Discourses of inclusion and exclusion: 
Ethnic minority, Muslim and refugee students 
in rural schools 

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

Research in the sociology of education over recent decades has generated a vast literature concerned with schooling inequalities and the way everyday subjectivities are produced and excluded by education policy and schooling practices. Much of this literature is concerned with the politics of identity and the performative constitution of the ethnic subject in schooling contexts. Yet, while there is a significant body of literature concerned with ethnicity and education in urban contexts, few studies explore how ethnicity is shaped by rurality in ‘country’ schools. This ethnographic study takes as its focus the everyday schooling experiences of six ethnic minority, refugee and/or Muslim students in three rural high schools in Australia. It examines the educational inclusions and exclusions these students experience as a result of the privileging of normative knowledges and practices. The study examines the dynamic and complex discourses that shape these students’ possibilities for being and belonging. It examines the tensions and possibilities that work to enable and constrain the students’ subjectivities within communities marked by ethnic homogeneity. The study argues that ethnic and religious minority students experience inclusions and exclusions in the rural landscape through affecting discourses that work to create ‘truths’ about who rightfully belongs in the countryside, as well as who these persons need to ‘be’ in order to experience belonging in the rural. The study also suggests that against narratives of unbelonging, moments of everyday place-sharing prevail. In Other experiences of rurality that de-centre White hegemony, I illustrate a multiplicity of ways that belonging is experienced in rural landscapes. In this sense, this study
examines how schooling cultures make viable and non-viable raced, placed, nationed and religioned bodies in education. These findings are taken up in the study to explore pedagogical possibilities for educators seeking to disturb everyday injustices in schooling.
**Key to transcripts**

Fieldwork data collected for this study is typically presented as a series of ‘episodes’, characterising a shift away from traditional academic modes of representation to new ways of engaging with data and disseminating research. As I go on to discuss in Chapter Four, this presentation style is in keeping with the conventions of similar studies in the sociology of education (Youdell, 2006b, 2011), as well as more general trends in the reporting of ethnographic data where theatrical ‘scripting’ is taken up as a means to engage with the complexities of poststructural research (Goldstein, 2008). The episodes that follow in this study are drawn from transcripts of interviews, as well as from my fieldnotes. The following conventions have been adopted in representing data:

- Episodes of quoted speech appear in *italicised Verdana font*.
- Episodes constructed from fieldnotes are represented in *Verdana font*.
- Episodes constructed from email communication are represented in *Courier New font*.
- Material that has been edited out of interviews is indicated by an ellipsis ...
- An ellipsis may also indicate a pause.
- Significant gaps in dialogue created through the process of editing are indicated by [...]
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- Information about how speech was delivered appears within [square] brackets.
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Chapter One
Introduction

The Australian country town where I live has altered. Walking along the main street, it is no longer unusual to see refugees from Sudan wearing tobs and kantas\(^1\) mingling amongst farmers in Blundstones\(^2\) and Akubras\(^3\). In local supermarkets, parks and schools, populations of people whose paths may never once have crossed now meet in close proximity.

As changing global spaces have altered local and national boundaries (as well as identities and cultures), and refugees are forced by political conflict to flee their homelands to seek solace in ‘safe’ countries like Australia, so refugee populations in rural settings have increased (DIAC, 2010; McDonald-Wilmsen, Gifford, Webster, Wiseman, & Casey, 2009). The visible presence of these immigrant populations in rural communities, and the inclusions and exclusions they experience as part of this residence, are a key concern of this study. As places are more closely connected by changing geopolitical relations, so associations in the everyday are impacted (Pain & Smith, 2008). Local constructions of ethnic difference in daily life produce, and are produced by, public discourses of power, knowledge, dominance and fear in the global sphere (Haldrup, Koefoed, & Simonsen, 2008). In the Australian context, ethnic and religious identities in rural life are produced in relations of power framed by circulating discourses of racism, national belonging (Noble & Poynting, 2010) and rurality (Panelli, Hubbard, Coombes, & Suchet-Pearson, 2009).

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\(^1\) Robes, often brightly coloured, worn by the women of Sudan.
\(^2\) A popular brand of Australian boot.
\(^3\) An iconic Australian hat favoured in rural areas.
An understanding of how this “quotidian diversity” (Wise, 2005), or everyday multiculturalism, is embodied and realised in place-based relations is increasingly important. Questions around how persons perform and negotiate their daily lives in changing times and altered spaces is an issue of emerging social relevance.

These issues are taken up in this study through an exploration of the lived experiences of six ethnic minority youth and their relationship with schooling inclusions and exclusions. Schools, as important sites where socio-cultural issues are played out, are key sites to understand how rural spaces have been transformed by ethnic minority populations, as well as how these persons are constituted by rural relations. This study examines the dynamic and complex narratives that shape refugee, Muslim and ethnic minority students’ possibilities for being and belonging. It draws attention to the students’ discursive positioning and the tensions and possibilities that work to enable and constrain the students’ identities within communities marked by ethnic homogeneity. In particular, I examine how students are made subjects in the rural, and how these place-based subjectivities go on to produce schooling inclusions and exclusions. Both official and unofficial knowledges shape exclusionary practices in (rural) schools, regulating how religious and ethnic identities and student and learner identities can be taken up and embodied by refugee, Muslim and ethnic-minority students. This study highlights how schooling cultures make viable and non-viable raced, nationed and religioned bodies in education (Youdell, 2006b), exploring pedagogical possibilities for educators seeking to disturb everyday injustices in schooling, as well as more far-reaching social inequalities in education.
In this context, schools are both agents of and impediments to change, and the challenges of working oppositionally in a neo-liberal environment are complex and challenging. The prevalence of neo-liberalism in the current educational context dictates that market forces are now the ultimate arbiter of educational quality (Apple, 2005; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Whitty, 2002; Youdell, 2004), replacing a previous emphasis on social justice and egalitarian values and ideals (Smyth, 2004; Welch, 2007; Whitty, 2002). In this climate, neo-liberal education policies and emphasis are argued to be “legitimating educational inequalities” (Apple, 2005, p. 271) and “reproduce[ing] traditional hierarchies of class, race, and gender” (p. 275) in education. As teachers’ lives become more and more concerned with measuring performance through ratings and rankings, in an educational environment increasingly aligned to the expectations and vernacular of business (around issues like choice, markets, accountability, management, effectiveness and efficiency, for example), so the experience of equality in education is lost to many (Smyth, 2004). In this environment, educators must find ways to creatively engage with pedagogy and curricula to effect and locate possibilities for socially just educational outcomes. This study takes up Welch’s (2007) argument that educators must think beyond the limits of neo-liberal discourse and the ways of thinking this discourse creates (which may, at times, appear “difficult or impossible” to challenge), “to ‘see’ (talk, write) beyond the boundaries of this reality” (p. 4). Indeed, Welch suggests that marketised educational discourses might simply be seen as “starting points for opposition” (p. 4), where counter-narratives and contradictory practices might be injected into the educational milieu to open up spaces for a transformative education built on social justice principles.
To this end, this study is concerned with pedagogy and its interactions with socio-cultural knowledge and political and economic discourse, and their ability to shape policy and the organisation of schooling in ways that go on to determine and constrain subjectivities in education. Youdell (2011), for example, highlights the importance of understanding pedagogy in the context of the socio-political, economic and institutional relations that shape and constrain the subjects of schooling, even as schools are, at the same time, the focus of policy interventions targeted at dissolving educational inequalities. These ideas and their implications for pedagogy and curricula will be further explored in Chapter Eight.

The politics of the nation inevitably impacts rural Australia; its struggles and tensions subsequently played out on rural soil. National debates over immigration, multiculturalism, terrorism, asylum seekers and refugees signify, at their core, something of the relationship Australians have with “self and others”, where “those who are one-of-us can define their identity through that which they-are-not” (Arber, 2008b, p. 2). In the wake of terrorist attacks in New York, London, Madrid and Indonesia, and racist riots on the beaches of Cronulla (an oceanside suburb of Sydney), it becomes inevitable that these tensions, and the logic that underpins them, are felt in Australian rural communities (and subsequently in rural schools). To this end, during the process of writing this research, an Australian country town called Tamworth, population 42,500, achieved national prominence in the Australian media when its local council voted not to accept government funding to resettle a small number of Sudanese refugee families into its community. This event, which encapsulates many of the issues described above, and which is outlined briefly in the media article
below, was an impetus to investigate the very real impact of global and national events on rural communities in Australia:

‘Duo succeeds in changing town’s tune on Sudanese’
The Australian, 17 January 2007

The country music town of Tamworth, which this weekend opens its doors to 50,000 music fans, has agreed to find room for five penniless Sudanese families.

A campaign by an unlikely duo – a Tamworth publican and an Anglican priest – has paid off, with both men instrumental in persuading the city council last night to overturn its earlier decision to reject the refugees.

Robert Schofield, a Tamworth councillor and publican at the Commercial Hotel, said the campaign to bring the Africans into town had made him unpopular but said he didn’t care.

“When you’ve been a publican for 40 years, you get used to things,” he said. “And people have been throwing stuff at me this week.

“One person even left me an email saying I looked like an academic. “I can tell you, I’m the furthest thing from an academic you’re likely to find. I was flat out getting a pass in the third grade.”

Mr Schofield was among three Tamworth councillors who last month voted to accept a federal government proposal to resettle the five families. Six other councillors rejected the plan, with the Mayor, James Treloar, saying he was concerned about crime and disease.

The refugees speak no English, are illiterate in their own language and have no experience of Western culture.

A poll of 500 people suggested three in four were opposed to the resettlement.

Mr Schofield said ignorance was to blame. “People are frightened of them because they are tall and black,” he said.

“I tell them, I’ve got a mate in Noosa, a dark guy, real tall, one of those Masai, and just lovely.

“And I tell them, this is the best country in the world and we ought to be sharing it.”

Anglican priest Ken Fenton collected 1500 signatures in support of the refugees.

Mr Treloar told The Australian yesterday that the refugees would be allowed to settle in Tamworth “but the people who are supporting them had better step up and volunteer and help to settle them in”.

Mr Schofield agreed. “The key thing will be the volunteers,” he said.

“We’ve got to show him how the mix master works, explain why you’ve got to wash your clothes.”

He rejected as “baloney” the idea that Sudanese people did not understand electricity, saying: “If they get it wrong and stick their finger in the power point, they’ll only get it wrong once.”

Tamworth police acting commander Greig Stier said some members of the 25 Sudanese families already living in Tamworth had committed traffic offences, mostly driving without a licence, but there was no “African crime wave”.

More than 3500 Sudanese refugees were last year settled in Australia.

Councillor Warren Woodley said Tamworth had been asked to take just five families. “Only five families – five! And we take 50,000 people for the country music festival,” he said.

“It’s fear that’s behind this,” he added. The Sudanese people walking the streets were “striking to look at, very tall, very black, and the first time you see them you do go, boing!

“But it’s a credit to the human race, they are so striking.”

(Overington, 2007)
As this report outlines, in December 2006, in Tamworth, New South Wales, Australia, the City Council voted to reject an offer by the Department of Immigration to resettle five Sudanese refugee families into the town, fearing the move “could lead to a Cronulla riots-type situation” (Mayor, James Treloar, cited in Norrie, 2006b). The move by the Council sparked the following headlines in the national media: “You’re not welcome, town tells refugees” (Norrie, 2006b); “Chorus of outrage at rejection of refugees” (Norrie, 2006a); “Sudanese ‘betrayed’ by mayor’s comments” (Stapleton & Madden, 2006); “The Tamworth test: country, Australia. Western, compulsory” (2006); and “A shameful lack of harmony in country music capital” (2006). While it would be wrong to suggest that all coverage of this issue flowed in support of the Sudanese in Tamworth, overwhelmingly, there was widespread national criticism of Tamworth council’s decision to reject refugee resettlement, and of the Mayor’s comments as racist.

Following a storm of protest, Tamworth City Council voted in January 2007 to reverse its decision and to participate in the humanitarian program, but not before a flurry of interest in the topic of people of ‘difference’ in rural areas had been generated.

While Australia has long been widely regarded as a multicultural society, the events of Tamworth put a question mark over whether this acceptance of multiculturalism ceased where the wide expanses of rural and remote Australia open up. Questions were raised about whether rural Australia is a less tolerant social landscape than urban Australia, whether it is more racist, more conservative, and less inclusive of ethnic minorities than urban Australia, or whether these are, indeed, simply stereotypes of ‘the bush’ that might be safely quashed given the backlash that was directed
in the Tamworth example, against the comments and actions of Tamworth Council and of Mayor, James Treloar. Certainly it was felt that the Tamworth identity clash captured attention because the so-called protagonists in this case – the Sudanese refugees – were highly visible. Their very presence in a rural space defied cultural expectations; was transfixing because of the refugees seeming irregularity and incongruity in the rural landscape. Questions were posed concerning the Sudanese people’s ability to perform as law-abiding, problem-free, effective citizens in rural space. Yet the debate was also a symbolic clash over rurality, a battle over ‘who is entitled to live in the rural landscape’. To this extent, an important part of the Tamworth story was also the backlash that occurred against the erecting of boundaries around the town, in the form of criticisms of the council’s decision to prevent resettlement. The council’s original decision against resettlement was not accepted, but vigorously contested, suggesting that rural space is not a single social space, as suggested by the stereotypes, but a more complex, fluid and diverse social landscape than its critics might suggest.

This event, then, captures and articulates many of the themes and issues that are significant in the study on which this thesis is based. It raises questions that lie at the heart of this study, namely:

- What is the response of rural communities in Australia to the increasing number of refugees, Muslims and ethnic minorities living in its boundaries?
- What are the political, social and cultural principles that explain the lived experience of refugees, Muslims and ethnic minorities in rural communities?
• What is the relationship between ethnicity, culture and power in rural settings?
• How are these issues played out in rural schools in Australia?
• What discourses of space and place shape pedagogy in the rural?
• How can pedagogical routines be interrupted and reconfigured to better teach with and for diversity?
• How can normative spatial relations in schools be ‘troubled’ to produce socially just and inclusive schooling spaces?

In answering these questions, this work recognises the interconnectness of local, national and global contexts and their relationship to the rural. In order to understand the macro-relationship between rurality and ethnicity, a central concern of this study is to explore the micro-relationships played out in rural school environments, as they are connected to national and global discourses of race, ethnicity and rurality and situated within the field of the sociology of education (Ball, 2004; Whitty, 2002). The inclusions and exclusions that students experience in the rural school setting reveal not only the discursive practices operating in and around the educational environment the student finds herself in, but also those functioning in the wider social setting. In this sense, the issues raised by this work do not stop at the school gates. While a central concern of this study is to understand the lived experience of ethnic minority students in rural schools, a broader theme of the research is to examine how the socio-cultural experiences of these students within the confines of the school heighten our understanding of rural society beyond the walls of the classroom.
The student narratives presented here are told with the aim of creating a form of justice for ‘Othered’ students in rural places whose stories have long been neglected in dominant representations of the rural. I hope to create a space for neglected rural stories; the (minority ethnic) narratives of rurality which have long been hidden beneath dominant social constructions of what the rural is, which has seen the ‘rural’ constructed as a space free of ethnicity. In this sense, I seek to destabilise and undo the myth of rural Australia as a ‘White’ space (Moran, 2004) by highlighting the presence of ethnic minority students in rural schools in Australia, as well as identifying the struggles and successes of these students in countryside cultures. As Cloke (2006b) recognises:

both extreme and banal racisms represent very significant socio-cultural problematics in rural areas, and as with other axes of marginalization, while rendering them highly visible is the first step to a more socially inclusive future ... A concern for ‘other’ people and practices of ‘othering’ ... has become of paramount importance in tracing the consequences of how cultural significations of rurality have impacts on and in rural life itself. (pp. 380, 381-382)

This discussion recognises that issues of minority ethnicity and Australia’s treatment of its Indigenous peoples are inevitably entwined. Expressions of minority ethnicity and Indigeneity in rural Australia are both prescribed by circulating discourses of Whiteness. Indeed, the abiding dominance of Whiteness in rural Australia dictates the discursive invisibility of both Indigeneity and minority ethnicity in relation to Whiteness. As will be discussed further in Chapter Two, the discursive reproduction of Australia as symbolically White involves the closing down of discourses that threaten and/or destabilise Whiteness (Hage, 1998). In this context, both ethnic minorities and the nation’s Indigenous population have struggled
with issues of symbolic erasure\(^4\). These issues will be explored further in Chapter Two.

This study is concerned with the relationship between power, ethnicity and rurality, as these concepts are experienced in the everyday lives of students of minority ethnicity in rural Australia. The study explores issues of place, identity, racism, difference, and belonging through an examination of the rural schooling experiences of secondary school students from Afghanistan, Sudan, and Vietnam. The study also considers the experience of Australian-born Muslim students to further understand these issues in relation to insider–outsider boundaries and their operation in schools in the Australian countryside. In this sense, the focus of the study is on the way ethnic minority students are constituted by the everyday conditions of rural schooling cultures, and how these processes result in inclusions and exclusions in rural settings. In general terms, I am concerned to understand how ethnic minority students in rural areas ‘do’ school, and the extent to, and the means by which these students experience belonging in the rural landscape.

This study argues that ethnic minority students experience inclusions and exclusions in the rural landscape through affecting discourses that work to create ‘truths’ about who rightfully belongs in the countryside, as well as who these persons need to ‘be’ in order to experience belonging in the rural. To examine these ideas I draw on the work of Foucault (1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b), Butler (1997, 2004) and de Certeau (1984), whose theories I discuss

\(^4\) In addition to discursive attempts to symbolically erase Indigeneity, there exists a body of research that records evidence of White colonisers’ failed attempts to erase Indigenous persons from their lands. See, for example, Henry Reynold’s (2001) account of colonial genocide in *An indelible stain? The question of genocide in Australia’s history*, and Moses (2004) account of the same in *Genocide and settler society: Frontier violence and stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*.
in more detail in Chapter Three. The results of this research suggest that White identities are more likely to enjoy the privileges of inclusion than persons of Other ethnicities, and examination of the processes by which subjects are raced, placed, nationed and/or religioned, and therefore experience possibilities for inclusion and exclusion, form a central part of this study.

Through student narratives, field observations, and an analytical account of the same, the study provides an exploration of the intersections between schooling, rurality and ethnicity. These stories do not, cannot, represent all stories of all ethnic minority students in rural areas. Yet the research unveils the broad experience of students of ethnic and religious difference in rural places in a range of contexts. The study employs ethnographic methods to explore the lived experience of ethnic minority students in three government high schools in rural Australia. I consider ethnography to be the most effective method for gaining insight into the discursive practices through which persons come to be constituted as ethnic subjects, and the means through which they experience belonging in the rural landscape. I employ a reflexive approach to ethnography in the study in order to reveal the discursive processes through which knowledge is produced, including my own discursivity. In this sense, the study makes transparent latent ways of knowing in which it is acknowledged that the researcher is also inevitably caught up (Merriam et al., 2001; Mohan & Venzant Chambers, 2010; Shah, 2004; Subreenduth & Rhee, 2010; Tsolidis, 2008). The research also acknowledges the partial and situated nature of this research (Kenway, Kraack, & Hickey-Moody, 2006). These issues are further discussed in Chapter Four.
The stories that make up this study, collected from refugees and other ethnic and religious minority students in rural high schools across New South Wales, Australia have been compelling. At the beginning of the research process my attention was captured by two Sudanese girls sitting alone on a school oval in Western New South Wales while the rest of the school population sat some three hundred metres away from them during the school lunch period. My interest was piqued by their isolation. What could I learn from their story, I wondered? Around this time I also met a young Muslim student in a small country town in rural Australia who seemed unable to shake off his cloak of ethnic difference, despite being Australian-born. His ‘ethnicity’ seemed to matter to those around him, despite his own identifying practices. What was it like to practice as a Muslim in his town? I undertook the process of finding out. Next I met a small number of Muslim students from Afghanistan residing in a large rural city. Their stories of ‘fitting in’ were equally illustrative of a seemingly common refugee narrative (Oikonomidoy, 2007, 2009; Zine, 2001, 2008) where rich discursive networks in (rural) schools limit available student subjectivities.

