for your final exe-cuted project:

Assessment Criteria	Percent-age allo-cated
RESEARCH & CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT • demonstrate the application of research that is relevant to the design of a visual identity for a specific brand; • show evidence of an understanding of concept development and the application thereof to a visual identity for a brand.	**20%**
PROCESS DEVELOPMENT & APPLICATION Show evidence of and understanding of: • develop a custom-designed typeface that reflects the visual identity of a specific brand; • create a typogrpahic logo and identity design elements that visually express the intended communication goals for the visual identity; • demonstrate the development of a brand's visual identity assets and the unified application thereof to collateral, marketing material, and stationary elements.	**40%**
TECHNICAL & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT Show evidence of and knowledge of: • technical skills in relevant software to create and execute various elements content relevant to visual identity branding; • creating and rendering 2D and 3D mock-ups, i.e. correctness of working files, mock-ups, quality of crafting, attention to detail, neatness of project as a whole; • crafting of a custom-designed tyface or lettering that expresses the identity of a brand.	**20%**

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FINAL DELIVERABLES Show evidence of and knowledge of: • digital and/or print production; • the creative process to inform a final digital and /or print deliverable; • apply critical thinking to the reflective cycle throughout the event in order to understand and learn from the creative process.	*20%*
TOTAL	***100%***

Resources:

Please check AERO regularly for updated digital resources and links to support you in successfully completing this brief.

Online:
https://www.typewolf.com/resources
https://www.smashingmagazine.com/typography-guide-lines-and-references/

Typography:
https://hello.monotype.com/rs/800-DWE-978/images/Mono-typeAwardsPacket_2020.pdf

Lettering:
https://www.crashboomdesigns.com
https://www.pandrdesignco.com
http://www.martinaflor.com
https://www.instagram.com/martinaflor/
https://www.louisefili.com/typedesign

Design Publications:
Communication Arts : https://www.commarts.com/
Print : https://www.printmag.com
How : https://howdesignlive.com
Graphis : https://www.graphis.com
CMYK : https://www.cmykmag.com/
Juxtapoz : https://www.juxtapoz.com/
Creative Quarterly : https://www.cqjournal.com
Eye : http://www.eyemagazine.com
Emigre : https://www.emigre.com/Magazine
Wired : https://www.wired.com
Layers : https://layersmagazine.com
U&lc : http://www.designishistory.com/1960/ulc/
Computer Arts : https://www.creativebloq.com/comput-er-arts-magazine
Creative Review : https://www.creativereview.co.uk
ID : https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk
Beautiful/Decay : http://www.beautifuldecay.com
Wallpaper : https://www.wallpaper.com
Smashing : https://www.smashingmagazine.com

Visual identities and logo design
https://werklig.com/project/helsinki-city-museum/
https://werklig.com/project/city-of-helsinki/
https://www.rightanglestudio.com.au/urbanresearchjournal/field-notes/this-must-be-the-place/
https://www.museumnext.com/article/eye-catching-muse-um-logo-design/

Designers
Michael Beirut
http://eyeondesign.aiga.org/design-histo-ry-101-michael-bierut-on-tough-assignments-what-its-like-to-be-publicly-scrutinized/

Karabo Poppy Moletsane
https://www.behance.net/Karabo_Poppy

Maaike Bakker
https://www.maaike-bakker.com
https://www.behance.net/Maaike_Bakker

Studio Muti
https://www.behance.net/muti?tracking_source=search_projects_recommended%7Cijusi%20south%20africa

Garth Walker
https://garthwalker.com
https://misterwalker.net

iJusi Magazine
http://www.ijusi.com/magazines.html

Constitutional Court typeface deisgn
https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/han-dle/2263/3084/Sauthoff_Alliance%282006%29.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/han-dle/2263/3084/Sauthoff_Alliance%282006%29a.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

https://stranger-studio.com/work/constitu-tional-court-art-collection-identity-design/

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Appendix E: Design Brief 2022

Brief Outline

MAJOR: *Graphic Design 2*

Event Number: 2

Title of the brief: Museum marketing campaign

Deadline:

Monday | 14 MARCH 2021

Expected Outcomes:

- Logo with custom lettering

- Single minded proposition & tagline

- Brand style guide

- Business card & letterhead

- Information guide & Map

Objectives for this Event

- conduct primary and secondary research to inform concept development aimed at a specific target audience

- develop and consistently apply creative, relevant concepts, which take cognisance of the intended communication goal, relevant media and client and target market expectations

- demonstrate theoretical and visual research that informs the image-making process and is relevant to the marketing material within the scope of the brief

- demonstrate exploration of how certain materials and techniques can add to the intended marketing communication objective and show the exploration of image-making and possible design solutions during the development of the visual communication

- show an understanding of the design principles when combining image/s with typographic information on different deliverables

- critically reflect on the event in order to understand and learn from the creative process

- correctly upload all work onto AERO in the format as stipulated by the brief

Brief *Introduction*

Museums are spaces for education and preservation. Yet, these spaces are often cultural hubs and places for experimentation and development. These spaces need to adapt and adjust over time to function within different political and social landscapes. The visual identity system and branding of a museum are one of the first touchpoints through which the audience engages with the space and needs to reflect the mission and values of the museum. Because of this, graphic designers play a key role in the per museum space perceived and how the audience engages with the museum.

For this event, you need to develop a new visual identity system for one of the following museums in Cape Town: District 6 Museum, Iziko Slave Lodge or Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum.

The visual identity you develop should be informed by primary and secondary research. Consider the role of these museum spaces within a post-colonial and post-apartheid landscape and critically reflect how the audience engages with these museums and the visual identity that you will develop.

Brief Unpacked

Brief Details

Research

For this event, you are expected to
conduct primary and secondary research.

You will visit the museum you selected in class in person to conduct primary research. When visiting the museum, take photos and make notes. The idea of primary research is to collect as much information as possible and to find unique insights into the museum. These should inform your conceptualisation of the visual identity. Carefully observe as much as you can and ask critical questions when visiting the space. Engage with the audience and the space to gather insights.

In conjunction with the primary research, you need to conduct secondary research. Visit the museum website, search for museum reviews or articles and include those in your process as well. Gather visual reference: existing imagery, photographs, etc. Also, consider similar museum spaces, competitors and the city (and country) the museum is in during your research.

Create a visual idea board for the museum that will inform your logo and the development of the visual identity. This can be organised in Milanote. Document images with links, thoughts, etc. directly to your Milanote process.

Keep in mind that research is a continuous process that should take place throughout the brief and should be focused on the part of the brief you are busy with. This means you also need to research image-making methods and other technical aspects that you need to master to create your visual identity.

Custom-Designed Lettering & Logo Exploration

- the logo you develop should include custom-designed lettering and relevant iconography (if needed)
- you will create a lino-cut print of your logo to print and digitalise
- explore a variety of different typeface and lettering options;
- explore a variety of different logo ideas in thumbnails;
- sketch at least 10 ideas or more for your concepts.

** Tips for generating logo thumbnails

- The more research and material you set down initially, the more options you have to explore.
- Work in an unconfined pictorial space – do not start by working in a square or rectangular field.
- Scamp directly on paper. *Do not start by working on the computer.*
- Work with line and shape only. The continuous tone is not permitted. If you want to create a sense of light and volume do so by using hatching, cross-hatching, stippling, etc.

** *Remember* that logos are seen in many different ways – very small (on stationery) and very large (on signage). The style you use to create the images should work well on any scale. The sort of subtle detail you

Reflective Cycle

Apply the following questions to direct your reflective cycle process. Document your reflective cycle on your Ev01 **Milanote board** in your final process document hand in.

Setting Your Goals For The Brief

Apply the following questions to direct your goal-setting process at the beginning of each brief. Document your goals at the launch of the brief on your Ev01 Milanote process document hand in.

- What are my personal expectations for the brief?
- How will I manage my time effectively?
- Have I met the brief requirements?
- What is my work ethic?
- e.g. arrive on time, preparation, respect rules and repercussions.
- What self-learning will I apply?
- What can I learn from my reflective cycle process?