In Chapter Two I trace the themes of race, ethnicity, identity and place as they have emerged as central concerns in my research. Through a review of the educational sociology, rural sociology, and human geography literatures, I show the complex ways in which these themes intersect in the rural schools and communities of rural Australia. In Chapter Three I review the theoretical literature underpinning this research. Michel Foucault’s (1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b) work is discussed to illustrate how discursive practices operate to construct narratives of the rural that generate inclusions and exclusions in rural life. Foucault’s theory of subjectivation is utilised to
confer understanding of who a subject must ‘be’ in order to be socially recognisable. Foucault’s framework for analysing the means by which power is exercised – his theories of a “grid of intelligibility” (1998), “system of differentiations” (2002b), “objectives” (2002b), and “antagonism of strategies” (2002b) are discussed, along with his theories of agency. Judith Butler’s (1997, 2004) theories of performativity, agency and recognition are also reviewed, and the work of de Certeau (1984) receives attention in relation to agency and narrative. Chapter Four outlines the methodological framework underpinning this research. The ethnographic methods used to gather data for the project are outlined in these pages. I discuss in this chapter how ways of knowing have informed the project from inception to conclusion. Student narratives are presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of the study. Chapter Five is concerned with documenting the experiences of ‘Saeed’⁵, an Australian-born Muslim living in a small town in rural New South Wales. The chapter explores how ethnicity is discursively constructed, as well as how these constructions generate inclusions and exclusions in the rural landscape. Chapter Six narrates the stories of ‘Asha’ and ‘Mihad’, two Sudanese sisters living in rural Australia. The narrative of ‘Hien’, a student from Vietnam, who has also experienced living in rural Australia, is also told. These narratives are used to explore the themes of racism and the hegemonic power of Whiteness in rural communities. Chapter Seven is concerned with the stories of ‘Hanif’ and ‘Khatria’, students who arrived in Australia from Afghanistan. The politics of schooling and belonging, and their connections to subjectivity and place, receive attention in this chapter. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I discuss rural

⁵ Pseudonyms are deployed throughout this study to protect the anonymity of participants. The names of places in this study have also been changed.
landscapes, and the possibilities inherent within them for intercultural belonging. This chapter also takes up the notion of a ‘pedagogy of belonging’, considering how educators might reshape the terrain of schooling by purposively engaging in practices of discourse that aim to unsettle and disrupt inequalities in schooling. Drawing on the analyses built in the preceding chapters, it considers the place of discursive counter-pedagogies in schooling and their ability to contribute to a transformative social justice of education.
Chapter Two

Rurality, Ethnicity, Identity and Place: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

Population research reveals that rural landscapes are currently being reshaped by immigrant settlement into rural communities, both in Australia (Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Forrest & Dunn, 2006; Hugo, 2005; Hugo, Khoo, & McDonald, 2006) and in other Western nations (Jentsch & Simard, 2009). As recently arrived migrants and refugees move into rural areas of Australia, and overseas-born Australians and their descendants migrate internally to rural areas, the composition of residents in rural populations who are overseas-born, changes. While the numbers of overseas-born persons residing in rural areas of Australia have not changed substantially over the last 30 years (around 5 per cent of the overseas-born population of Australia lives in rural areas, compared with 12 per cent of the Australian-born population) (ABS, 2004), research in Australia (Argent, 2002; Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Forrest & Dunn, 2006) suggests that increasingly diverse immigrant populations are contributing to the development of a more socially and culturally heterogeneous countryside. This situation is not unique to Australia, with research in Europe (Jentsch & Simard, 2009; Oliva, 2010) and the United States (Donato, Tolbert, Nucci, & Kawano, 2007) also recognising the ways that immigrant populations are changing rural landscapes. As this demographic change unfolds, the myth of rural Australia as a homogenous ethnic landscape is called into question, and the commonalities of rural social space as often represented – set in
dichotomous opposition to its more diverse urban counterpart – become harder to maintain. As Sibley (2006) recognises, increasingly, “international migrations and internal movements of people have made rural spaces spaces of difference” (p. 403). As rural landscapes undergo these demographic changes, it becomes important for social researchers to understand how power relations are configured in rural populations. As Kenway, et al. (2006) observe:

increased interconnectedness and interdependence have ... intensified the collision of cultures and histories that have long characterized the human condition. This has also contributed to the simultaneous process of homogenization and fragmentation, disintegration and reintegration ... Most people must resolve, somehow, the implications for the self as they negotiate multiple affiliations and overlapping communities. (p. 25)

Understanding the historical, socio-cultural and political discourses framing this reconfiguration of space is important for examining how minority students in schools come to be affected by global change in a quotidian sense. Furthermore, understanding what it means for minority students in rural schools in the aftermath of crises like September 11, and the London and Bali bombings provides a means to comprehend how rural space has been redefined by the global movement of people, producing new ways of identifying and belonging (Arber, 2008a). This is particularly important in a political climate where suspicion, intolerance and hostility towards people of minority ethnicity exists (Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007; Noble & Poynting, 2008), and where popular representations of what constitutes an outsider in the rural may exclude those who do not possess the symbolic capital of Whiteness (Hage, 1998). Recognising the ways that ethnic minority, Muslim and refugee students come to perform, speak, know and ‘be’ in pedagogical spaces, as well as understanding how privileged and
legitimised forms of knowledge and power determine belonging in the rural is an undertaking of educational and sociological significance.

Such recognition becomes ever more urgent in times of real or perceived ‘crisis’, when questions about how Australia defines itself and its national boundaries, and expressions of violence stemming from these discourses have resulted in a politics of fear (Gannon & Saltmarsh, 2008; Noble, 2005; Noble & Poynting, 2008; Pain & Smith, 2008; Poynting, 2006; Rizvi, 2005). Noble (2005) suggests that a “moral panic” (p. 107) has arisen in Australia, denoting an increase in discomfort and anxiety in the nation over the presence of people of difference. Such signs of crisis are not new (nor confined specifically to Australia) (Noble & Poynting, 2008; White, 1997), be it in rural or urban spaces. Australia has a long history of concern over security and its borders, expressed in documented disquiet over immigration, invasion and racial composition (Noble, 2005). Immigration policies of assimilation, and migration programs designed to discriminate against non-White populations were a fundamental part of Australian government policy for the first half of the 20th century, replaced by a policy of multiculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s (Noble, 2005). Multiculturalism, with its emphasis on recognition and understanding of cultural difference, has been criticised for failing to critically engage with the normativity of Whiteness (Troyna & Rizvi, 1997), but was nonetheless a discursively celebrated part of Australia’s cultural landscape until the rise of Pauline Hanson and the high-profile One Nation political party in the mid 1990s. Hanson, a conservative candidate for the Federal seat of Oxley⁶, then an

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⁶ Pauline Hanson first garnered public attention when, as a conservative political candidate for the safe Australian Labor seat of Oxley, she wrote to the local paper complaining about the injustice of government handouts to Aborigines. She was disendorsed by her party for these comments, but went on to win Oxley as an independent following a blaze of media
independent member of parliament, made a populist and conservative appeal to Australia’s White, middle and working class ‘battlers’, criticising Australia’s immigration and welfare policies, particularly as these were seen to benefit ‘Asian’ and Aboriginal Australians. Sensing the popular mood of the electorate, this ‘new racism’ found political support in the government of the Prime Minister, John Howard, who, in refusing to repudiate the racist views of Hanson, appeared to legitimise hate speech in Australia (Cuneen, Fraser, & Tomsen, 1997; Poynting, 2006). From this period in 1996, racism found a discursive foothold in the policies and pronouncements of successive Australian governments (Mansouri & Wood, 2007; Perera & Pugliese, 1997; Tascon, 2008), as well as in sections of the media who have, in the name of social cohesion, continued their criticisms of ‘political correctness’ in relation to issues of cultural unity, immigration and border security. This discursive politics, where fear is utilised as “a tool of governance, legitimising national and international actions on terrorism, informing issues of national security, restricting immigration, and so on … inspires actions which regulate and manipulate everyday life” (Pain & Smith, 2008, p. 4). In line with this argument, successive Australian governments have continued to devise and implement policies that have contributed to heightened racial tension in Australia (Aly & Green, 2010; Noble, 2005). Such events have functioned contextually to create a contemporary political climate where everyday ethnicity is lived and moderated in a “mood of fear and anxiety” (Noble, 2005, p. 109).

attention and popular support for her views. She later formed the One Nation party and moved to the safer rural seat of Blair in the state of Queensland, where the party’s support was mostly concentrated. Hanson’s populist appeal was greatest in regional areas of Australia of relative ethnic homogeneity, low incomes and high unemployment (Poynting & Mason, 2008; Wear, 2005).
Synthesising the connections between global discourses of crisis and local responses to ethnicity is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, community responses to ethnicity in the local are closely connected to national and international discourses of security and belonging, where questions of place and identity configure how relationships in the rural are constructed and play out. Secondly, Australia has a long history of migration into rural areas (Burnley, 2001), calling into question the myth of homogeneity and permanence in the countryside. As Poynting (2006) suggests, (and putting aside Australia’s history of the colonisation of Indigenous Australians for a moment), there is a history of racism in rural areas that should be marked, from the anti-Chinese goldfield riots in rural New South Wales in 1857 and 1861, to violent agitation against Afghan cameleers in remote Australia in the 1800s, to anti-immigration race riots in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia in 1933-34 (Burnley, 2001). While the reported incidence of racist violence in the rural is uncommon in the Australian archives, these events call into question popular historical representations of a homogenous, tranquil and serene rural Australia. Indeed, such encounters illustrate a long history of productive migrant settlement in rural Australia (Collins, 2007). Missingham, Dibden and Cocklin (2006), indeed, have shown that ethnic minorities have contributed significantly to the historical establishment and current growth of Australia’s rural horticultural and market-gardening industries, suggesting that in specific rural locations ethnic minority persons constitute a significant percentage of the population. Such records illustrate how contemporary discourses around place and ethnicity are historically located

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7 In this study, Indigenous Australians refers to both Aboriginal persons from mainland Australia and Torres Strait Islanders from the Torres Strait north of Australia.
within a culture that has been mercurial in its treatment and recognition of immigrants, and that has a “specific history of anxieties” (Noble, 2005, p. 108) around how boundaries of place and identity are produced.

This anxiety extends to Australia’s treatment of its Indigenous people. While it is not the aim of this study to investigate inclusions and exclusions as they pertain to Indigeneity, it is important to note the way Australia’s relationship with its Indigenous population, like its relationship with its minority ethnic population, is premised upon the centring of Whiteness. Nicoll (2004), for example, suggests that “white Australians … investment in white sovereignty is compulsory and [is] the basis of our national identity” (p. 19). She argues that the refusal of successive governments to recognise Indigenous sovereignty is a political manoeuvre designed to keep power from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, while the discursive pursuit of the more ambivalent policy of ‘reconciliation’ keeps power firmly in the hands of White Australians (Nicoll, 2004). Such a premise has obvious consequences not only for the nation’s treatment of its Indigenous peoples, but also for understanding how relations with ethnic ‘Others’ in Australia are produced. While debates over Indigenous and minority ethnic belonging share a common concern with origin and culture, these debates have tended to take two distinctly different turns in their discursive approach to affecting political and social change. An Indigenous concern with sovereignty, dispossession, land, and the power that attaches to these claims means that Indigenous claims to recognition are often different to those of immigrant populations who have sought recognition of cultural

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8 Such research has been carried out by others – see, for example, Cowlishaw, 1988, 1999, 2004 for an ethnographic study of the racial politics of rural Australia; Moreton-Robinson, 2004 for research pertaining to the relationship between sovereignty, whiteness and Indigeneity in Australia; and Aveling, 2006; Martino, 2003; Reid, 2004; Rahman, 2010; Santoro, 2010 for a discussion of Indigeneity, schooling and teacher education.
diversity on different terms (Curthoys, 1999; Stephenson, 2003). Curthoys (1999) has described this dissonance as an “uneasy conversation” between assertions “deriving from a past history of colonisation” and those focused on “multiculturalism” (p. 277), noting that calls for a common approach to diversity have been criticised for essentialising the particular claims of both the immigrant and the Indigene.

For the purposes of this study, minority ethnicity will be discussed as a category distinct from, and separate to, issues of Indigeneity (except where, in the everyday lives of participants in the study, opportunities arise to discuss the interplay of discourses affecting these groups). This differential is made for pragmatic analytic purposes, whilst recognising that identity categories are never essential, fixed or internally homogenous. It is also to recognise that conceptual categories like ethnicity are embodied and lived; that their conditions of possibility exist in relations with dynamic cultural systems. In this sense, this study appreciates that difference is produced in “discourses and practices [that] inscribe social relations, subject positions and subjectivities” (Brah, 1996, p. 115). And yet, this distinction having been made, it remains important to remark upon at least one of the significant similarities binding ethnic minority and Indigenous Australians in rural Australia. This concerns their discursive invisibility in the rural landscape. While the myth of Australia as a White nation is easily undone by reference to Australia’s Indigenous population (Indigenous Australians counting for 2.5 per cent of Australia’s population, with 69 per cent of this population living in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia) (ABS, 2007), Australia is frequently represented as a White space (Elder, Ellis, & Pratt, 2004; Hage, 1998; Moran, 2004) – a discursive that engenders a
distinctly rural Australian construction of Whiteness. This invisibility has its source in the notion that, as Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos (2004) write:

white Australia is too accustomed to disassociating the Indigenous other from much of what we value as Australian … the perpetuation of white race privilege within a society that affirms the notion of equality and a fair go as national ideals depends upon a collective ability to exercise a rather high level of wilful blindness to the conflation of whiteness with Australianness. (p. 44)

Foord (2004) has suggested that the disavowal of an Indigenous presence in the Australian nation also has its roots in the White fantasy of terra nullius, where the idea persists that there was no Indigenous presence in Australia prior to the arrival of White settlers. This blindness to an Indigenous presence in the nation extends to Australia’s conception of rural Australia as a White space, where the material and cultural domination of the landscape by White persons allows rural Australians to ignore a significant Indigenous rural presence. The importance of this point to this study is that when this research makes reference to the hidden presence of ethnic Others in rural Australia, it does so, recognising that the discursive White landscape of the rural is a misnomer that hides the presence of Indigenous Others as much as it hides those of minority ethnicity.

As outlined, the central identity category around which analysis in this study revolves is ethnicity. The term ethnicity has been subject to considerable academic discussion focused on its myriad meanings and use (Goldberg, 1993; Hall, 2000; Omi & Winant, 1993; Rizvi, 1986, 1991), to the extent that the concept has been referred to as the “hot potato of sociology” (Malesevic, 2004, p. 1). While sometimes used interchangeably, the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’ continue to claim academic attention from
“race-conscious scholars” (Warmington, 2009, p. 282) for their ability to variously mask and unmask the way difference is inscribed in social practices. Whilst on the one hand ‘race’ is eschewed for reifying biological difference (race having been historically regarded as natural and primordial), ‘ethnicity’, when taken up as a more inclusionary category, is also subject to criticism for its ongoing power to racialise the very discourse it seeks to interrupt (Hall, 2000; Warmington, 2009). As Song (2003), drawing on the work of Gilroy (2000), writes:

just as race can be reified, understandings of ethnicity can also suffer from reification and static, essentialistic characterizations of particular ethnic groups (Gilroy 2000). The reification of ethnicity results from the belief that ethnic groups are somehow endowed with a given set of cultural values and practices – rather than conceiving of ethnicity as something which is continually in process, negotiated, renewed. (pp. 10-11)

While recognising these concerns, and without wanting to imply their simplistic resolution, the term “ethnicity” is preferred in this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, to confer understanding of ethnicity as a social construct. In this sense, ‘ethnicity’ is understood as an “imagined grouping” (Song, 2003, p. 10) where, as with ‘difference’, ‘ethnicity’ is acknowledged as discourse. As Hall (1996b) confers:

The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual … [It recognises] that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position. (pp. 446, 447)

Secondly, the term ‘ethnicity’ recognises the continuing power of race identifiers to order social relations and determine socio-political intelligibility (Gillborn, 2008; Song, 2003). As Arber (2008b) notes, reflecting the concerns of Stuart Hall, the semantic debate over terminology
is necessarily a political one, “often hid[ing] the fact that these constructions are tied to real positioning with material consequences” (p. 10). Or as Warmington (2009) writes, citing the work of Leonardo (2005): “To the extent that race as a concept is not real, its modes of existence are real. Its racial subjects are real” (p. 284), “race may lack scientific integrity but it is a lived experience, a lived relationship” (Warmington, 2009, p. 283). To this end, this study centres ethnicity as a conceptual category whilst recognising the concerns of poststructuralism to decentre identity. In this sense, the study runs the risk of essentialising that which it seeks to destabilise; to at once take up, as well as to contest the conditions of difference implied. It does so with an understanding that while all categories of identity are “constituted by and … constitutive of each other” (Brah, 1996, p. 109), not all identity categories operate equally as axes of exclusion. To this end, the study offers everyday examples of lived ethnicity, its dynamics and contradictions, in order to illustrate how students’ take up of subject positions can interrogate and mobilise fixed identity categories (this point is further explored in the school data chapters that follow).

Whatever the terms of the discussion, and whether framed as concern over anti-racism (see Gillborn, 1995; Troya, 1993), Critical Race Theory (see Apple, 2006; Gillborn, 2006, 2008; Gillborn & Youdell, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005, 2009) or multicultural education⁹ (see Kamp & Mansouri, 2010; Mansouri & Kamp, 2007; Rizvi, 1986, 1991), race theorists working in the field of education share a common concern with

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⁹ While multiculturalism has been criticised for its superficial celebration of difference and for a failure to decentre Whiteness (Kamp & Mansouri, 2010), the use of the term ‘multicultural education’ persists in Australian research and policy contexts and is taken up in this study to reflect this circumstance (Leeman & Reid, 2006). It is also to recognise that alternative concepts, such as anti-racism, “are equally burdened by their own limitations and histories” (de Finney, 2010, p. 474).
how racial and ethnic differences are inscribed in the boundaries and practices of education, as well as how practices of racialisation – “the process of attaching racial meaning to individuals” (McDonnell & de Lourenco, 2009), where racial identity is read through markers on the body and is fixed and naturalised – play out in schooling contexts. In this study, these concerns are taken up through a focus on educational exclusions, particularly as these occur in the everyday practices of rural schooling. As Youdell (2006b) writes: “the identity of the excluded group is fundamental to their exclusion” (p. 13). To understand these exclusions is to discern how the identities of students – their positioning in terms of categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and so on – come to be the axes around which exclusionary boundaries are deployed. While wishing to acknowledge concerns over the disjuncture that occurs in the ‘bracketing’ of identity markers, this study firmly locates itself within a tradition of identity politics in education that seeks to explain the social processes by which identity or group membership is central to educational inequality and exclusion, where, as Youdell (2006b) has written:

the micro exclusions that take place in the most mundane moments everyday inside schools cannot be understood as simply being experienced by students. Rather these must be understood as constitutive of the student, constitutions whose cumulative effects coagulate to limit ‘who’ a student can be, or even if s/he can be a student at all. (p. 13)

Key bodies of work concerned with the organising categories of identity leading to these social practices of exclusion are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Racism is a practice central to this study. To make sense of how students’ experience both mundane and extreme racisms in the everyday, this study makes use of the work of Hall (1996b) and Rizvi (1993, 2009) to
understand how subjectivities intersect with circulating discourses of nation and nationalism to produce racist practices. This involves a rethinking of theories of racism that claim for it either an individual or institutional basis. Rizvi (1993, p. 128) suggests that individualised racism can be understood as “an expression of an individual’s negative prejudicial attitudes that is directed against another individual or a group of individuals on the basis of some presumed physical or cultural differentiation (Lippmann, 1977)”. He suggests that individualised racism is commonly understood as “a phenomenon located in ignorance or irrationality”, where there is an understanding that “racism can be ‘punctured by the application of a superior logic’” (Cohen, 1987 cited in Rizvi, 1993, p. 128). Institutional racism, alternatively, is framed as “the structural subordination of one racial group by another” (Rizvi, 1993, p. 129). Rizvi’s position on racism recognises that the problem with interpersonal racism is not “the cognitive errors of individuals” (Rizvi, 1993, p. 129). He also suggests that even within institutions, individuals have agency to reject and redistribute power (Rizvi, 1993). Such a position recognises that while racism is deployed by individuals and within institutions, racism is not a product of either vehicle, but instead, that these entities are vehicles for the articulation of racist discourses. It is to suggest that the lived experience of racism is produced in wider social relations, as articulated in circulating discourses of nationalism and national belonging (Rizvi, 2009). In this sense, racism can be understood to have productive capacity – it produces and is produced by, racist moments in the everyday. As Hall (2002) writes:

Racism is not dealt with as a general feature of human societies, but with historically specific racisms. Beginning with an assumption of difference, of specificity rather than of a unitary, transhistorical or universal ‘structure’ ... one cannot explain
racism in abstraction from other social relations ... One must start, then, from the concrete historical ‘work’ which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions – as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation. (pp. 56, 57, 59)

Or as Rizvi (2009) has suggested:

Recent theoretical work (for example, Hall 1996) on its nature and scope suggests that a universal characterisation of racism is impossible ... As Hall (1996, 435) points out, while there are no doubt certain general features to racism, what is ‘more significant are the ways in which these general features are modified and transformed by the historical specificity of the contexts and environment in which they become active’. Discourses of racism do not present a coherent set of ideas, but are often contradictory”. (p. 365)

This study takes as its starting point the notion that racism is produced in and through discourse. In its everyday manifestation, it can found in practices such as violence, psychological abuse, unequal access and treatment (Rizvi, 2009), or in what Butler (1997) calls ‘hate speech’ – a racist mechanism that is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. This study also takes up Rizvi’s (2009) argument that current manifestations of racism may be masked “behind the discourses of nationhood, patriotism and nationalism” (p. 365) – discourses that are premised upon the privileging of Whiteness. This position recognises that racist discourses may not be framed in terms of traditional ideas of biological racial difference, but instead, may find expression in more contradictory and complex discursive constructions (Rizvi, 2009).

I have already illustrated the need to explore the relationship between identity categories. However, it is also necessary to examine meaning within the category of identity so as to understand how this concept is taken up and utilised in this study. To do this, I draw on the work of Hall (1996a), who suggests that ethnicity, like all identity categories, needs to be
recognised as “not an essentialist [category], but a strategic and positional one”, where the “concept of identity does not signal the stable core of the self” (Hall, 1996a, p. 3). On this topic, Hall (1996a) suggests that:

identities are never unified and … [are] increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation … Identities are … points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (pp. 4, 5)

Working from this non-unitary, fluid notion of identity, I am also attracted to Youdell’s (2006b) concept of identity as “shifting, non-necessary constellations of categorisations, constellations that are themselves shifting and non-necessary” (p. 29). Youdell posits that categories of identity might be best understood as formed like a constellation of stars, where meaning is imposed by the way the stars are joined within the constellation (keeping in mind that no constellation is ever contained by its contours):

The constellation of star is meaningless until we join the dots, until we draw in the sky and impose meaning … we join the dots in particular, abiding but non-necessary ways. We join the dots to make the Bear as we have done for centuries, but we need not join them in these ways. There are surely other pictures that could be drawn in the sky. (pp. 29-30)

Youdell asks readers to consider how categories of identity come to be made meaningful through their relationships to other categories of identity within a constellation, as well as how singular categories of identity are made meaningful by the constellation in which they appear. Understanding identity in this way is important for understanding how persons come to be constituted by their subjectivation within these classifications. The question of how particular constructions of ethnic identity generate inclusions and
exclusions for students in rural schooling contexts is framed by this concept, forming a central concern of this study.

The term “Whiteness” also figures prominently in this study. The concept of Whiteness is significant in explaining the normalised place of White privilege in society and its power to order social life through lived identity (Apple, 2004; Frankenberg, 1993). Studies of Whiteness attempt to undo the way “dominant forms of ethnicity are made ‘invisible’” (May, 1999, p. 4), or as Aveling (2004, para. 7) suggests: “instead of studying down in the power structure and focussing upon racially oppressed groups, the gaze in critical Whiteness studies is averted from ‘the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers’ (Morrison 1991, 90).” The importance of this viewpoint to this study has been clearly articulated by Dwyer, who suggests that: “As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people” (1997, p. 1). This understanding is an important feature of a teacher education literature concerned with the power of Whiteness to order students’ lives in school settings (Allard, 2006; Allard & Cooper, 2001; Allard & Santoro, 2004; Aveling, 2006; Reid & Santoro, 2006; Santoro, 2007, 2009; Santoro, Kamler, & Reid, 2001; Santoro & Reid, 2006). This literature acknowledges the way that “many schools that have been relatively homogenous are experiencing, for the first time, cultural diversity within their student population” (Santoro, 2009, pp. 33-34), and suggests that to effectively respond to ethnic, religious and cultural difference in students, “teachers need to come to know themselves as ethnic and encultured if they are to understand their students and engage with the
complexities of teaching for diversity” (Santoro, 2009, p. 41). Santoro suggests that “learning about and reflecting on the ‘ethnic self’ in relation to the ‘ethnic other’ … is an area of important professional development and research” (p. 43). This understanding of the role of teacher education in improving schooling outcomes for ethnic minority students is further explored in later chapters of this study.

The work of Ghassan Hage (1998) is also considered to examine the concept of Whiteness and its effects. Hage contends that in Australia, a “White national fantasy” (p. 96) exists whereby White Australians, in acts of national imagining, govern and construct who legitimately belongs in Australia, where the power to tolerate or not tolerate ethnic Others is inevitably bound up with discourses that centre White culture. In this space, Whiteness and Australianess are synonymous. These concepts are taken up in this research to consider the way Whiteness operates in global and national settings, as well as how it is perpetuated and interrupted in localised settings. I engage with subjectivities in this research to consider how ethnic-minority young people contend with White hegemonic nationalist practices in the everyday. In this sense, the normalised, privileged role of Whiteness in rural society is highlighted to show how Other non-White students are constructed as different in relation to a White community norm. The referent ‘O/other’ is used in this study to refer to the boundaries constructed as a result of “people’s perception of a sense of difference in relation to others who are perceived to be ‘not us’” (Rizvi, 1986, p. 11). Such exclusions are understood as a product of normative discourses of Whiteness.
Linked to these ideas is a recognition that the act of ‘naming’ groups is itself not neutral, but a productive act resulting in the maintenance and construction of difference and inequality. To this end, terms like ‘refugee’, ‘Black’ and ‘Other’ are discursive terms which are employed cautiously in this study. I use the term Black, for example, to refer to Sudanese refugee participants from North Africa, as well as Indigenous Australians. This usage reflects the self-naming practices of participants (practices which may, in themselves, be citational and reiterational), whilst also acknowledging the contested nature of such terms (Maylor, 2009). Such usage, in the words of Hall (1996b), entails a:

recognition that ‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature. What this brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects. (p. 443)

I also preference the term ‘ethnic minority’ throughout this study to refer to both persons from non-majority ethnic backgrounds, as well as students who are Muslims and/or refugees. Such usage is not meant to suggest that the issues experienced by refugee, Muslim and ethnic minority students are the same in all cases, but is to recognise that the issues that I discuss in relation to ethnic minority students are ones that, in some cases, are likely to be of concern to those students who are also refugees and/or Muslim in the rural. Where I refer specifically to refugee and/or Muslim students, I do so in order to take account of the particular subjectivities at play in the lives of the Muslim and/or refugee participants in the study. In this way, I draw on the argument of Matthews (2008), who found that aspects of the educational experience of refugee students are sometimes shared “with other identifiable groups, such as migrants, ESL-New Arrivals,
indigenous students and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 32).

So too, my use of terms like ‘students’ and ‘young people’ is also not meant to suggest a commonality of experience amongst youth today. Indeed, my analysis aims to trouble and disrupt uncontested and homogenised identities. To this extent, I acknowledge the complexity and diversity of the lives of young people in today’s society, and situate my study within a history of research (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Butcher & Harris, 2010; Cook-Sather, 2007; Tsolidis, 2008) that adopts a more situated, nuanced account of ‘youth’ in order to suggest the complex nature of the making of young peoples’ subjectivities.

It is against this backdrop that I now turn to issues of rurality so as to articulate more of the discourses affecting belonging in the rural.

2.2 Place, space and rurality

This research is informed by the place, space, and rurality literatures. These bodies of work, which developed in the field of geography and are central to rural studies, and have more recently been taken up within educational studies, are part of an epistemological trend that Gulson and Symes (2007) refer to as a “spatial turn” in social theory, where: “spatial theories are not restricted to geography, their traditional ‘home’, but travel through and between social theory and are ‘implicated in myriad topographies of power and knowledge’” (Gregory, 1994, p. 11)" (p. 98). Drawing on the theories of Henri Lefebvre (1991), Edward Soja (1996), and Doreen Massey (1991, 1994, 2005), educationalists are increasingly turning to spatial theories to understand “the ways space constitutes and is
constituted through raced, classed and gendered power relations in social transactions” (Ferrare & Apple, 2010, p. 211). In this study, spatial theories are taken up in order to examine the ways that space impacts social relations and practices. In particular, I am interested in how ethnicity is constituted and produced by rural spatial relations and, in turn, how rurality is socially produced relative to ethnicity. As Gruenewald (2003) recognises, “being in a situation has a spatial, geographical, contextual dimension. Reflecting on one’s situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits”, which, in turn, provides insight into “how dominant definitions and uses” of rural space “regulate and control how [persons] organise their identity around territory” (pp. 4, 5). In keeping with Gulson and Symes (2007) ‘spatial turn’ framework, this study recognises space as a key dimension of everyday life. Gulson and Symes (2007) have chronicled the way space has been reconceptualised over time from a positivist, measurable unit to a more abstract surface upon which social relationships play out. In the same way, when discussing space in relation to rural education, Green and Letts (2007) have suggested that space is more than a mere “container” within which education “takes (its) place” (p. 57); that “space is implicated in social and educational practice, at every level” (p. 68). This is particularly true of studies of the rural, where it is recognised that “rurality, the defining criterion of rural sociology, is, of course, a spatial concept” (Therborn, 1999, p. 21). In keeping with this view, this study utilises Massey’s (1994) notion that: “the spatial is socially constituted. ‘Space’ is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global” (p. 265).
As discussed in Chapter One, a defining concern of this study is to understand the way rural communities have responded to diverse numbers of ethnic minority persons residing in rural areas. In seeking this understanding, this study has sought to question the stereotype of rural space as a less sophisticated, more hostile-to-‘others’ version of its urban counterpart (Bourke & Lockie, 2001; Dunn & McDonald, 2001). To this end, Massey (1994, 2005) suggests that places are made up of spaces that should be recognised as complex, layered and interconnecting. Indeed, rather than having a single identity, spaces can be dialectic in their configuration. Massey (1994) refers to this as the “simultaneous multiplicity of spaces” (p. 3). As Thomson (2007) recognises:

> Space is not homogenous. Recognition that there are multiple experiences, trajectories, and narratives of space and place produces more open/less closed theory and practice. Thinking and acting spatially in this way creates the opportunity for a ‘sphere of possibility’ in which there is ‘coexisting heterogeneity’, multiplicity, and difference (Massey 2005: 9). (p. 113)

This theorisation of space is crucial in informing this study. Akin with a small body of anti-racist literature of the rural (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997; Bryant & Pini, 2009; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Cloke, 2006b; Cloke & Little, 1997; Holloway, 2007; Panelli, et al., 2009; Williams, 2007), this study recognises the rural as a heterogeneous space where inclusive intercultural relationships at the level of the everyday coexist alongside relations of repression and exclusion. Multiculturalism as a form of “place-sharing” (Wise, 2005), where discourses of ‘belonging in diversity’ are practised successfully in everyday rural life illustrate the positive articulation of embodied, lived minority ethnicity in rural landscapes. Against a discursive backdrop of racism and inequality, rural communities
exist as places inherent with possibilities for close association, opening up spaces for recognition of the ‘ethnic’ stranger (Hubinette & Tigervall, 2009). To this end, Wise (2005) argues against the traditional notion of communities as places where boundaries are always tightly guarded, as spaces that necessarily privilege closure. It is in the possibilities opened up by the local – by everyday acts of knowing – that substantive potential for belonging is engendered.

Linked to this idea is the notion of relational space, where “places are nested within others at different spatial scales” (Lobao, 1996, p. 78). Hence, a town sits within a district, which lies within a state boundary, for example. This notion has theoretical implications in terms of acknowledging the need to view practices and discourses operating at a number of levels, including the local, national and global. As Gruenewald (2003) asserts, we should position our focus “to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society” (p. 5). Central to this argument is a recognition of the way places are actively constituted by the movement of people, assets, and ideas within and across borders. In contemporary times, mobility becomes a defining feature of a cosmopolitan, connected, global world, affecting not just how places are configured, but also how identities are negotiated and formed within these locations. Bauman’s concept of “liquid modernity” (cited in Singh & Doherty, 2008), where “instantaneous communication, global travel, electronic finance, and mobile capital … produce a new, more flexible or fluid social condition” (p. 117) becomes an important frame within which to examine identities and their transformation. As Massey argues (cited in Cresswell, 2006), in this context,
boundaries become blurred in place, with place identities becoming fluid and unfixed. In this conceptual global place:

there is no longer a clear inside and outside and therefore it is much harder to make judgements about insiders and outsiders. To illustrate this notion [Massey] describes Kilburn High Road in north London. On this street she encounters Irish pubs, Indian sari shops, and a Moslem newspaper seller. Planes from Heathrow fly overhead. The street is thoroughly constituted by its connections to the wider world. (p. 8)

And yet the world that Massey describes, and that Cresswell goes on to cite, is not necessarily a rural world. While Cresswell argues that “it is hard to exclude the outside when there is no clear outside” (p. 8), such reasoning ignores the very real way that some persons and places remain largely unconnected to global experiences, and resist those experiences when they do impose (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005). The lived experience of young people in this study, their multiple and contradictory experiences of living with an ‘ethnic’ identity in a rural area, illustrate how the relationship between globalisation and the rural is often an assumed experience. In scholarship on globalisation and cosmopolitanism (Appadurai, 1996; Beck, 2000; Parekh, 2003; Urry, 2003), academics have tended to emphasise the universalising nature of global forces, while ignoring the sensibilities of social differentiation and space (Kenway, et al., 2006; Matthews & Sidhu, 2005). Reflecting the concerns of Massey (2005), Kenway, et al. (2006) remind us that “time and space are compressed in different ways for different people, and in some cases not much at all” (p. 23). These ideas have applicability for understanding the ways that “identities and experiences in rural environments cannot with ease be ‘measured’ against, or compared with, urban experiences” (Stehlik, 2001, p. 38). This is not to reinstate the rural as the binary opposite of the urban, but is to recognise that
specific geographies construct their own ways of being in space (Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Stehlik, 2001).

Closely connected to space is the notion of place. Cresswell (2004) describes places as “spaces which people have made meaningful” (p. 7). Rather than being the sum of mere geography or “simple location” (Malpas, 1999, p. 31), places function to produce and frame experience. As Malpas (1999) writes, “the crucial point about the connection between place and experience is not ... that place is properly something only encountered ‘in’ experience, but rather that place is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience” (pp. 31, 32).

‘Community’ is also a term central to the analysis of social space (Liepins, 2000). Conceptualised in this study as “a social construct about human connection that involves cultural, material and political dimensions” (Liepins, 2000, p. 29), the term community is taken up in this study to engage with people’s attachment to particular discourses of ‘community’ and the conditions that make possible, or deny, their equal availability to all persons. To examine the ways that some persons appear more readily excluded by discourses of place and community than others, this study engages with the ideas of Arber (2008b) and Sibley (1995, 2006) to discuss the processes by which belonging is engendered. Arber (2008b) suggests that in postmodern globalised times, insider/outsider boundaries are blurred in communities, so that “the conception of who-we-are and who-they-are becomes increasingly difficult to define as the stranger moves inside and outside of communities, is part of the community and not part of the community at the same time” (p. 396). Yet at the same time as communities are being reconfigured in this way, processes of boundary construction,
inclusion and exclusion in rural communities mean that some identities may find more ready acceptance in the rural than others. Following Arber’s (2008b) thinking, ‘Others’, though perhaps now harder to define as outsiders/strangers, can still be discursively produced outside the boundaries of community and belonging. To this end, Sibley (2006) suggests that:

‘strangers’ ... create a consciousness of a rural community that is defined in opposition to various ‘others’ who threaten to disturb the unity and social cohesion of that community. The boundary of the rural is, thus, contingent on the perception of a potentially transgressive ‘other’ but this boundary and the community which it encloses are recognized only by those occupants of rural space who feel threatened. (p. 406)

There is a wealth of literature about what rurality represents – open space, agriculture, tranquillity, harmony, purity, close knit communities, and tradition (Bourke & Lockie, 2001; Bunce, 2003; Cloke, 2006b; Haugen & Villa, 2006; Panelli, et al., 2009; Sibley, 2006; Woods, 2006). Such representations are founded upon long-established notions of unique distinctions between rural and urban ways of living. While stereotypes persist that seek to paint a portrait of rural communities as less modern than their urban counterparts, research claiming a distinct social system for rural societies is now largely confined to the history of the rural sociology tradition (Marsden, Lowe, & Whatmore, 1990). Historically, the concept ‘rural’ emerged in the rural sociology literature out of a desire to establish categories around two seemingly dichotomous social worlds – the urban and the rural – the first marked by social tension and disconnection, and the latter defined by a greater sense of harmony and community engagement (Mormont, 1990). Tonnies’ (1957, cited in Cloke, 1985) widely taken-up theorisation of the rural-urban dichotomy was born out of a distinction between Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society); thinking
that emphasised the collective and individual natures of rural and urban places. Early rural sociology research, then, situated rural societies in direct contrast to urban ones.

Like space, however, the ‘rural’ has been subject to considerable contemporary academic attention regarding the defining features of rural life, its difference from the urban and, in the wake of postmodern thinking, the validity of ‘pinning down’ or generalising about the concept of rurality. Rural geographers and sociologists in Australia (Bourke & Lockie, 2001; Lockie, 2000; Share, Lawrence & Gray, 2000), the United Kingdom (Halfacree, 1993; Jones, 1995; Philo, 1992; Pratt, 1996), and the United States (Lobao, 1996), for example, have all been concerned to document the transition of rurality from a purely quantitative or demographic concept to a cultural and social construct, where hegemonic and essential characterisations of the rural and rural people are critiqued for their tendency to preclude ‘other’ rurals (Cloke, 2006a). In this latter configuration, rurality is recognised as a discursive construct, and hegemonic representations of the rural as a White, problem-free, homogenous space are argued to be fragile and in need of revision (Cloke, 2006b; de Finney, 2010; Holloway, 2007; Panelli, et al., 2009). While there are “cultural differences to be found between rural and urban Australia”, Gray (1994, p. 234) explains, these “stem from the differences between agricultural and non-agricultural society” and not inherent divisions between rural places and urban ones and those who populate them. It is this reconceptualisation of the rural in sociological terms that provides a platform from which to question and challenge rural racism (Chakraborti
and Garland, 2004; Neal, 2002) and other exclusionary geographies of ethnicity in the rural.

Taking up this task, academics are increasingly engaging in critiques of the relationship between rurality and subjectivities such as ethnicity, gender and class. This literature recognises that the discursive repertoire of the rural has performative force which, in turn, engages exclusionary practices around questions of who rightfully belongs in the rural. Understanding rurality becomes a means to understand how exclusions emerge out of particular constructions of the rural. This body of work is considered below, and provides a backdrop against which to consider issues of performativity in educational settings in rural space.