Reflect-in-action: *Communication*

1. Whose work did I explore regarding typeface design and what did I discover about their method and technique?
2. Whose work did I explore regarding logo design and what did I discover about their method and technique?
3. Has my research informed my making, how?
4. What have a learnt about visual metaphors and meanings?

Reflect-in-action: *Technical*

1. What typographic/lettering skills did I explore? What did I discover by applying these skills?
2. Did I apply skills learnt by referencing other designers and illustrators?
3. How did I apply typography and image to create a typographic logo?
4. What technical skills did I explore in logo design?
5. How have I applied my CDP skills in my creative process?
6. How have I applied the logo and assets to create a holistic visual identity for a Museum?

Reflect-on-action: *Introspection*

1. What did I struggle with? Why?
2. How could I do this differently?
3. Did I apply any self-learning by accessing online tutorials? Was this beneficial and how?
4. Did I struggle with my CDP skills? if so, how should I address this challenge?
5. Did I learn anything from my peers?

Hand-In Requirements

might use in an illustration will not always work in a logo. **SIMPLIFY**!

Visual Identity

You need to design a one-page (A4) brand style guide to show your visual identity. This guide should include:

- Full colour and black and white logo
- Primary and secondary fonts
- Colour palette with CMYK & RGB colour codes

Customer Touch Points

The visual identity must be extended to customer touchpoints: stationery (business card & letterhead, map and information guide.

** Keep the audience and the way they engage with various touchpoints in mind when designing your visual identity,

Exercises And Workshops

Complete exercises on AERO according to the schedule

Milanote Process Document

You will be required to document your creative making process on your **Milanote Board**.

**NOTES:

1. create and upload screenshots/scans/photos of your process to Milanote as you work. Make this a habit now and you will never need to go back and update to meet the weekly process deadlines.
2. Label your boards with your names for identification.
3. Invite all lecturers to your Milanote Board, using their email address, before the end of class on the first day of the event briefing.

Apply the tutorial on compressing files for the AERO final hand.

1. Physical Hand-in: *consider materials and printing*
Visual journal: include all original illustrations, artwork and exercises.

- Stationary: Business Card & Letterhead
- Map & Information guide

2. Digital Hand-in on Aero:

i. Unpacking board: *example supplied*

- *Custom-designed typeface*
- *Final Logo/Logotype with Tagline*
- *Gif of logo (logo reveal)*
- *Final image making; ie.illustrations/photographs*
- *Brand Style Guide*
- *Business Card and Letterhead*
- *Map & Information Guide*

ii. PDF of Milanote process document with link

- *** Important Note:** correct format must be applied to work for digital hand in of all work (labelling, jpeg, pdf etc.).

- **Save**: all final documents must be saved into one zipped folder.

- **Label folder:** eg. E1_JouS.zip

Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria	Percentage allocated to individual criterium.
Research & Concept Development • demonstrate the application of research that is relevant to the design of a visual identity for a specific brand; • show evidence of an understanding of concept development and the application thereof to visual identity for a brand.	20 %
Process Development & Application Show evidence of and understanding of: • develop a custom-designed typeface that reflects the visual identity of a specific brand; • create a typographic logo and identity design elements that visually express the intended communication goals for the visual identity; • demonstrate the development of a brand's visual identity assets and the unified application thereof to collateral, marketing material, and stationary elements.	40 %
Technical & Skills Development Show evidence of and knowledge of: • technical skills in relevant software to create and execute various elements of content relevant to visual identity branding; • creating and rendering 2D and 3D mock-ups, i.e. correctness of working files, mock-ups, quality of crafting, attention to detail, neatness of project as a whole; • crafting of a custom-designed typeface or lettering that expresses the identity of a brand.	20 %
Final Deliverables Show evidence of and knowledge of: • digitaland/orprintproduction; • the creative process to inform a final digital and /or print deliverable; • apply critical thinking to the reflective cycle throughout the event in order to understand and learn from the creative process.	20 %

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