2.3 Ethnicity and the countryside

This study contributes to a growing body of literature highlighting alternative narratives of rural life; an alternative rural studies which places the narratives of Others at the centre of rural life (see, for example, Milbourne, 1997, Philo, 1992, and Cloke & Little, 1997, for early examples of work refocusing attention on racialised Others in the rural). These studies attempt to illustrate the way, for example, gendered and sexualised relations of power are normalised within rural communities (Cloke & Little, 1997; Kenway, et al., 2006; Little, 2003; Little & Austin, 1996). Each of these accounts of rural life provides an alternative discourse to the long prominent representation of rurality as a place of “white, middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied, sound-minded heterosexual men” (Philo, 1992, p. 193); a discourse which has, in effect, been powerful in silencing other voices within this space.
In keeping with this trajectory, in Australia and New Zealand a small body of literature has considered how power relations are configured in rural and remote settings between dominant ethnic groups and Indigenous persons (Cowlishaw, 1988; Panelli et al., 2008). Such scholarship has suggested that, in rural settings, “Whiteness” can come to involve the marginalisation or erasure of Other ethnicities. It commonly involves the unequal distribution of power and the hegemonic privileging of Whiteness. A recent study by Panelli et al. (2008), however, has documented the way Other ethnicities (in this case, Maori constructions of place) can operate alongside “White” constructions of cultural identity, providing a contrast to the sort of erasure of Indigenous culture normally recorded in the literature. The authors’ local spatialised study of place and ethnicity in a rural coastal area of New Zealand provides insight into the way Indigenous narratives of place identity can be foregrounded in rural spaces. The complex configuration of Maori-Pakeha-European identity in a place called Bluff indicates the way White and Other ethnicities can coexist when discourses of landscape are examined. As the authors suggest when discussing the promotion of tourism ventures in the town:

while Pakeha and European histories were more widely promoted [in Bluff], both historic and contemporary expressions of Maori culture and place identity were also present. Unlike the rural racism Hubbarb (2005) exposed, the case of Bluff indicates how indigenous and settler ethnicities are interwoven; coexisting in individual lives and the Bluff landscape. (p. 52)

In Britain, human geographers have led the way in terms of advancing theoretical lines of argument around rurality and ethnicity, and rurality and racism. Williams (2007), for example, proposes three discursive trajectories framing the way arguments have been represented in the literature. The first, she suggests, is concerned with representation. This body of theory
“focuses on representations of the countryside and the ways in which these socially constructed imaginings promote the ‘othering’ of minority individuals” (p. 743). Williams suggests that these constructions of the rural are deeply connected to notions of English national identity and the rural idyll, so that the countryside becomes intimately connected to images of Whiteness. The second analytical trajectory in the literature is concerned with community relations. Williams (2007) suggests that:

The Relations analysis takes as its starting point issues of belonging and attachment within the locality and points to ways in which community cohesion is hampered by exclusionary practices, largely at the level of ‘banal’ racisms and/or open victimization. The potential identifications with the community for the ethnic minority individual are variously undermined (p. 744)

The third analytical approach is defined as a rights approach, where studies have highlighted areas of policy concern in relation to ethnic minorities in rural areas, and proposed strategies to achieve equality of outcomes in these areas. Williams’ (2007) study is critical to this research in the sense that it brings to light counter-narratives in the rural studies literature which, in the words of the author, “disturb the predominant discourse of black rural experience” (p. 752). This predominant discourse is typically one of discord. Hence, when given focus, these counter-narratives interrupt prevailing discourses of rural racism. Williams, however, argues that to deny the positive voices of Black rural residents in the United Kingdom is to deny them agency, or alternatively to co-opt their stories into the discourse of the ‘there’s no problem here’ framework – a framework which will be discussed in more detail later in this study. This research project takes as its starting point two of these three theoretical frames – representation and relations – and applies them to the Australian context.
In Australia, a small body of literature has taken up the themes of rurality and ethnicity. Australian empirical studies of the relationship between rurality, immigrant settlement and racism have found little evidence of an urban-rural variation in attitudes and racist behaviours towards migrants (Dunn & Geeraert, 2003; Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Forrest & Dunn, 2006). While space and geography are understood to impact social relations, no evidence of a distinct geography of racism has been found to support the idea of a heightened presence of racism in the rural. Indeed, Collins (2010), in a speech taken up by the national media (Horin 2010a, 2010b), reported an overwhelmingly positive response in rural areas to new immigrants. Commenting on “the warmth of the welcome that new immigrants in the bush receive”, Collins’ study suggests that “two thirds of respondents … felt very welcome in the [rural]; a good news story that challenges notions of the Australian bush being racist and red neck”. Similarly, Dunn and McDonald (2001) have suggested that “while racism is everywhere … it is ‘everywhere different’” (p. 30). While such research is useful in informing this study and in undoing stereotypical notions of the rural, it does not adequately pursue a theoretical understanding of the relationship between geography and ethnicity, leaving questions about the underpinnings of spatial variations in ethnocentrism and racism largely intact. This study will take up these questions using Foucaultian poststructuralism to untangle the processes mediating race and space.

A recent paper by Missingham, et al. (2006) has attempted to review much of the existing Australian literature on rurality and ethnicity, particularly as it pertains to the fields of natural resource management and agriculture, and the impact of resettlement on the same. Missingham, et al.
(2006) take as their starting point the “widespread popular myth that rural Australian society is not multicultural” (p. 132). Citing the research of leading Australian demographer Graeme Hugo, Missingham, et al. (2006) report instead that:

The 2001 Census found that, for the Australian population as a whole, 21.9 percent of the population were born overseas and 15 percent reported speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home. By contrast, in rural Australia, only 11.3 percent of the population were born overseas, and 4.7 percent reported speaking a LOTE at home. These figures, however, obscure the fact that NESB groups ‘tend to be highly concentrated in particular communities, especially those in intensive market gardening, horticulture, grape growing and orcharding areas’ (Hugo, 2000). (p. 133)

While this study takes as its research interest rural sites which are notable for their homogeneity rather than their heterogeneity, Missingham, et al.’s (2006) literature review is nonetheless notable for its attempt to explain the settlement patterns of immigrants in rural Australia, which are said to be linked to processes of cultural continuity, where immigrants seek to replicate the patterns of rural land ownership and farming they have known in their former homelands, as well as to seek new economic opportunities and escape the unemployment and discrimination that is seen to attach to urban areas. Missingham, et al.’s (2006) paper is also important in the sense that it updates and synthesizes the Australian literature on what Gray, Dunn, Kelly and Williams (1991) refer to as ‘immigrant settlement’ studies – a body of work which focuses on the resources and services available to immigrants and refugees in rural areas (see for example, Alston, 2005; Gray, et al., 1991). Missingham, et al. (2006) report that “such studies show that [Non-English Speaking Background] immigrants have been socially

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10 ‘Rural’ here refers to non-urban Australia, that is, towns less than 100,000 population, localities and the rural balance.
disadvantaged in rural areas, with limited access to government and social services, and little knowledge of relevant government agencies” (p. 137). Taking a similar perspective to the ‘rights’ framework proposed by Williams (2007), this body of work focuses on government services, and privileges a policy approach to outcomes for ethnic minorities in rural areas.

Gray et al. (1991) also refer to a second body of work in the Australian literature linking the themes of rurality and ethnicity which the authors refer to as a “community studies” (p. 6) literature. The authors suggest: “community studies have usually adopted participant observation methods over a period of time in order to study social features such as class and power structures, social interaction and integration” (p. 6). Key studies in the Australian context have tended to focus on particular ethnic groups and their experiences of social integration in rural farming communities (see for example, Babacan, 1998; de Lepervanche, 1984; Kelly, 1985; Kelly, 2001) For the purposes of this project, the limits of the existing research lie in the fact that these studies have generally approached rurality and ethnicity from a service provision, program and policy perspective, rather than discursively attempting to understand how power is performed and articulated in rural communities. Even those studies which have focused on ethnicity and rural schooling (Anderson, 1998; Morris, Elliott & Brennan, 1992) have tended to adopt this rights approach (Williams, 2007). They point to the deficiencies in services for ethnic minority students as they pertain to needs such as language provision, without attempting to adequately understand or explain the socio-political context that underpins this circumstance. For example, in Morris, et al.’s (1992) study of the needs of non-English speaking background children in schools in the large rural
city of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (population 60,000), the authors’
report that:

the host population is not as accommodating of foreigners as is the case in the cities; and NESB people are likely to suffer prejudice, or at the very least, ignorance, as the Wagga Wagga residents have been, to a large extent, insulated from the debate concerning multiculturalism. (p. 30)

Yet in making this claim, the authors provide no evidence to support it, and no extended interrogation or discussion of it, and would thus appear to rely upon and perpetuate the stereotype of rural areas which would see them classified as “conservative” and socially “backward” (Bourke & Lockie, 2001, p. 3). This dearth of critical academic attention to ethnicities in the rural and their relationship to schooling practices, as well as the political and cultural circumstances affecting belonging in the rural, is considered further below.

### 2.4 Rurality, ethnicity and schooling

While there is a significant body of literature concerned with ethnicity and schooling in urban contexts, there are few studies which explore the experience of ethnic minority students in rural areas. Fred Yeo (1999) writes:

Almost the entirety of educational research, literature, and rhetoric on the incorporation of multicultural education into schools, including its pedagogical and curricular use as a tool for more ‘effective’ classrooms ... has targeted suburban and urban schools. While there is a significant lack of research and literature about rural schooling in general, material addressing multicultural education within a rural school context is virtually nonexistent. (p. 2)

Yeo’s work offers significant insights, many of which resonate with the findings of this study. Firstly, his work is critical in that he calls on researchers to avoid framing students simply in terms of their race and
ethnicity. Identity categories like gender and social class also come into play, he suggests, in constructing experiences, educational contexts and communities, and should be taken into account in research that seeks to understand the rural context. He is also censorious of recipes for urban multiculturalism (that ignore the intricacies of social, cultural and historical context) that researchers suggest might be simply transplanted into rural settings. He also calls on teachers to critically engage with the concept ‘rural’, for themselves and with their students, to avoid having “a disconnected understanding of their own teaching milieus” (p. 2). Yeo is also critical of research on multicultural education and rural schooling that appears to equate race with culture and that takes a ‘compensatory’ approach to fixing minority students. As he explains:

By way of example, teachers and administrators (all from rural schools) in my graduate courses typically argue that multicultural education is inapplicable because their community (in their perception) is monocultural or, if recognized as not monocultural, their community is small and everyone knows their place in its social structure – the implication being that multicultural education would cause disruption of long-standing social relations (e.g., segregation by race, class, or both). (p. 3)

Yeo is critical of efforts at multicultural education that reduce it to the level of a “simplistic add-on to the curriculum” (p. 4). As he posits, “To reduce multicultural education to facts about cultural attributes, such as language, food, dress, and customs ... is to teach a form of ethnic geography” (p. 4).

Yeo also acknowledges the way that, in rural communities, diversity is frequently rendered invisible, and multicultural communities are constructed as mono-racial. The finding that race is considered a non-issue in rural areas is confirmed in the work of Carroll (2002), as well as in the work of Williams (2007), who suggests that a relative silence on rural racism may exist, in part, because of the myth of “no problem here” (Williams, 2007, p.
743), a discourse that renders minority ethnicity invisible in the rural landscape. Arber (2008a) has also found evidence of international students being seen as ‘good’ for rural schools, for their ability to introduce isolated rural students to other cultures. In this suggestion, however, Arber notes the operation of an unspoken power dynamic at play: “The exotic difference brought by the international and ethnic student is placed in binary opposition to an undefined, normalised, seemingly empty notion of monoculturalism” (p. 392).

Each of the findings suggested in this literature intersects with the analyses offered in this study, and reported in the chapters that follow, to demonstrate how schooling practices in rural contexts are complicit in producing and sustaining educational inclusions and exclusions. The dearth of research analysing the experiences of ethnic minority and refugee students in rural schools also provides a tangible impetus for this study. This project might be considered a response to Cloke’s (2006c) “call for narratives of how particular rural others actively produce other rurals, not only imaginatively but also practically” (pp. 449-450), as well as a response to Holloway’s (2007) claim that:

we not only need grounded research which considers current constructions of race and rurality, but crucially also research which foregrounds the temporary and potentially fragile nature of these discursive constructions and the ways they can be reinforced, but also challenged, through social practice. (p. 9)

This ‘gap’ in the literature points to the significance of existing studies on ethnicity and its relationship to the rural, as the analytic frames engaged by researchers provide a foundational backdrop from which academics working with ethnicity, rurality and schooling might begin to interrogate rural schooling data. This research literature, along with studies of identity and
schooling (to be discussed below), provide an important lens from which to build analyses of the quotidian experience of minority students in rural educational settings.

2.5 The politics of identity in education

This study is situated within a tradition of schooling research focusing on identity, schooling exclusions and issues of social justice. School ethnographies which employ a common theoretical and methodological approach have relevance to this research for they highlight traditions and commonalities in the way student identities are formed in educational institutions, and suggest processes by which schooling inclusions and exclusions are made and unmade. Understanding ‘who’ a student gets to ‘be’ in schooling contexts in order to be recognisable provides a means to understand how processes of marginalisation commonly play out in schools, as well as how difference is negotiated in the everyday by students of minority identity.

There is a history of Australian education research in the sociological tradition that focuses on axes of identity in order to understand how schooling inclusions and exclusions are made (Allard, 2002; Arber, 2003, 2008b; McLeod & Yates, 2003; Noble, Poynting, & Tabar, 1999; Tsolidis & Pollard, 2009). In this literature of identity politics, the policies and social processes of schooling that contribute to educational inequalities are foregrounded (Youdell, 2006a, 2011). Studies of the relationship between gender and educational practices in the ethnographic tradition inform current understandings of how gendered identities and school experiences are produced by schooling cultures. In this tradition, Walker...
(1988), Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), Martino (2003), and Walkerdine (1989) have produced school ethnographies that examine how gender is constructed within the confines of schools. This research suggests ways in which schools play an implicit role in producing gendered subject positions through discourse, which is an important step in understanding the complex configuration of educational inequalities. Along with studies of class, which suggest that some students come to school less equipped than others to operate in classroom spaces that discursively privilege the middle classes, a number of ethnographic studies have explored how the processes of schooling affect educational outcomes, which in turn play a role in producing student identities. In the Australian context, Thomson (2002), for example, writes about what she calls “rustbelt” schools or disadvantaged schools and the way they produce and reproduce educational inequality. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Thomson suggests that schools reproduce existing relations of privilege and disadvantage through practices which favour those students who understand the rules of the schooling “game” (p. 5). In this culture, students’ educational outcomes are determined by their possession of, and ability to employ, cultural capital, or what might otherwise be termed “knowledges that count” (p. 8). Thomson suggests that systemic changes to education – changes that recognise the interconnectedness between schools and society – are needed if social justice is to be achieved for students. Her analysis recognises the situated nature of schools as complex, classed, geographical and historically positioned entities, requiring policy solutions that take account of a schools’ particular circumstance and location. She also argues that “how schools make difference” (p. 3) has consequences for the way students construct
their identities as learners, and as participants in the wider community. While the focus of Thomson’s study was not on how class-based identities and knowledges are produced in schooling, Thomson’s work is useful for understanding how class distinctions function to produce student identities.

Tsolidis (2006), too, has concerned herself with how schools facilitate privilege. In an Australian ethnographic study considering the connections between education and social justice outcomes, in a similar fashion to Thomson (2002), Tsolidis argues that schools script students into roles that are hegemonically prescribed, leaving students at the margins – often those from diverse backgrounds, and those whose identities sit outside what it means to be a “good student” (p. 8) – disadvantaged. Her argument that there is a “need to reclaim public schools as part of a social justice agenda” is connected to an understanding that students’ educational achievements are contextualised within a broader neo-liberal framework.

Deborah Youdell’s (2003; 2006b; 2006c) ethnographic school studies have made an important contribution to a growing body of poststructuralist research concerned with how student identities are configured in school environments, and influence this study in elucidating how educational inclusions and exclusions are made within schools. Youdell’s (2003) study of African-Caribbean students in UK schools, for example, draws on the theories of Judith Butler to explore how students’ race identities are discursively constructed, producing students outside schooling realms of recognition. In Youdell’s study, students practice forms of bodily and gendered behaviour which locate them outside the acceptable realms of institutional practice, as Youdell explains:
The ideal student, even the tolerable student, does not slouch, rest his head as if asleep, or rock on the back legs of his chair. In terms of the official school discourse these postures cite and constitute the boys’ negative school orientation ... In terms of the student subculture, the boys’ bodies cite heterosexual masculinity, the privilege of Blackness, irreverence for the school and high subcultural status ... (p. 13)

These practices have consequences for students’ learning outcomes, for as these practices elevate students within their own cultural hierarchy, so they put students at odds with the institution upon which they rely for instruction, lessening their opportunities as learners.

Similarly, in an ethnographic study at an Australian urban high school (2006c), Youdell identifies everyday schooling practices that discursively inscribe subject positions. Highlighting the way Arab students are positioned within broader discourses which suggest the threat of Islamic terror, Youdell highlights the way Arab students at a Western Sydney school are positioned as raced, nationed and religioned subjects. This analysis informs understanding of the way schooling is implicitly involved in the production of student subjectivities, creating student exclusions and inclusions, as well as producing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjects of schooling.

In addition to the existing research on schooling and minority ethnicity, there is a growing body of academic literature that considers the experience of refugee children in schools. Concerns over school and language preparedness receive considerable attention in this literature (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Olliff & Couch, 2005), with a particular focus on the effects of interrupted schooling, and the suitability of traditional ESL methods (originally designed for use with literate European and Asian migrants to Australia) (Matthews, 2008) for use with refugee students who may not be literate and numerate in their first language (Brown, Miller &
Mental health issues and the psychology of trauma are prevalent in this body of research (Berry, 1997; Porter & Haslam, 2005), although criticism has been attached to the hegemony of these discourses and their tendency to homogenise the experience of all refugee children (Oikonomidoy, 2010: Pinson & Arnot, 2007; Rutter, 1999). As Ferfolja and Vickers (2010) stress: “refugee students are not simply ‘victims’, although they are often constructed as such. Refugees are resilient people despite their difficult histories; being a refugee is only one aspect of their subjectivity” (p. 151).

Less attention has been devoted to understanding how practices of racialisation and everyday racism in schools are experienced in the lives of refugee children (Christie & Sidhu, 2006; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Matthews, 2008). There are also few studies which consider the identity negotiations performed by refugee students in schooling contexts (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Oikonomidoy, 2007, 2009; Sarroub, 2001). As Pinson and Arnot (2007) suggest: “sociological research into asylum-seeking and refugee children in general, and into their education in particular, is still relatively underdeveloped” (p. 399). Yet, the potential of schooling sites to provide refugee young people with opportunities to “transform themselves from the ‘foreigner’ to the ‘A student’” (Mosselson, 2006, cited in Oikonomidoy, 2010) is of growing interest, and hence is a focus of this research. Despite this, the literature on educational interventions to improve schooling outcomes for refugees might be regarded as in its infancy, with disparate perspectives on the efficacy or otherwise of ‘practitioner’ measures such as community partnership (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Matthews,
2008; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007), homework and tutoring programs (Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010), and whole-school policy approaches (Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Matthews, 2008) to improving educational outcomes for refugees. What does appear to be in agreement is that, as Sidhu and Taylor (2007) propose, “in the current situation of limited resources, educational provision for refugee education is left to chance” (p. 297).

It should be noted that the refugee education research is quite distinct from a separate academic literature concerned with Muslim identity. This literature considers what it means to be Arab and/or Muslim in a post September 11 world (Basit, 2009; Haw, 2009, 2010) and, in particular, what it means to be an Arab and/or Muslim young person going to school in contemporary times (Kamp & Mansouri, 2010; Keddie, 2011; Mansouri & Kamp, 2007; Rizvi, 2005; Shain, 2000, 2003; Zine, 2001, 2008). This is despite that there exists some overlap of interest between these literatures. As the literature pertaining to ethnic minority students makes clear in its social justice orientation, Arab and Muslim students will experience many of the same inclusions and exclusions that are experienced by ethnic minorities, some of whom may also ‘fit’ the category of ‘refugee’.

There is a significant body of Australian literature concerned with identity and the impact of discourses of nationalism on Arab-Australian and Muslim persons’ experience of belonging (Duderija, 2007; Nobel, et al., 1999; Noble & Poynting, 2008; Poynting, Noble, Tabar & Collins, 2004; Poynting, 2006, 2009). In literature emanating from the United Kingdom (Basit, 2009; Haw, 2009, 2010; Keddie, 2011; Shain, 2000, 2003) and Canada (Zine, 2001, 2008), interest is oriented to understanding the success of Arab and Muslim minorities in developing dual ethnic identities that
allow them to express resistance and experience confidence in the face of persistent tension in their environments. In Australia, much of the research literature is concerned with social space and the regulation of national belonging, the discursive criminalisation of Arab and Muslim identities, racism directed against Australians of Arab and Muslim background, and the conflation of Arab and Muslim identities with fear and terrorism, although this is not to deny that some research is similarly oriented to that undertaken by sociologists in the UK and North America (Duderija, 2007; Poynting, 2009). The important point to make about each of these literatures is that they contribute to understanding not only how discourses operate in Australia to shape experiences of belonging and non-belonging, but they also inform our understanding of how ethnic minority young people negotiate their ethnic and religious identities in the everyday in ways that have variously been described as ‘fluid and creative’ as well as ‘problematic’ (Poynting, 2009). These analyses have pertinence to this study in informing understanding of Muslim students’ processes of identity construction and belonging in schools in times of “incivility” (Noble, 2005). These points will be further explored in Chapter Seven in a schooling case study.

The literatures outlined in this chapter are taken up in this study to explore two primary lines of argument. Firstly, I explore how ethnic minority students in rural spaces are constituted along axes of identity informed by circulating discourses of national belonging and rurality. In doing so, I argue that discourses of rurality are shaped by prevailing discourses of Whiteness to determine ‘who’ ethnic minority students get to
‘be’ in rural schooling contexts, and the grounds of their recognition. Secondly, I consider the implications of these practices for how students in rural Australia experience schooling inclusions and exclusions.

In the chapters that follow, I continue to represent and analyse these lines of argument using data obtained through three school ethnographies. The theoretical framework I use to develop my analyses is outlined in the chapter that follows.
Chapter 3
Framing the Research

3.1 Introduction

This study concerns itself with two broadly interrelated threads – the discursive construction of the rural, particularly as these constructs generate inclusions and exclusions in rural space; and the performative constitution of the ethnic schooling subject in rural landscapes, especially as these subjectivities interpellate place-based identity constellations. To explore these concerns, the study draws primarily on the theories of Michel Foucault (1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) to examine the relationship between ethnicity, rurality and power, and the writings of Judith Butler (1995, 1997, 2004) to explore how performativity and agency work in combination to produce raced, placed, nationed and religioned subjects. The work of Michel de Certeau (1984) is also considered in order to understand agency, as well as to examine how narrative functions to constitute belonging and non-belonging in rural social space.

3.2 Discursive Practices and Culturally Constructed Countrysides

A central theoretical concern of academics working in the field of rural studies in recent years has been to reconfigure the rural; to detach rurality from a traditional version of itself which has seen the countryside painted as a White space devoid of ethnic and cultural difference. In particular, there has been a concern to undo the myth of the so-called ‘rural idyll’; to rewrite the countryside so that it, in the words of Cloke and Little (1997), is no longer one which “excludes a host of ‘others’” (p. 1) in
contemporary imaginings. Central to this concern is a recognition of the culturally constructed nature of rural places, along with the discursive power of these constructions to shape the experience of ethnic minorities in rural areas. When Dunn & McDonald (2001) suggest that “it has long been recognised that people from non-metropolitan areas are generally less tolerant of cultural difference than those from cities” (p. 31), these authors are appropriating a script with an historical legacy and performative force that has the potential to shape belonging in the rural. Such a mythical construction is exclusionary, provisionally serving to marginalise ethnic minority persons from belonging to rural surroundings. As rurality is increasingly understood as a social construct, however, such discursive performatives are called into question, and the power of discourse to order rurality in traditional ways is displaced.

In this regard, the writings of Michel Foucault on discourse become an important theoretical tool for understanding how ethnic minorities in rural areas might come to be positioned discursively outside the normative frameworks that traditional representations of rurality construct. By this I mean this study will use what Foucault calls “the history of systems of thought” as a model to explore the way power relationships are brought to bear on ethnic minority students in rural areas.

3.2.1 Discourse

Foucault uses the term “the history of systems of thought” (2000a, p. 9) to refer to the way it is possible to trace knowledge systems to their roots and analyse them for their effects. He argues for the importance of understanding these knowledge structures and categories as they shape
possibilities of thought in order to think through knowledge in the present. As Rabinow (2000) has suggested, “the challenge is not to replace one certitude with another but to cultivate an attention to the conditions under which things become ‘evident’” (p. xix). Foucault suggests that in order to analyse the world, we call upon the structures available to us that enable us to interpret experience – structures that may have acquired normativity and that are often difficult to open up to questioning. But rather than leaving these categories of thought sealed, Foucault urges an examination of “the law of existence of statements, that which rendered them possible … the conditions of their singular emergence” (Foucault, 1991, p. 59). Indeed, in mapping the history of a system of knowledge or “discourse”, in Candidacy Presentation: College de France, 1969, Foucault (2000) suggests that it is in fact necessary “to reexamine knowledge, its conditions, and the status of the knowing subject” (p. 10). In making this suggestion, Foucault refers to the need to understand the intricate and interrelated rules and operational regulations – discursive practices – that go to make up a social system. He is also referring to the bodies of established knowledge that enable these systems to operate. In this sense, the term discourse is used broadly to refer to:

strategic games of action and reaction, question and answer, domination and evasion, as well as struggle. On one level, discourse is a regular set of linguistic facts, while on another level it is an ordered set of polemical and strategic facts ... what we should do is show the historical construction of a subject through a discourse understood as consisting of a set of strategies which are part of social practices [italics added]. (Foucault, 2002a, pp. 2-3, 4)

Foucault provides here a theoretical to understand how subjects might be historically constituted through discursive practices, and the means to understanding the origins and effects of these practices. He suggests that by
tracing these practices to their roots – their archaeology – and establishing the knowledge base or discourse upon which they have been founded, it is possible to understand how social life is constituted. Foucault also suggests that knowledge and power are inextricably bound; that where there is an exercise of power there is the production of knowledge, and that where there is knowledge so too there is power (Foucault, 2002a).

For this study, these conceptual tools provide a means to think through regimes of marginalisation and privilege in the rural, so that where, for example, ethnic minority students are discursively cast as ‘problems’ in schools (while concurrently Whiteness goes unexamined), it is possible to understand how the production of knowledge – what is known and who ‘counts’ as legitimate in this context – is reinforced by existing hierarchies of power. It is also to consider how knowledge produces objects of discourse, which in turn produce the subject in complex relations of power.

Using Foucaultian theory, and Foucault’s theories as they have been taken up by Butler, I aim to make sense of the production of student-subjects, as well as the reproduction of educational exclusions, in order to recast rural schooling in a politics of the poststructural. It is this model of understanding that this study will utilise to trace the connections between ethnicity and power in rural settings.

3.2.2 Power

Foucault’s writings on power relations provide a useful framework for providing understanding of how ethnic minority students in rural schools are constituted in and through the educational institutions they find themselves situated in. In this section I set out the tools that are taken up to
make sense of quotidian power arrangements in the rural, and their effect on the schooling experiences of minority young people. I aim to better understand how power is productive and an effect of discourse, and “how practices – located and real and constrained – make some things possible, or even likely, and other things all but impossible” (Youdell, 2006a, p. 35) in educational contexts.

Foucault’s analysis of power is largely focused on three central modalities of power: sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower. Sovereign power is exercised by those in authority and their ‘agents’, but its influence is mitigated by the productive capacity (agency) of those whom it is enacted upon; disciplinary power is dispersed and does not involve the direct application of power by individuals, but is pervasive and panoptic nonetheless; and biopower is typically concerned with the regulation of the body. Foucault’s interest in power largely centres on the effects of institutional power on persons, and the role that these persons play in either resisting or acceding to power effects (Mills, 2003). Rather than viewing power as being centrally located within institutions, Foucault is concerned with how power is exercised at local levels by individuals or groups within these structures, to the extent that “the state consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations that render its functioning possible” (Foucault, 2002c, p. 123). To this end, Foucault suggests that power is not something that is imposed from above where the will of one person or group is exercised on another, but is instead “rooted in the whole network of the social” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 345), and is in place at every moment of social interaction. Rather than representing power as repression, Foucault is instead concerned to show how power operates in the everyday as strategy,
in and through people and institutions, and to this end is as much concerned with resistance to power as he is with oppression (Mills, 2003) (resistance will be further discussed in a later section).

In *The Subject and Power* (2002b), Foucault provides a “starting point” (p. 329) for the analysis of power and its operation. “Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality”, Foucault writes, “it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies (p. 329).” What Foucault is suggesting here is an approach to appraisal where one seeks to locate relations of power in the absences, in the spaces in between, in the contradictions and oppositions in relationships. By way of illustration, Foucault (2002b) provides examples of what this might mean in practice: “In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions” (p. 340). According to Foucault, it is possible to identify power relationships in the system of differentiations that establish markers between those who exercise power, and those who have power exercised over them. Foucault (2002b) suggests systems of differentiations:

- juridical and traditional differences of status or privilege; economic differences in the appropriation of wealth and goods, differing positions within the processes of production, linguistic or cultural differences, differences in know-how and competence, and so forth. Every relationship of power puts into operation differences that are, at the same time, its conditions and its results. (p. 344)

Power relationships can also be located by identifying the “objectives” of those who exercise power over others. Some of the examples Foucault (2002b) provides of these objectives are “the maintenance of privileges” and “the exercise of statutory authority” (p. 344). So too, power can be seen in
“forms of institutionalization” (p. 344), that is, in the structures and operations of institutions, and in the means of bringing power relations into being (p. 344). By this, Foucault refers to the way power is exercised, whether it be, for example, by speech, surveillance, force, or a combination of these methods of control, be they overt or not.

In his chapter on ‘Method’ in *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1*, Foucault (1998) also suggests that power is decipherable when understood as a “grid of intelligibility of the social order” (p. 93). In this statement, Foucault is suggesting that power operations are explicit and intelligible when understood as a system by which hegemonic groups seek to exercise power over others. Foucault theorises that power is not “a general system of domination exerted by one group over another” (p. 92), that power is not hierarchical, that it does not emanate from a central unifying point, but rather that it is dispersed as it circulates amongst and between social hegemonies. These hegemonies, he suggests, are located in “state apparatus” (p. 93) (such as institutions like schools); that they are, in fact, the “internal conditions” of relationships such as “knowledge relationships” (p. 94).

### 3.2.3 Narrative as discursive practice

While discourses are often exercised through linguistic practices, they are also taken up in practices of representation, bodily performatives, naming, categorisation, and silence (Youdell, 2006a). The effects of these practices are important for understanding how subjects come to be made intelligible or unintelligible in educational contexts, with ensuing consequences for educational attainment. For example, the ‘Black’ student
who is constituted by discourses of ‘White’ rural normativity may find herself constituted as a subject outside the bounds of place and acceptability. Similarly, the ‘Asian’ rural student who is constructed through prevailing discourses of nationalism and rural belonging may, also, sit beyond acceptable bounds of recognition and be constituted as an unintelligible learner. As Youdell (2006a) writes of the discursive repertoire of the educational terrain, schools are: “suffused with exclusions, with what the student-subject cannot be, with who cannot be the student-subject” (p. 38).

de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), considers the role of speech in enacting the use of such power. In this theoretical text, de Certeau provides a means to understand how people use narrative to mark out spatial boundaries, delimiting those who belong within a geographical space and those who do not. He suggests that narratives are used to mark out spaces, where:

The narration is ‘established’ on the basis of ‘primary’ stories ... stories that already have the function of *spatial legislation* since they determine rights and divide up lands by ‘acts’ or discourses about actions ... from the home ... to the journey ... from the functioning of the urban network to that of the rural landscape, there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers. In this organization, the story plays a decisive role. It ‘describes’, to be sure. But ‘every description is more than a fixation’, it is ‘a culturally creative act’. It even has a distributive power and performative force (it does what it says ... it founds spaces. (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 122-123)

de Certeau provides in this analysis an account of the way spaces and places are culturally and politically constituted through narrative. As discursive tools, stories function to mark territory, he suggests, and map boundaries. These boundaries work as “fixing points” or “markers”, becoming a reference point for indicating who rightfully belongs in a space, according
to myth, performative force, and/or the history of a narrative. As de Certeau suggests, these narratives are decisive and foundational. In this sense, we see the force of the power of speech to function as a tool in the exercise of power over others. These speech acts function to control bodies, but also, importantly, work to control who belongs in (and out of) geographical spaces and places.

Butler (1997) is also recognised for her writings on speech, suggesting it is one of the ways by which persons are formed in language:

To be called a name is one of the first forms of linguistic injury that one learns. But not all name-calling is injurious. Being called a name is also one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language. (p. 2)

Butler suggests that hate speech may be injurious if it succeeds, but this success is not guaranteed. Subjects have discursive agency in response to offensive speech (the notion of agency is discussed in more detail below), but are nonetheless interpellated by its call. Injury occurs, however, because hate speech situates the recipient outside the bounds of acceptance. Butler (1997) also suggests that subjects are constituted as subordinate by hate speech. In the deployment of injurious speech, subjects are performatively cast in inferior terms, so that when hate speech is effective, it necessarily positions subjects outside of normative frameworks of recognition and legitimacy (the concept of recognition will be further discussed in a later section). It is also to render the receiver disconnected from those who speak the injury:

To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are. Indeed, it may be that what is unanticipated about the injurious speech act is what constitutes it injury, the sense of putting its addressee out of control ... Exposed at the moment of such a shattering is precisely the volatility of one’s ‘place’ within the community of speakers; one
can be ‘put in one’s place’ by such speech, but such a place may be no place. (Butler, 1997, p. 4)

Central to this research is the notion that place-based identities are constituted in and through discourses of the rural. When hate speech works to situate a minority ethnic subject outside of their place-based subjectivities, the power of hate speech to destabilise identity is realised. Nationalist discourses, premised upon Whiteness and annexed to circulating global discourses, have a long history in Australia (Forrest & Dunn, 2006; Hage, 1998; Gannon & Saltmarsh, 2008) and have been taken up in contemporary Australian rural life to regulate place and boundary. These citations, and their particular rural incarnation, become a means to engender belonging and non-belonging as ‘truths’ about who belongs in the rural circulate with widespread recognition. These normative rhetorical citations become ‘real’, with ensuing power to regulate social life in rural schooling contexts.

Considering the cultural operation of boundary setting around notions of ethnic difference, in Precarious Life (2004), Butler writes: “To what extent have Arab peoples, predominantly practitioners of Islam, fallen outside the “human” as it has been naturalized in its “Western” mold? … Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, what makes for a grievable life? (p. 20)” This theoretical framework, which flows out of Butler’s work on ‘the subject’, and the questionable nature by which humans are discursively constituted as raced, nationed, and/or religioned subjects, provides an important tool for understanding how the participants in this research are performatively constituted as ethnic, and by corollary, often marginal and/or excluded subjects as a result of their ethnic and/or religious identities. Butler (2004) argues there has been a particular
tendency to regard Arab and Arab-looking people with suspicion, alienation, and at worst, a complete abrogation of rights (p. 98), highlighting the “racial and ethnic frames by which the recognizably human is currently constituted” (p. 90). Butler’s argument highlights the way ethnic subjects can be performatively positioned outside the normative frameworks of what it means to be human. This positioning is produced by those who define and set the limits of this framework. Discursively, in such instances, subjects operate in a political and social climate that regards them as alien, as different and unfamiliar. They therefore sit outside the cultural parameters of what is legitimised as human, with consequences for their treatment by the broader population.

For the purposes of this study, this understanding of how humans are performatively constituted as subjects has important implications for examining how ethnic minority students are interpellated and constituted as subjects. This understanding of interpellation draws on the work of Butler (1995) and Althusser (1971) who discuss how subjects are ‘hailed’ and subsequently subjectivated. Butler’s framework provides a basis for understanding how ethnic minority students in rural schools might be positioned in relation to their ethnic and religious identities. How these identities are configured in the specific contexts of schooling examined in this study, and the broader implications of this for understanding the effects of schooling on ethnic minority students in rural areas, is explored in later chapters.

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11 Butler’s writing on ‘Arab’ is situated within a critical history of work concerned with the making of Arab subjectivities. See, most notably, Edward Said’s (1991) *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. 

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3.3 Performative Subjects – Mapping the Contours of the Human

3.3.1 Subjectivation

An essential task of this research project is the analysis of how participants in the study have been made subjects. Foucault (2002a) defines this task as the creation of “a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 208). Seeking to clarify his theoretical position on power, Foucault (1994) wrote in a retrospective introduction to his book, The History of Sexuality, that the general problem to be understood in relation to his work was power and its operation in relation to subjects:

The question is one of determining what the subject must be, what condition is imposed on it, what status it is to have, and what position it is to occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become the legitimate subject of one type of knowledge or another. In short, it is a matter of determining its mode of ‘subjectivation’ (p. 315)

To this end, Foucault is suggesting that in studying power, the quest is to understand who subjects must “be” in order to have legitimacy and status in the realms in which they operate. This notion is inevitably tied to the body as a site of discursive struggle, where the body is “a place where discourses are acted out and acted upon” (Mills, 2003, p. 91). To be viable social subjects, Foucault suggests, it is necessary to understand the conditions and parameters that shape and contain bodily potentiality. That is, it is necessary to make sense not only of how subjects are constituted, but also of how they are constrained by these constitutions (Youdell, 2006a, p. 37). This involves: “studying the devices and techniques that are used in different institutional contexts to act on the behaviour of individuals taken separately or in groups; to shape, direct, and modify their behaviour, to impose limits
on their inaction …” (Foucault, 1994, p. 318). The operation of power relations on the body can be understood, in this sense, through an analysis of the actions and practices that act on the behaviour of others.

This involves processes of recognition of subjecthood (so that subjects are able to make sense of themselves within available discourses and others are able to make sense of them), where some subjectivities (of race, gender, age, class, and so on) will be more viable than others. On the process of attaining recognition, Foucault (2002b) writes that power: “applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him” (p. 331). Considering the operation of this practice in schools, Davies (2006), drawing upon the work of Butler on subjection, suggests that subjecthood relies upon recognition (of and by the subject) in ways that are viable, and that failure in this regard can lead to unintelligibility and a loss of context: “Students work very hard to embody themselves as appropriate and appropriated subjects, and losing their footing – being seen to be incompetent or inappropriate – can be very painful” (p. 433). Thus, students struggle for “mastery” as subjects (Butler, cited in Davies, 2006) in order to be viable in schooling environments. It should be noted that being the “right sort of subject” may involve students being more concerned with being viable to schooling peers than schooling authorities; actions that may constitute the student outside of official schooling discourses but viable within student subcultures (Davies, 2006; Youdell, 2003).

These analytical tools for locating the student-subject in and through schooling discourses are important for understanding how bodies are
produced, regulated and constrained in relations of power. Within rural schools, these configurations of power have particular import for raced, religioned, classed and gendered student-subjects as subjectivities of identity interface with place-based discourses of belonging. The importance of understanding who ethnic minority students get to ‘be’ in the rural has implications for “constitut[ing] students again differently” (Youdell, 2006c, p. 519, emphasis in original). These understandings are taken up in the analyses of schooling practices that follow in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

3.3.2 Performativity

In this section I take up Butler’s work on performativity, namely her consideration of the “powers of language to ‘name’, wound, challenge and to shift meaning” (Hey, 2006, p. 442). I do this in order to make sense of the way ethnic identities are produced through naming practices. I am interested in how the ‘rural’ is ‘spoken’ into being, and simultaneously how ethnic subjects are ‘spoken’ into being in this discursive ‘rural’. I am also concerned to understand how ethnic minority subjects come to be discursively positioned outside normative frameworks governing rurality, race, nation and religion. An inherent aspect of this process is the way subjects ‘become’ what they are named; are named and made by discursive practices that interpellate identity. Butler calls this practice ‘performativity’, where language has a constitutive function and subjects are performatively constituted. In *Excitable Speech* (1997), Butler writes:

What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform and, in particular, to perform what it names? On the one hand, it may seem that the word – for the moment we do not know which word or which kind of word – enacts what it names; where the ‘what’ of ‘what it names’ remains
distinct from the name itself and the performance of that ‘what’.
(p. 43)

Butler is suggesting in this argument that persons are not merely *named* as subjects, but are also *produced* and made by naming practices. This performativity, according to Butler (1997), may have a history:

Racist speech works through the invocation of convention; it circulates, and though it requires the subject for its speaking, it neither begins nor ends with the subject who speaks or with the specific name that is used. (p. 34)

If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that ‘success’ is always and only provisional), then it is … because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices* … In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force. (p. 51)

This historicity relies upon prior utterance for its meaning. Such context gives speech significance in the present, having derived relevance from its past circulation. Once enacted, it is beyond the power of the sovereign subject to know or control the effect of their speech and/or actions. Indeed, discursive practices may be deployed with unintended effects. Gannon and Saltmarsh (2008) remind us that citation, in the words of de Certeau, “‘appears to be the ultimate weapon for making people believe’ (2002, 188), and the citation of racist discourses with a long and pervasive history in Australian civic life is a powerful means of reinscribing racialized privilege as a discursive norm” (p. 167). Citation thus becomes the rhetorical means by which nationalist sentiment, underscored by racist discourse, becomes a discursive norm in the Australian context. Hey (2006) has referred eloquently to this process as “the incessant replication of norms that materialise that which they govern” (p. 440).
This framework of understanding suggests that subjects are not only constituted by naming practices, but that naming categories are central to practices of ‘sense’ making (Youdell, 2006a, 2006c). For example, to be called a ‘wog’\textsuperscript{12} in Australia is to be both named as a subject and constituted as a particular sort of subject (Allard, 2002). It is to be ‘made’ by circulating discourses of Whiteness framing nationalism and belonging. Youdell (2005) suggests that “such a naming joins a citational chain that inevitably inscribes hierarchical binary relations (Derrida, 1998)” (p. 252). In this instance, it is to inscribe the recipient of the name as both a non-Anglo Australian, and one who is ‘naturally’ situated out of place in a binary relation with ‘real’ (White) Australians (Hage, 1998; Tsolidis, 2001) (it is also to open up possibilities for discursive agency; a topic to be discussed below). Such functioning highlights the power of performative practices to constitute subjects in ways that are recognisable within discursive relations, and to do so in ways that produce identity within complex relations of power.

3.3.3 Recognition

Judith Butler’s work on recognition is utilised in this research to consider the relationship between normativity and the terms by which humans come to be recognised as intelligible social subjects. Butler’s work is taken up to demonstrate how enduring discourses of rurality, nation, race and religion circulate in schools to frame acceptable and non-acceptable, intelligible and non-intelligible student and learner identities, affecting possibilities for educational achievement and belonging. On the topic of recognition, Butler (1997) writes that “one ‘exists’ not only by virtue of

\textsuperscript{12} ‘Wog’ is a derogatory slang term in Australia directed against persons of ‘Mediterranean’ ethnicity.
being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being *recognizable*” (p. 5). She suggests that the terms by which humans come to be recognised are socially articulated; that we are “constituted by our relations” (Butler, 2004, p. 24). Drawing on the Althusserian notion of interpellation, Butler (1997) argues that: “The act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence” (p. 25). The normative conditions by which humans come to be recognised and given status within this social milieu are posited by Butler as being the sum of “a ‘Western’ civilization” which “defines itself over and against a population understood as, by definition, illegitimate, if not dubiously human. (Butler, 1997, p. 91). Who counts as human by this normative standard, Butler asks? Butler suggests that differentiations are made on the basis of sex, race and body morphology, determining not only who subjects can “be”, but whether they can be recognised and made sense of as social subjects at all. According to Butler (2004), it is “the familiar” that becomes “the criterion by which a human life [is established as] grievable” (p. 38).

In the research that follows, these ideas are taken up to illustrate processes of educational inclusion and exclusion. As subjects in this research are denied discursive legitimacy on the grounds of ethnicity, nation and/or religion, so they are deemed to sit beyond the bounds of recognition. The examples in this study highlight the terms defining the human; the way some individuals are given the possibility of living lives that recognise this status, whilst others remain outside the bounds of social and educational intelligibility.
3.3.4 Agency

This research draws on the work of de Certeau (1984), to consider the place of schooling in creating ethnic subject positions. Like Foucault, de Certeau writes about power and its operation in everyday life, but his work is used here to consider both how individuals work to resist having power exercised over them, as well as to consider the enduring nature of institutional power in Western societies.

On the topic of one’s ability to resist a regime of power, de Certeau (1984) suggests that not only are strategies of refusal possible within available spaces of resistance, but that acts of agency actively reconstitute power relations. He writes that: “order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers” (p. 18). In this sense, de Certeau considers that even in the most “dogmatic” of power relations, there is room for resistance – space for play – for the individual or group who is having power exercised over them. In strategies of resistance that he describes as “trickery” (p. 18), de Certeau argues the place for tactics in considering the “innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other’s game” (p. 18). Indeed, he suggests, “people have to make do with what they have. In these combatants stratagems, there is a certain art of playing one’s blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space” (p. 18). In these acts of agency, de Certeau highlights the possibilities for resistance that can actively be taken up to resist the exercise of power.

Judith Butler (2004), too, considers that “we are at once acted upon and acting, and our ‘responsibility’ lies in the juncture between the two” (p. 16). In this sense, Butler acknowledges the role of individual responsibility
in power relations, the space for action and an “enabling response” (Butler, 1997, p. 2) from individuals, even in circumstances where people are being acted upon. At the same time, however, she recognises that “we need to situate individual responsibility in light of its collective conditions” (Butler, 1997, p. 15), acknowledging that context – the context of domination, for example – can be constraining (Davies, 2006). On the discursive agency of subjects in relation to speech acts, in *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997) suggests:

One is not simply fixed by that name that one is called, in being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call. Thus the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyse the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. (p. 2)

Thus, while subjects may be injured by speech, these acts of speech simultaneously open up possibilities for resistance. In the case of this study, while student-subjects are invariably constrained by circulating discourses about who they can ‘be’, it is also possible for subjects to deploy resources that resist or thwart these practices; to take up “practices that insist that discourses have been silenced be intelligible and legitimate”, and to “deploy [discourse] in new ways; and overlay it with alternative meaning” (Youdell, 2005, p. 268).

This topic has also been taken up by Foucault, who theorises about the role of agency in power relations, and in *The hermeneutics of the Self* (1980) clarifies his position on the place of individuals in exercising power, even in circumstances where they are subject to social forces. Of agency, he suggests: “power consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set
of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies (Foucault, 1999, pp. 162-3), where he defines self-technologies as:

techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on. Let’s call this kind of techniques a techniques or technology of the self. (Foucault, 1999, p. 162)

Foucault suggests here that subjects are subjected to forces that are both external and self-imposed. These processes of self-regulation are the essence of agency that allow subjects to resist power being exercised over them. Rather than understanding power as it has traditionally been represented (by theorists such as Marx and Althusser, for example) as a top-down model of domination, Foucault argues that power can equally be exercised from the bottom-up, that it permeates and is invested in all social relations, and that persons actively contest and struggle against power. Indeed, rather than regarding power in a negative sense, Foucault, like Butler, suggests that even at its most restrictive and confining, power can be a productive force giving rise to new forms of behaviour (Mills, 2003).

Beyond these processes of self-command, Foucault (1998) recognises that agency is often enacted by subjects in incremental ways; a subject’s response to power often being moderate and recurrent, rather than revolutionary. Of resistance, he writes (1998):

They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. Hence they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour. Are there no great radical ruptures,
massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance ... (p. 96)

This theoretical framework is utilised within this study to examine the processes whereby subjects utilise opportunities – even if sporadic and contained – to exercise agency and resistance against those who would seek to exercise power over them, as well as to mark out spaces where apparent disadvantage can be turned to situations of leverage. This framework enables understanding of how acts of agency enable persons in positions of unequal power access to spaces of influence.

In the chapters that follow, I move beyond this theoretical outline to an illustration of how this theory is operationalised in the everyday practices of schooling. I take up the theories I have outlined above of discourse, power, narrative, subjectivation, performativity, agency and recognition to discuss the lived experience of ethnic minority subjects in the Australian rural environment. This theoretical framework becomes a means to investigate the concerns at the heart of this research, namely, how ethnic minority students are constituted in and through rural (educational) landscapes, as well as how the discursive construction of the rural engenders practices of inclusion and exclusion for ethnic minority subjects. I do this as a means to consider both how poststructuralism can be taken up to think through rural schooling moments in the everyday, and the implications of this thinking for educational practice.

Before examining these everyday moments of rural schooling and their effects, in the chapter that follows I first set out and justify my choice of research methods for this study. I do this in order to make evident the
processes of data production that form the foundation of this research. In keeping with poststructuralist practices of reflexivity, Chapter Four is concerned with outlining the events that brought me to this research, in an epistemological act of making transparent my own positionality within the research. In this way, the following chapter aims to make transparent both the methods orienting this research, as well as the subjectivities underpinning these methods as they engender knowledges and performativities. This discussion is positioned within an account of the philosophies that characterise a poststructural ethnographic study of education.
Chapter Four
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Ethnographic studies are frequently borne out of a researcher’s desire to answer a question that provokes an emotional response, a response derived from a desire for social justice. Such questions become the impetus that drives a research project. Conteh, Gregory, Kearney and Mor-Sommerfeld (2005) write:

The beginnings of an ethnographic study are often rooted in anger, even fury, and, as such, are partisan. A chance encounter with a book, a classroom incident, a teacher, child or parent’s remark will often be enough to spark a deep-seated anger or an unanswered question from deep in our own past, which initiates the study. Margaret Meek has often referred to this eloquently as ‘the paradigmatic moment’ that both symbolises and illustrates the central or big question of the study, a moment we keep returning to throughout the work and which we never forget. (p. x)

Margaret Somerville (2008) has similarly written of important moments from which research emerges. These points in time – what Somerville calls “postmodern emergence” – are the beginning of a researcher’s connection to and relationship with a research problem:

the emergence of new knowledge is held in an image ... It is resilient in that I can call it up over and over and examine the deep resonances and connections that I am yet fully to explore ... The image emerges from a place of unknowing, it holds that place and allows me to return there. It is almost as if this image calls me up. (p. 212)

In the same way, Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & McCormack Steinmetz (1991) have suggested that “how people feel and what they learn ... is crucial to every aspect of the qualitative way of looking at life” (p. 1).
They suggest that “qualitative study ... is an intensely recursive, personal process” (p. 1).

With the idea in mind that our connections to research matter, it seems important to articulate the moments of “emergence” from whence this research came, along with something of ‘the personal’ that orients this research.

I grew up in cities. This meant that for the first twenty-odd years of my life I had no experience of rural life whatsoever, except perhaps as I experienced it via the television and books. This situation changed for me when my mother and step-father moved to a large New South Wales country town when I was in my late 20s. A sprawling property was bought on the outskirts of ‘town’, and on my occasional visits there I began to enjoy the pleasures of country life. Despite relishing the slower pace of life, the beauty of the rural landscape, and a sense of community that seemed to exist in the town I was slowly coming to know, for many years I thought I could not live outside the city, away from the coast. In this sense, the pull of a ‘tree change’ was strong, but not strong enough. It was to be many years before the allure of country life became so compelling so as to draw me away from ‘the familiar’ to ‘the bush’.

Now I cannot imagine living anywhere else. I am deeply attached to rural life and its allurements. And yet I remember being disturbed by aspects of rural social character in my early days in the country – characteristics that come under scrutiny in this study; that are, in fact, at the heart of this inquiry. When I first arrived in rural Australia, I met people who appeared to be more conservative than anyone I had encountered in the city. I have a strong memory, for example, of answering the telephone to a new-found
acquaintance of my mother’s and being gently plumbed for information about the couple who owned our neighbouring property. The couple, in their 50s, had just got engaged and my mother’s friend appeared fascinated by the couple’s status as ‘divorcees’. Divorce, from what I could tell, sat outside this woman’s normative framework, just as her conservative attitude to divorce sat outside mine. My response to the conversation at the time was to be quietly amused by the woman’s undisclosed inquisitiveness, and her regulatory response to family. I also became aware of some of the stereotypes of rurality that come under scrutiny in this research – insularity, conservatism, and a ‘backwardness’ in social attitudes not usually associated with cities.

But investigation of these stereotypes was to take some time. For it was not until many years later that the ‘paradigmatic moment’ (Conteh, et al., 2005) defining this research was stirred. It was produced as I worked at a university in rural Australia. It was in this learning community that I met Ali – an Iraqi student at the university. In a subject I was tutoring on media and culture, I noticed barely disguised hostility towards Ali’s country of birth and its inhabitants from a vocal minority of students, along with a reluctance to consider discursive readings of the war stories coming out of Iraq at the time by some students in the course. This resistance engendered the beginning of a meaningful dialogue between Ali and I about student reactions and opposition to his Arab and Muslim identity by some ‘aggies’ [short for ‘agricultural’, a colloquial term for rural students] on campus. As Ali related a painful narrative of racial abuse by other students, I began to think more explicitly about the relationship between ethnicity and rurality, and particularly about the stereotypes of homogeneity surrounding rural
places. These questions centred on whether rural places are necessarily more racist than urban areas, and whether, as a result of their supposed homogeneity, rural places are difficult places for ethnic minority persons to reside. I was grappling with ideas and questions of identity and place; questions that figure prominently in this study. These are the questions that pushed me into the “chaotic place of not knowing” (Nakamura cited in Somerville, 2008, p. 210) that marked the beginning of my journey towards knowing (if only partially and subjectively) that is this research project. The methods that I use to get to this place of knowing are the topic of this chapter.

4.2 A poststructuralist method

Research on the practice of educational ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Woods, 1996) has an established history within the tradition of qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Silverman, 2004; Wolcott, 1995). This research is situated within this tradition, where the methodological aim of this project mirrors that of the qualitative paradigm more generally. That is, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Put another way, this research seeks to construct:

a cultural grammar ... that describes the rules or norms that individuals within a society, community, or group have to know, produce, predict, interpret, and evaluate in a given setting or a social group in order to participate in socially and culturally appropriate ways. (Green & Bloom, 1997, p.186)
This study, utilising a poststructuralist methodology, seeks to ‘unpack’ these norms using the tools of discourse (Foucault, 2000). This practice involves understanding social life through an examination of the discourses and performativities that determine social normativity.

A researcher’s theoretical perspective, and the epistemological process of knowledge production grounding this thinking are intimately connected to their method of data collection, analysis and writing. While traditional practices of ethnography may have seen method characterised purely in terms of techniques like direct observation, immersion in the field, and the researcher as research instrument (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001), poststructural accounts of ethnography are infused with “theory and the broader philosophical questions of knowing and being” (Youdell, 2006b, p. 59). As Popoviciu, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill (2006) write: “the task of the post-structuralist ethnographer is to recognize the (politically led) narratives that enmesh how we locate and identify those subject to the research (p. 405)”.

Method, in the sense that ‘doing ethnography’ has traditionally involved a process of data collection and analytic steps, overlooks how closely theory is tied to method in poststructural ethnography. In this type of ethnography, “ethnography does not stand outside discourse” (Youdell, 2006b, p. 60). Indeed,

the question becomes ... not whether ethnography is theoretical, but how far its theoretical framework is made explicit and worked through research questions, data generation, analysis and writing. (p. 60)

Maggie MacLure (2003) posits that popular texts in the everyday frequently display a “knowingness about [their] own discursive construction” (p. 5). In the same way, this study aims to make transparent
the way ‘truths’ are constituted through discourse in this work, (both in terms of what is studied and how it is studied), and to open up these ‘truths’ to questioning (MacLure, 2003). As Foucault (2002c) writes:

Truth is a thing of this world ... Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true. (p. 131)

An ethnographic study concerned with the discursive production of knowledge recognises the task of data collection as one where “the only way to access the world and the subject is through discourse” (Youdell, 2006b, p. 68). Yet the discourses presented in this study are as contingent as the “truths” that Foucault (2002c) suggests operate in society as a function of discursive regimes.13

Just as it is important to recognise the constructed nature of ‘truth’, so it is important to acknowledge the way discourses form the objects of which they speak, and have productive capacity. Discourses are produced knowingly and unknowingly by subjects. Even discourses intentionally circulated may have unforseen meaning attached to them, or may circulate beyond the intention of the subject who speaks them (Butler, 1997; Youdell, 2006b; Youdell, 2006c). This notion of discursive agency has performative effect in this study. For example, a student may call another a ‘terrorist’ and know that the term is a slur against Arab persons/persons of Arab appearance. Yet the same student may have little or no understanding of the historicity involved in invoking the term, with its attachment to discourses of, for example, war, defence, politics, security, globalisation, and liberty.

As I in my research capacity, however, continue to reinvoke such terms, I

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13 This study also recognises that theoretically oriented work loses some of the ‘rich description’ of a traditional ethnography. In this sense, this research is best described as a series of “ethnographic studies” that draw on the practices of traditional ethnography.
extend the discursive process of giving performative force to the injurious name (Youdell, 2006b). In this way, this study can be understood as “implicated in ongoing processes of subjectivation” (Youdell, 2006b, p. 64).

Following this line of thought, the research that follows can only claim to provide a partial account of the discourses that operate in the settings under discussion. Both intentionally and unintentionally, discourses will escape the intention of the researcher and researched, and other discourses will also be in play, in a complex, layered, multidimensional configuration of readings of the narratives sketched. In this sense, I am aligned with Kenway, et al.’s (2006) argument that ethnographies can only ever “produce partial, situated and interested knowledge” (p. 41).

Unlike in the scientific paradigm where research ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ are said to be produced through rigorous attention to protocol, the task of the educational ethnographer is instead to present ‘trustworthy’ research (Popoviciu, et al. 2006), or as Youdell (2006b) writes, poststructural ethnographies offer “‘confidence’ rather than ‘proof’” (p. 60). This process is achieved in this project by acknowledging the many ways in which my identity as a researcher, in both conscious and unspoken ways, influences the research.

4.3 Issues of power and reflexivity in ethnography

Understanding the workings of power is a crucial dimension of poststructural ethnographic studies in education. Power relations between researcher and participants are central concerns in this study, as in other poststructural school ethnographic studies. Popoviciu, et al. (2006) have
suggested that school ethnographies are rich in promise for research that seeks to work with subordinated groups:

Opening up a social world and sensitizing the researcher to alternative experiences and understandings to those of the dominant institutional explanations of what is institutionally going on. (p. 401)

However, this study recognizes that “even in the most ‘empowering’ research, issues of power are never absent” (Scott & Usher, 1999, p. 18).

Thus, in writing the narrative of young, ethnic Others, I acknowledge the subjectivity of my position as a (White, female) researcher, and the cultural prism through which I make meaning and interpret events. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, my own experience of rural life, and its complexities and ambiguities, profoundly shape my own subjectivity, as well as my own orientations to the research endeavour. Similarly, my location in rural spaces as a White, educated, English-speaking adult woman, shape not only what is possible for me in personal terms, but also shape how I am perceived and my relationships in research sites. These issues of power and positionality are explored in this study through processes of reflexivity.

The methodological difficulties inherent in conducting research with ethnic Others is well documented in the research literature (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004; Haig-Brown, 2001; Mohan & Venzant Chambers, 2010), where issues of understanding across cultural difference permeate. While the literature concerned with insider–outsider identities shares a common concern for methodological integrity, its perspectives are diverse. Mohan and Venzant Chambers (2010), for example, identify four common arguments in the insider/outsider debate: insider research is desirable; outsider research is desirable; the research of both insiders and outsiders is
desirable; and one is both insider and outsider in the research process as multiple forms of relation take place between the researcher and researched. In line with these trajectories, ethnic minority scholars have challenged outsider-researchers to meaningfully engage with cultural differences and their implications for meaning-making in cross-cultural research, suggesting that cross-cultural communications are constrained by insider–outsider subjectivities, where outsider-researchers’ lack of cultural knowledge can impact a researcher’s ability to make meaning of insider narratives (Shah, 2004). By way of contrast, other ethnic minority researchers in the field have questioned the extent to which ethnic identification creates more nuanced understandings of insider experiences (Merriam, et al., 2001; Mirza, 1995; Mohan & Venzant Chambers, 2010). Haig-Brown (2001) suggests that it is scholars from the dominant ethnic group who are best placed to affect change for minorities given their political privilege. From a different perspective, yet still within a tradition of “coalition work” (Haig-Brown, 2001), Santoro and Smyth (2010) make a case for the benefits of collaborative research as a means to enhancing the reflexive process.

This study aligns itself with Merriam et al.’s (2001) proposition that the complexities of identity (of both the researcher and researched) should be taken up in the research process, where there is recognition that during “the course of a study, not only will the researcher experience moments of being both insider and outsider, but that these positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants” (pp. 415-416). Such an argument recognises that the self is not unitary, and that, as such, there is a blurring of distinctions that can be made between insider and outsider boundaries (Subreenduth & Rhee, 2010). It recognises the
situated nature of identity, and calls for subjectivities to be made transparent so as to make recognisable how discourses render knowledges and performativities.

Such a position recognises that notions of positionality are intrinsically linked to questions of power and authority. As Gregory (1994 cited in Cloke & Little, 1997, p.13) asks: “By what right and on whose authority does one claim to speak for those ‘others’?” My answer to this query is articulated in the response of Gregory (1994 cited in Cloke & Little, 1997, p.13), who argues:

To assume that we are entitled to speak only of what we know by virtue of our own experience is ... to reinstate an empiricism ... Most of us have not been very good at listening to others and learning from them, but the present challenge is surely to find ways of comprehending those other worlds – including our relations with them and our responsibilities toward them – without being invasive, colonising and violent.

Those who argue from an ontological perspective that it is only those situated inside the perspective of a particular identity who are equipped to speak of what they know ignore the way this argument essentialises identity. As Youdell (2006b) writes:

... to call for ontological match between the researcher and the researched ... premises a ‘true’ experience which is accessible, if only to the ‘right’ researcher, and assumes a subject whose being, or ontology, is ‘authentic’ and ‘essential’ even where this authenticity and essence is understood to be socially constructed (Fuss, 1990). (p. 63)

For poststructural ethnographers, a response to such arguments entails a reflexive process of acknowledging identity (both of the researcher and researched) as being ‘in play’ throughout the research process, where the notion of gaining access to a ‘real’ representation of a participant is problematised. In this regard, Brah (1996) argues that “experience does not reflect a pre-given ‘reality’ but is the discursive effect of processes that
construct what we call reality” (p. 11). The task of the poststructuralist researcher becomes to understand participant identities, both as they are revealed to us, and as research processes inscribe and inhibit these processes of understanding. As Popoviciu, et al. (2006) write: “Ethnographers … should consider the processes that make identities socially, culturally and psychically visible including aspects that remain unseen or out of view” (p. 405). It is to acknowledge that intercultural ethnographic data gathered from student participants is inevitably culturally located by the researcher/researched relationship, and is subject to the specific conditions of its discursive location (ethnic identity and age being just two of the many subjectivities in the research process affecting how power relations and discursive repertoires are configured and reproduced).

In the case of the Sudanese students in this study, for example, (see Chapter Six) the participants appeared to draw meaning and status from the researcher’s interest in them, and it is suggested that through the power inherent in this relationship, as well as the mutual trust that was developed, the female students may have learned something of their personal and cultural value through the process of participation in this study. Thus, while my position as a White adult positioned me as an outsider in relation to the Sudanese participants’ cultural knowledge, other points of identification opened up alternative avenues of meaning and understanding.

This is not to suggest that tensions involving cultural relations (or, indeed, other relations of power) are easily resolved in this study, but instead is to suggest that meaning-making in relation to these subjectivities remains open to questioning, with the ultimate aim in the study of challenging hegemonic relations and culturally privileged ways of knowing.
and being in society. It is to suggest that the conditions for reflexivity are established in practices of representation that position how discourses are revealed as located and privileged, and not in method alone.

4.4 Researcher positionality and subjectivation

Deborah Youdell (2006b) suggests that the question of whether Foucaultian researchers give an account of themselves to their audiences is indeterminable. Should researchers choose to write themselves into the text they risk essentialising themselves, but should they opt not to reveal the ‘self’ they are at risk of “a disembodied authorial authority” (p. 65).

Subreenduth and Rhee (2010) similarly write of the production of performative research identities: “Once we/these subjects/fields are named – through geography, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, and language, we are assumed to represent ourselves in accord with the referent, and the discourse of the referent as dictated by researchers’ organized knowings” (p. 337). The problems inherent in discourses of disclosure are well documented in the research literature (Nelson & Gould, 2005). In Merriam et al. (2001), a researcher, Johnson-Bailey, relates an instance where the disclosure of her class identity failed to parallel how this subjectivity was taken up by the researched. The researcher’s claims to poverty, for example, were doubted by some participants in the study who had also related stories of “growing up poor” (p. 407). Similarly, the experience of Rhee in Subreenduth and Rhee (2010), suggests poststructural identity allows for significant complexity in relation to notions of positionality, or how one positions oneself and is positioned. For myself, the complex nature of identity is replicated in my own sometimes ‘messy’
subjectivities and positionings. There have been instances in schools, for example, when teaching staff, in relating some aspect of student experience, have presumed that my (assumed) class position means that I will be unable to understand a participant’s disadvantaged experience of schooling. An unproblematic, safe, middle-class upbringing is assumed from my current educational status (and presumably other indicators of class, taken at face value). The disparity between the teachers’ assumptions and my own experience has left me feeling disquieted. Yet examples such as these illustrate the problem of subjectivities being closed down by markers on the body which essentialise identity. In response to such dilemmas, in choosing how to disclose herself to readers, in Impossible bodies, impossible selves (2006b), Youdell locates herself cautiously in the text in the same way that she is located to students in a school research setting:

Identity categorisations are seen to be as mobile as the discursive circuits through which they are performatively constituted ... Introducing such discourses into a research setting has the potential to subjectivate the researcher and the researched in ways that may well be unfamiliar, at least in the school context, even as these are recognised as being contingent, provisional and fragile – these moments in the field might themselves be moments of performative politics. (p. 65)

To this end, in schools, in moments where Youdell (2006b, p. 65) chooses not to “out” herself to students, her identity is only available through the “visual economies” of gender and race (woman, White). In the same way, her “social class, sexuality, sub-cultural and age locations” (p. 65) are taken to be less obvious to students and so are not disclosed, although it is recognised that these identity categories may be guessed at or assumed. Youdell’s position on the subjectivation of the researcher has been adopted in this study. As such, I make myself available to the reader as I was ‘visibly’ available to students in schools (woman, White), as well as trying
to explain something of what brought me to this research project. In adopting this approach, I attempt to make transparent my own discursive repertoire, in as much as it is available to me, and as it influences the research.

4.5 Research sites

Three school sites were selected for study in this rural project: Springville High School (a small rural school); Darby High School (a school of ‘medium’ size in a large town); and Gundah High School (a large and diverse school in a populated regional centre). The selection of these sites reflects a desire to understand ethnic minority student perspectives in a range of rural contexts and places. In this sense, the principal criterion in selection of schools was less concerned with ‘What schools represent the totality of rural education?’ but, rather, ‘What group of schools will help understand the diversity of experience of ethnic-minority students in rural schools?’ (Stake, 1995).

I sought schools that were public (government), coeducational, secondary, rural, and had an ethnic minority student population. Rurality as selection criteria around which to choose a schooling site seemed self-evident. I was living in a country town throughout the period of conducting this study (and for some years beforehand) and thought I knew a rural school when I saw one (while rurality has been heterogeneously defined in the literature according to factors such as population size, density, distance from urban centres, and land use (Black, 2005; Butler Flora, Flora & Fey, 2003), these functional, positivist understandings of rurality have been eschewed in this study in favour of a more conceptual understanding of the
term; one that posits rurality as a social construct (Cloke, 2006a)). Yet rurality, at least in a relational sense, influenced my choice of schools. Rurality mattered because I wanted my school sites to be sufficiently different from each other to potentially, at least, elucidate different issues at each site. If one rural site was small, I wanted the next site to be larger to see what impact (in a nuanced way, as opposed to a more measured statistical way) this change might have on the data (a detailed discussion of the demographic particulars of each research site is provided in the school data chapters of this study).

Relationally, too, the selection of one site impacted on the choice of others. As it became clear to me that I wanted to include a particular site in the study, its demographics influenced my choice of other sites. As I ‘nailed down’ a large school in a large country town to participate in the study, I stopped looking for other large sites and started to focus on smaller sites with students of different ethnicity at the site to provide contrast in the study. I expected that issues of population and its relationship to community might impact on my understanding of rurality and its connection to ethnicity, so schools of differing student populations in towns of differing populations were sort for the study.

The decision to focus on students from particular ethnic groups in the study was largely determined by the students who presented at each site. It sometimes seemed that narratives attached closely to ethnicity and place, so that sites would appear to offer up ‘race and school’ as a neatly entwined package just waiting to be discursively unpacked. As an example of this, in the early stages of the research I spoke to an officer of the Department of Education about schools in a region I was interested in conducting research
in. The officer was reviewing the statistics relating to Language Backgrounds Other Than English students at schools in a particular area, and offered suggestions about possible sites for the research (suggestions that I would then take up (or not), and arrange a school visit as a first step towards determining suitability). The woman appeared to know many of the students at many of the schools, it being her role to ‘support’ this particular sub-group of students, and she exhibited a knowledge of many of the school sites. She could tell me, for example, that there were $x$ number of students of a particular ethnicity at $y$ school and a particular narrative attaching to each of them. Some of the students’ circumstances – how they came to live in rural Australia, their religious practices, or their place in the life of the school – came to influence my decision whether to make initial contact with a school.

In total, six school sites were ‘scouted’ as part of the process of selecting the three school sites that would later appear in this study. It is important to remember when considering this process of site selection that small numbers of ethnic minority students is the ‘norm’ in rural schools, leading to a situation at the beginning of the research process where I was fearful that I might not be able to persuade any of this small number of students to participate in the research. This fear, perhaps, lead me to lean towards school sites where a number of students of similar ethnicity were situated, as opposed to following up school sites where there might only have been one or two students of minority ethnicity. While there are schools in urban centres, and a number of identifiable rural areas with high populations of students with Language Backgrounds Other Than English (where farming opportunities have led to concentrations of particular
immigrant groups), this configuration is unusual in rural Australia. I wanted my selection of sites to reflect the norm. I therefore selected sites with small numbers of ethnic minority students. After obtaining ethics approval for the project, principals of schools were approached for access, whereupon I began the process of seeking participant consent for the research.

4.6 Participants

This study is built on the stories of six ethnic minority students from three rural schools. Students were selected for inclusion in the study based on theoretical considerations of discursive opportunity. That is, students whose discursive trajectories seemed to offer the most interesting and perplexing questions for analysis were included in the study. Pragmatic considerations were also taken up as matters of access affected selection of schools and students.

Students of high school age from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)\(^{14}\) were sought to participate in the research. As the project unfolded, this age criteria was collapsed to allow a former student of a participating school from a CALD background to be interviewed for the project. School staff, including classroom teachers (five in total) and executive staff (two Principals and two Head Teachers) were also asked to participate in the project through formal interview. The narratives of these staff participants were sought as necessary, and on an ongoing basis, throughout the study so as to elucidate the events and discourses under

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\(^{14}\) Inglis (2009) writes that the term ‘culturally and linguistically diverse’ has commonly replaced the term ‘non-English speaking backgrounds’ in official educational usage in Australia. I take up the use of CALD in this study to refer to students from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) (the category schools used to record CALD students at the time of this study), as well as to refer to students who have English as a first language who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
observation at a site. School staff that had a close formal or informal association with the students in this study were interviewed in circumstances where their roles or relationships in the school provided access to schooling practices and/or moments of interest to this project. While many of these narratives are not included in the body of this study, they were always useful in excavating the site under observation (not always in ways intended by the interviewee), and are included in this study in circumstances where they provide particular insight into discursive moments of knowledge production and/or the making of student performativities. Interviews were also conducted with ethnic majority students in order to better understand the discursive environment under examination. Further details of these interviews are provided below. A schedule of participants and data collection methods is provided in the Appendices to this study.

The communities in which the schools were situated have a presence in the research, and were therefore considered as part of the research design. From the outset of this project, schools were understood to be nestled within a larger geographic space, hence the impact of the rural community on student and schooling identities was always considered to be important to this project. The ethnographic process was designed to take account of this by considering issues of space and place as integral to realising the discursive project.

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of one school year. I endeavoured to spend a significant amount of time (approximately one school term, which amounts to a period of 10-13 weeks) in each school setting. Observation involved ‘sitting in’ on numerous lessons with
participants, observing them in playgrounds, and following them (more or less discretely) as they went about their school day. What I tried to do was simply follow the student to observe how they ‘do’ school, all the while recording my observations in a field notebook.

In the early stages of the research at Springville and Darby High Schools, participants were recruited to the project via a recruitment letter. It was originally envisaged that the recruitment letter would be issued to all ethnic minority students at a participating school, yet while the letter did elicit participants, it also had the effect of notifying larger numbers of people in the school community about the research than was absolutely necessary (my original proposal suggested that only those directly participating in the research would be informed of the specific focus of the research, in order to avoid participants being ‘labelled’ by their peers, for example, as a result of participating). While there is no suggestion that any undue harm occurred to any of the participants in this regard, to assist in negating its possibility, when research commenced at Gundah High School only four students were directly asked to participate in the research (I identified students from Afghanistan as students of interest to the project) to contain the number of students who had direct knowledge of the research and its intent.

4.7 Observation and interview as construction sites of knowledge

This research employs the common tools of ethnography: observation, interview, and focus groups. These tools are used to ‘get inside’ a setting as it is lived by participants. In choosing observation and interview as primary methods of data collection, the study acknowledges the qualitative research
interview and participant observation as “construction site[s] of knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 42). These tools were not chosen, however, because it was believed that they could give me access to a definitive ‘truth’ about schooling, rural places, or the ethnic subject in either or both of these settings. As Youdell (2006b) writes:

my selection of particular methods is not predicated on an assessment of their relative abilities to access ‘truth’ or even ‘experience’. Rather, selection is based on considerations of how best to access the discursive practices through which subjects are constituted, sustained, contested and reinscribed. (pp. 68, 69)

Qualitative handbooks commonly suggest that the task of the ethnographer “is to make the familiar strange (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Spindler and Spindler, 1982)” (Gordon, et al., 2001, p. 188). As Youdell (2006b) has recognised, however, we also seek to become familiar with any new research setting whilst trying to see beyond our familiar understandings of what we are seeing. In poststructural ethnographic studies, there is also a recognition that there is an impossibility of ever truly ‘knowing’ a research site.

Participant observation has been referred to as a process of “ongoing and intensive observing, listening, and speaking” (Ely, et al., 1991, p. 42). Wolcott (1995) suggests that three different participant-observation styles are available to researchers: the active participant, the privileged observer, and the limited observer. The active participant, he suggests, has an active role to play in the research setting; the privileged observer is entrusted with special privileges as this pertains to access and observation of the research scene; and the limited observer plays no role in the research setting other than that of researcher (Ely, et al., 1991). In the time I have spent in school research settings, I have found that my ‘participant’ role often sits
somewhere across these three styles. Most often I am a non-participant in the formal and informal life of the school, but sometimes I am invited to ‘get involved’ in classroom or school activities, and I do (by answering questions in class, for example, or attending sporting matches). Often, however, my role as ethnographer also involves special access and privileges that would not otherwise be afforded (for example, I might be given generous access to the time and resources of school leaders). I use my role, in whatever shape it takes and shifts into throughout the research process to explore the discursive practices of schooling and the subjects who inhabit these places.

A poststructural approach to observation entails recognising that analysis is taking place from the researcher’s first moments in the field, as choices are made regarding where to look and what/whom to look at (or ignore), and how to make sense of data in terms of subjectivities taken up (or not) and discursive frames employed (or eschewed) (Rhedding-Jones, 1996; Youdell, 2006a). The processes that see data selectively reproduced in this study are mediated by a recognition of the researcher’s own discursive capacities – “the discourse that I see and name” (Youdell, 2006b), p. 513). In this sense, in selecting data, I offer compelling moments from the field that (I suggest) represent how knowledges and subjects are constituted. This privileging of some data over others is enacted with the intention of opening up regimes of truth to questioning, particularly as these truths produce inclusions and exclusions in rural life. In the words of Youdell (2006b), the narratives I have selected “do not contain, expose or reflect any universal truth”, but they do “resonate” (p. 513). Observations recorded for this study were made on site in the form of handwritten fieldnotes. Those observations
I later chose to include in the study as ‘episodes’ (see discussion following) were transcribed and analysed at a later date.

4.8 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in order to explore discourses and their effects as they emerged in participant narratives. Narrative, in this sense, is not about how participants remember, construct and narrate their experiences (or of how I, in an interpretive sense, make meaning from participants’ perspectives), but is instead about mining narrative for its discursive moments, so as to analyse how knowledges and subjects are constituted through the discourses and performatives revealed in everyday life (Garrick, 1999). Unlike in interpretive studies where there is a focus on accessing the experience of participants through narrative, this discursive study is instead oriented to examining the way social realities are continually in the process of being constructed (Miller and Fox, 2004). In this study, rather than seeing narrative as a ‘reality’ to be captured by ethnographic methods, read, and given meaning as a form of ‘truth’ from the participants’ perspective, narrative is instead posited as discursive data, to be examined for its performative possibilities. In this way, this study recognises interviews as reconstructed stories actively shaped by both researcher and participant (Scott & Usher, 1999), where results are “negotiated” and “contextually based” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with individual students, with each interview lasting somewhere between thirty minutes and one hour. Interviews took place in a quiet space on school grounds, with only the student and researcher present, usually in an area like a study room.
in the school library, or an empty classroom. Interviews were guided by a set of questions that sought to capture the participants’ background, along with their perspective on being an ethnic minority, Muslim and/or refugee student in a rural school and rural community. Specific questions related to the following: what it is like to be of a particular ethnicity/religion at school; any issues that have arisen for the student around their ethnicity/religion in a rural place; what interest others take in their ethnic background; and how students at the school respond to students who come from an ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic background different from their own. The students were also asked to describe the rural place where they lived and how they felt about living in that place. They were questioned about differences between the city and rural areas as they had experienced them, and were asked to reflect on how people from other cultures in their town fitted in. Students were sometimes asked to reflect on events I had observed in the classroom, or on aspects of school culture as this might affect them. Sample transcripts of interviews with participants are provided in the Appendices to this study.

Formal interviews with school staff were also conducted at each school site. Teaching staff were asked questions about their school’s response to ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity, incidents of racism, their approach to teaching for ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity in the rural, and the responses of students in their school to ethnic difference.
4.9 Focus groups

Focus groups were utilised in this study for their potential to create a “synergistic effect” (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 180), whereby the dynamics of group interaction are utilised so that participants are able to build upon responses of other group members in active ways. Wilkinson (2004) suggests that “focus groups are well suited to exploring ‘sensitive’ topics, and the group context may actually facilitate personal disclosures (Farquhar with Das, 1999; Frith, 2000)” (p. 180). In the single group interview included in this study (in Chapter Six), this appeared to occur, with a more detailed account than might otherwise have been provided in an individual interaction being produced. In the focus group interview provided in Episode 6 with Lizzie and Kate, I sought to capture the perspectives of ethnic majority students who share classroom spaces with two of the refugee participants in this study – Mihad and Asha. In a process designed to ‘unpack’ a classroom incident that takes centre stage in this study (Episode 7) from the perspective of the dominant ethnic majority, I approached fellow students in Mihad and Asha’s classroom to discuss events observed in a particular lesson. Given the small class size in this particular rural situation, four students were approached to participate in a group interview, with only two students arriving to participate on the day of the focus group. While this small ‘sample’ might be considered to have worked against disclosure and interview ‘fusion’ of the kind suggested by Wilkinson (2004), I would suggest that the intimacy engendered by both number and situation (two teenage girls having grown up and schooled together in the rural their whole lives brought together in conversation) brought about an
openness of the very kind desired of focus group method. The results of this interview are provided in an edited transcript in Chapter Six.

4.10 Email communication

Email communication was used as a tool in this study to extend my research reach to participants beyond the school site. In Chapter Six, I examine the schooling experiences of Hien, a former student of Darby High School. I was introduced to Hien by a member of staff at Darby High, who suggested that I might find Hien’s story revealing and of interest to this project. This staff member contacted Hien to ascertain her interest in being contacted for the project, and then put us in contact via email due to Hien’s geographical distance from Darby. A small but illuminating number of emails were then exchanged, an edited transcript of which is provided in Episode 9.

The data provided by email in this study has been treated as narrative provided through a different means, where as researcher I had no contact with the participant other than online, and as the participant was made known to me by school staff (with whom I had ‘physical’ contact). While being aware of the potential of the internet “to shift the ways in which qualitative researchers collect, make sense of, and represent data” (Markham, 2004), my focus in this study is on the discursive construction of knowledge in so far as this knowledge shapes places and identities, therefore it considers all narrative as ‘text’ and ‘artefact’, and, as such, meaning, whether the researcher’s own or that of the email correspondent, is considered to be fluid, partial, and discursively ‘under construction’. In this study, then, in the particular episode under examination, email has been
treated as ‘interview’ for its ability to illuminate discursive and performative processes in the rural, and is regarded in the same way as other forms of narrative ‘text’ in this study.

4.11 Transcription

This study recognises transcription as a process of (re)presentation, where interview subjects are actively constructed in the process of capturing their likeness in print, and again as this likeness is edited and (re)presented to readers. Just as interview questions and the conduct of an interview lead to a co-production of data between researcher and researched (Kvale, 1996), so the researcher is an ‘instrument’ in constructing participants through the selective take up and denial of interview data in the transcription process. Thus, transcription can be understood not just to reflect research, but to shape it (Davidson, 2009). In this sense, the researcher is intimately involved in processes of knowledge production as they engage in practices of transcription.

In this study, an approach to transcription was adopted where I endeavoured to present a trustworthy portrait of students’ voices by faithfully reproducing a participant’s speech and its patterns in written text, including the pauses and rhythms that gave affect to their words, as I understood them. A sample interview is provided in full in the Appendices to this study for comparison purposes, so as to make the transcription process as transparent as possible. However, as has been discussed previously in this chapter, the likelihood of ‘accurately’ capturing the participant through transcription can only ever be an illusion. Researcher subjectivities and choices are at play throughout the representation process,
where only edited transcripts are provided in the body of this study. This selective process of portrayal can only ever provide a partial (re)presentation of the participant and their ‘voice’.

4.12 Analysis

As discussed in Chapter Three, this study is concerned with how knowledges are constituted, as well as with how subjects are constituted by ways of knowing. In writing an ethnography, I examine ways of knowing, being, and resisting, as these practices are produced in discourse. Adopting a discursive approach to methodology entails seeing narrative “not as reflections of experience but as discursive productions” (Rhedding-Jones, 1996). In this sense, Popoviciu, et al. (2006), suggest that “post-structural research accounts identify the need to be reflexively aware of how epistemologies may implicitly produce versions of realities rather than being a mirror or device to access reality” (Popoviciu, et al., 2006, p. 403). The above authors’ argue that from this standpoint, “the writing up of research becomes highly problematic” (p. 404). This is due to the fact that “post-structuralist methodology deploys its theories and concepts as strategies of reflexivity, allowing the researcher to examine the researcher/researched relationship as a local production that is rhetorically constituted” (pp. 403-404). Following this understanding, this research recognises the study in itself as a construction site of knowledge. In order not to reinstate a ‘truth’ in the writing of analysis, I recognise a need to perpetually keep discourses ‘open’, to subject them to questioning, and to hold them in tension in order to create understanding of the inclusions and exclusions they generate. As Popoviciu, et al. (2006) have suggested, the
task of the poststructural ethnographer is to understand that “social relationships do not inherently contain meanings and we are unable to read off a resulting analysis” (p. 399). My task in writing an analysis, then, is to discursively open up a space to questioning, to keep my representations open to new readings and questions, and to allow for new understandings and explanations to be made. In this study, I offer readers an ‘account’ of the events under view, an account that is necessarily imbued with my own ways of knowing and being. As such, I, like Nelson and Gould (2005):

risk speaking for others, misrepresenting what they say, or failing to respect their autonomy. If we don’t consider these issues (and sometimes even when we do) we can make the wrong choice or fail to notice what might be a better choice. (Nelson & Gould, 2005, p. 338)

In this way, reflecting the sentiments of Rhedding-Jones (1996), whose writings on poststructural ethnography have strongly influenced my own thinking, my representation of the research remains open “for the reader to select from, resist and reject” (Rhedding-Jones, 1996, p. 22). Such a position implies that my conclusions are inherently a starting point from which further meanings might be made (Rhedding-Jones, 1996).

4.13 Data as episodes

In the following chapters schooling data is typically presented as a series of ‘episodes’. These episodes are drawn from transcripts of interviews (including email ‘interviews’) and focus groups I have conducted with students in schools, as well as from my fieldnotes. When I have presented my fieldnotes in an episode, I do so in the form of a script. In this sense, the data is self-consciously presented as a performance (Goldstein, 2008). I do this to highlight the discursive nature of the text, as well as to facilitate
further discursive possibilities (Youdell, 2006b). In adopting this representational style, I hope to mirror Youdell’s (2006b) wish that:

this approach will allow the reader to access the minutiae and complexity of the apparently mundane and everyday practices of schooling and appreciate the significance of the way that these practices constitute subjects in very particular ways – including as subjects included or excluded from the project of schooling. (p. 73)

This discursive framework is utilised to reveal the complex interplay of subjectivities, rurality and schooling, and to make accessible how subjectivities and knowledges are produced and kept in play in rural landscapes.

4.14 Ethical concerns

At Darby High School, the issue of visibility presented a particular methodological problem. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, the Sudanese students at Darby High School were frequently the object of the unwanted gaze of other students at the school. Marked by the colour of their skin and highly visible as a result, these students were commonly objects of curiosity for students and teachers in a largely White schooling landscape. Retreat from the gaze of others became a common response for the students. As a researcher interested in issues of power and ethnicity, it became clear to me (following a period of observation in the school and some reflection on my findings) that I was intimately caught up in this process as I went about observing the students, and that my observations, no matter that they had the sanction of the Sudanese participants, were no less problematic than the gaze of those I was critiquing. I was forced to question whether, as research participants, the Sudanese students were not just as much ‘objects of curiosity’ to me as they were to other members of the school population
whose behaviour I was discursively unpacking. How could I make a claim to ethical research practice once it had become clear to me that I was implicated in the processes I was appraising? Having come to this conclusion, I made a decision to cease observations of the Sudanese girls, and went on to limit my ethnographic activities at the school to interviews with the girls. While this practice did not dissipate power relations between the researcher and researched, the more intimate nature of interview, with its possibilities for collapsing insider–outsider boundaries (Merriam et al., 2001; Mohan & Venzant Chambers, 2010; Nelson & Gould, 2005), meant that my feelings of being a “social intruder” (Shah, 2004) were lessened.

4.15 Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the methods and processes by which data has been collected and presented in this study, as well as issues of analysis as they are affected by relations of power and positionality in research. I have shown how the theoretical perspectives of this research are closely connected to chosen methods of data collection, analysis and writing, and the way each of these steps is both a product of, and productive of, discursive knowledges.

In the following chapters I provide an examination of the school data gathered for this research, organised into three chapters: ‘Springville’ High School, ‘Darby’ High School and ‘Gundah’ High School. The analysis of everyday schooling practices at these sites provides a foundation from which to consider issues of power, belonging and difference in the rural as these relations go on to produce schooling inclusions and exclusions.
Chapter Five
Springville High School, New South Wales, Australia

5.1 Introduction

Springville High School is situated in the town of Springville in the Central West of New South Wales. It has a population of approximately 3,000 people. With farmhouses strewn across gently rolling hills, the landscape surrounding Springville reveals the town’s rural nature. As far as the eye can see, baled hay can be found dotted over parched paddocks. A railway line appears to run endlessly as it follows the main road into town, and blue summer weeds line the roadside.

In the town centre, farm vehicles meander slowly through the streets, where a number of elegant, restored old homes are juxtaposed against more modest cottages; lodgings which might be said to more accurately characterise the town’s architecture. There is an historic courthouse and post office in heritage colours, and a decrepit shopping ‘mall’.

Immediately as you enter Springville from the West, an imposing factory heralds its presence as the town’s main employer and economic lifeline. Typical of many small Australian country towns, one business – this business – is largely responsible for keeping this quiet town afloat.

Like many small Australian country towns in contemporary times, the forces of globalisation have impacted on Springville. Keller (2001) suggests that changing national and global circumstances during the late 1970s and early 1980s began a trend of migration away from rural areas that has continued to the present day. While it has been typical for large Australian country towns to increase in population during this period,
areas, along with metropolitan areas, have increased in size at the expense of rural areas, with small and remote rural communities being the most likely to suffer decline in their populations (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005; Hugo, 2005; Keller, 2001; Murphy, 2006). As Keller writes of the character and composition of these altered rural locales: “many have persisted, but changed” (p. 21). Those country towns like Springville that are geographically located “within striking distance of regional centres” (Murphy, 2006, p. 34) have had the best chance of survival, being able to offer residents the services and facilities of the larger towns in their vicinity. Springville can be said to have enjoyed some of the social and economic opportunities of this geographic advantage. Nevertheless, while two larger towns sit some 40 kilometres from Springville in opposite directions (offering the town an important economic lifeline), Springville remains fixed by its position as a ‘small’ country town – a concept that the rural sociology literature would suggest is synonymous with rural decline in contemporary times (O’Connor, Stimson, & Daly, 2004). Thus, Springville has survived economically in a challenging global climate, but as Keller (2001) suggests is likely, has altered its economic makeup to adapt to changing international circumstances.

One of the most visible changes in Springville as a result of an altered global environment is its ethnic composition. While in population terms only very small numbers of immigrants and refugees have arrived in Springville, due to the confined nature and size of the town these residents are highly visible as a result of their ethnicity, religion and culture. While comparatively larger country towns in the same region have been more conspicuously impacted by ethnic population change (notably a larger influx
of refugees from African nations into their communities), Springville has experienced these changes, but on a smaller scale. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006a) reports that of the 2,745 residents in Springville at the 2006 census, 245 residents were born overseas. Of this number, 80 persons spoke a language other than English. Of the eight new international immigrants who arrived in Springville between 2001 and 2006, seven new arrivals were from Africa. Of approximately 300 students enrolled at Springville High School, five students are from Language Backgrounds Other Than English. 3.3 per cent of the Springville population is Indigenous (compared to 2.3 per cent of total persons in Australia). As I will go on to show, issues of invisibility and hyper-visibility attach to ethnic minority students at Springville High School. It should be noted that these issues of erasure and recognition extend to the school’s Indigenous population, who are also ‘whited out’, as well as made conspicuous, by circulating discourses of Whiteness. While Indigeneity as an identity category does not receive attention in the schooling data chapters of this research until Chapter Eight, it should be noted that the issues of invisibility and hyper-visibility that are discussed apply equally to Indigeneity; that a relationship exists between these constitutions as they are affected by issues of Whiteness.

A kilometre or so on from the entrance to town sits Springville High School, where students from the district and surrounding farms travel to be schooled. It is a small school, commensurate with the size of the town. Nestled amongst some shade-providing trees are an administration block, a quadrangle, an auditorium that doubles as a basketball court, teaching rooms that spread out from the central administration wing, and a number of demountable classrooms that are some decades old – rooms that have seen
better days. Spreading out from these teaching spaces are a sporting oval and cricket nets, and as is typically found in many rural schools, a small agricultural plot where farm animals graze, and where vegetables are grown from seed.

This is a place where landscape permeates, where the stillness of the countryside contextualises all that it surrounds. As Kenway, et al. (2006) have written of “out of the way” places: “time goes slowly” (p. 94) in such locations, these “zones provok[ing] different ways of being and feeling in place – temporality and temperament are symbiotic” (pp. 94, 95). This is a place where stillness imbues the landscape, necessarily shaping identity as it wraps itself in and through the town. Schooling and ‘place’ are contiguous here. It is not uncommon to find students from Springville High walking the 100 metres or so from the school to the nearby river to take samples for a science experiment, or walking the few blocks to the nearby oval for a football match, perhaps saying “hello” to a familiar face along the way. This is a town where, when students do work experience, they commonly talk of doing a placement with “my uncle”, or at “Julie’s”, such is the intimacy of Springville. Adding to the sense of bucolic ambience at Springville High is its location across the road from the town’s bowling green. At all times of the day, old men and women in their ‘whites’ can be seen scuttling their bowling balls across the green lawn of the bowling club. Opportunities for close association between school and community are common in this intimate, interconnected community, as these scenes exemplify.

Springville was chosen as a site for this study largely as a consequence of the size of its population, and because a small number of ethnic minority families live in the community (whose children attend the
local high school). Dempsey (1990) has suggested that small communities are an excellent site for the study of socio-cultural relationships, as he explains when introducing his own study of a small community:

The small size, the high visibility of its actors and of the events in which they participate, combined, as it will be seen, with multiples social links among them, make it an excellent ‘laboratory’ for the study of relationships and ideologies of inequality that affect all members of this society and which all members help sustain and perhaps extend. (pp. 7, 8)

In the same way, this study demonstrates how schooling contexts, the visibility of individuals, and social links in small rural communities can combine to provide fruitful sites for research investigation. Understanding how ethnicity is discursively constructed, and the inclusions and exclusions that such constructions generate, is foregrounded here within the context of the rural landscape. The tensions and possibilities that work to enable and constrain those constituted as ‘different’ within communities marked by ethnic homogeneity (Williams, 2007) become readily apparent under these conditions. Additionally, the role of schooling in such communities is a particularly productive site for exploring how social institutions might be implicated in denying difference and privileging Whiteness (Hage, 1998; Raby, 2004).

In the discussion that follows, these themes will be explored through the story of Saeed, an Australian-born Muslim youth of Pakistani background at Springville High School. The following analysis offers an account of the way performative identities are produced (Butler, 1993), where subjects become products of, and are constrained by, normative discourse, determining who students can ‘be’ as raced, placed, nationed and religioned persons. This analysis also considers spaces of resistance and how these determine social subjects’ intelligibility and subjectivities.
Finally, the chapter takes up the notion of “multicultural belonging” (Wise, 2005) to argue for a recognition of the ways in which ethnic minorities forge acceptance and inclusion in the rural landscape, and in so doing, are involved in processes of de-centring White ruralities.

5.2 Saeed’s story

Saeed is a 16 year old boy who has lived in rural Springville, in the same house, his entire life. He has two teenage brothers, who are also students at Springville High. His father was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and his mother is a Springville ‘local’. Saeed’s father was sponsored by a family member in Sydney, and local industry, to take up employment in Springville as a halal slaughterman. In recent years he became self-employed and travels regularly to Sydney to manage his business interests. As a young man he met and married Saeed’s mother through friendships formed at work in Springville. Saeed’s mother, born in Springville and raised to Christian beliefs, converted to Islam upon marriage.

Saeed identifies as Australian, whilst also strongly acknowledging his Pakistani background. He speaks with a strong Australian accent.

Saeed is a Muslim. There is no mosque in Springville, so Saeed’s family are not part of a Muslim community in rural New South Wales. However, Saeed’s father regularly travels to the city for work, and therefore maintains connections with the Muslim community in Sydney. In this sense, while Saeed and his brothers do not often leave Springville, they do have some contact with other followers of their faith outside their home town.

Outside of school, the brothers are keen cricket players. They also enjoy the popular rural pastime of hunting. As Springville is a small school,
friendships are tightly formed and, as such, the boys are part of a close circle of friends who have known each other their entire lives.

The following interview was recorded at Springville High School. The extracts provided below are part of a much longer interview that took place with Saeed following observations of him at Springville High School when he was a student in Year 10.

**Episode 1: Constellations of Identity and Belonging: In discussion with Saeed**

[In Springville], you just fit in with everyone. You get on well ... [Having a Pakistani background] makes you feel unique ... You feel like you’re a bit different, but you kinda, like, fit in as well ... I see myself as Australian, but I know there’s a little bit of difference there. I like that, because it kinda, like, separates me from [everyone else]. Yeh, except I do see myself as Australian.

[...]

I’ve always been proud of my background. My Dad’s really proud of being Pakistani ... I’ve been brought up being proud of [being a Muslim]. I just love being Muslim. I feel proud most of the time. The only time you do feel a bit different is when, like, the terrorists and all that, attack.

[...]

Being a small town and that everyone realises that I am different, that I am Muslim and that ... The whole school they’re accepting. What are they gunna do?

[...]

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One of our geography teachers he always asks me about Ramadan. He knows a fair bit about Muslims. He always asks me how fasting and all that’s going.

[...]

When we were little Mum used to go over [to the primary school] and tell all the little kids about our culture and religion and all that, so they’ve got an idea about what it’s about and all that.

Episode 1 illustrates how raced, nationed and religioned identities are performatively produced through naming practices. The episode also highlights how subjects embody contested and conflicting subjectivities as raced, nationed and religioned persons. As discussed in Chapter Three, poststructuralist theories of identity argue that our identities are not fixed, but are fluid, shifting, and contradictory. As Butler (1990) argues:

According to the understanding of identification as fantasy ... it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express becomes a fabrication manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (p. 336)

While Butler writes here about identity as it relates to gender, her argument has applicability for understanding how identity can be conceived more generally as being in the process of being continually shaped and refashioned. While identity might appear to be fixed in place, it is, in fact, no more than the product of discourse as it is inscribed in the performative body.
As discussed in Chapter Three, Butler (1993) argues that subjects are named and made by discursive practices: “discursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make” (p. 107). Utilising this theoretical understanding, it is possible to recognise how Saeed is performatively constituted as a raced, nationed and religioned subject through discursive practices, as well as through acts of agency opened up in resistance to these normative constraints. Saeed speaks to the possibilities of manifold identity when he talks of being both Australian and “different”. To the degree that he is able to articulate his ethnic identity, Saeed uses the category ‘Australian’ both as a marker of his nationality, and as a cultural marker. To this end, he recognises that he is not a White Australian when he acknowledges his Pakistani ethnicity. He also acknowledges his “difference” in relation to his Muslim identity. Saeed articulates that having a Pakistani background makes him feel “unique” and “proud”. He is also immeasurably proud of his Muslim identity, although he recognises that this identity is sometimes associated with terrorism; that associations between Muslims and violence are readily made. As Saeed is positioned to give “coherence” (Butler, 1990, p. 336) to his identity, he names himself as Australian; a speech act that recognises both his citizenship and ethnicity. And yet Saeed also recognises the limits of his acceptance within this identity category, naming his cultural, ethnic and religious “difference”. In doing so, he exercises agency to claim his religious and ethnic subjectivities, illustrating the resistance operating alongside the cultural performatives producing his ethnic Otherness in rural Springville.
Hage (1998) suggests that Whiteness and Australianess are synonymous in the Australian context. Using Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital to refer to a person’s ability to acquire the social characteristics that will lead to “national belonging” (p. 52), Hage suggests that Whiteness equates with national capital in the Australian psyche. To be White, Hage suggests, is potentially to be viewed as a ‘legitimate’ Australian. Saeed’s ethnicity, however, performatively casts him as “different” and places him outside the boundaries of normative recognition (this concept is further discussed in Episode 3). Yet, in the narrative of Saeed, being ‘ethnic’ is unproblematic. Saeed clearly sees himself as belonging in rural Springville, saying: “you just fit in with everyone ... you get on well”. Saeed acknowledges having experienced racism at school, having been targeted because of his religion and skin colour. He appears, however, to accommodate these comments within a framework that emphasises his sense of belonging, rather than his alienation from his peers. In this sense, he privileges the positives in his environment, stressing the commonalities he shares with his community (getting along with most people, being ‘mostly’ accepted), rather than the differences that separate him from it. Given agency, Saeed’s remarks suggest an unproblematic relationship between minority ethnicity/religion in rural Springville and the majority ethnic group. His words suggest belonging, tolerance, harmony and acceptance – a narrative that sits at odds with discourses of rural racism commonly cited in the literature concerned with the experience of ethnic minorities in rural areas (Candlin, 2000; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Cloke, 2006a, 2006b; Cloke & Little, 1997; Garland & Chakraborti, 2006; Hubbard, 2005; Millbourne, 1997; Neal, 2002; Sibley, 2006).
Writing about agency, Butler (1993) argues that the subject is constituted by normative frames, which are, at the same time, open to resistance: “and if there is agency, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands” (p. 12). The subject is, then, a product of these interpelling codes, both normative and resisting. To this extent, it can be argued that Saeed is articulating a strategic identity position when he privileges his Australian identity over his Pakistani identity. In giving his ‘Australianess’ ascendancy when speaking about identity, Saeed could be argued to be aligning himself with the dominant cultural group; to be speaking himself into a position of “belonging” by asserting his Australian nationality and cultural identity. To this end, Hage (1998) suggests that “to say that migrants and Aboriginal people are constructed within White multiculturalism and White racism as non-White objects to be governed does not mean that they perceive themselves as, or act as if they are, objects” (p. 19). Or as Butler (1993) suggests of the relationship between performative speech acts, their social repetition or “cultural iterability” (p. 107), and the way they interpellate subjects into identity positions, creating the possibility of performative defeat: “Since the law must be repeated to remain an authoritative law, the law perpetually reinstitutes the possibility of its own failure” (p. 108). In this sense, when Saeed repeatedly articulates his ‘Australian-ness’ while voicing his difference from constraining normative identity discourses, he rearticulates and founds an identity position beyond the normative codes provisionally made open to him. To this end, in identifying how normative
identities are produced, it is possible to see how (and which) subjects are positioned outside these boundaries, as well as possible sites of resistance. That is to say, as persons are produced in a normative identity, so Others sit outside this homologous space, at the same time opening up opportunities for the exercise of agency.

In a sociological study about ethnic identity amongst Arabic-speaking youth in Sydney, Noble, et al. (1999) argue that identities are “strategic and positional”, that they are impacted by social relations and subject to “accommodation, negotiation and resistance” (p. 31). Using this framework of understanding, the experience of Saeed highlights the way that identity positions are complex, and necessarily shift to accommodate ever changing social needs. As Noble et al. (1999) suggest, “deployment of intense senses of ethnicity, fluid boundaries and hybridism constitutes a repertoire of socially useful subject positions, appropriate for different contexts” (p. 40). As will be discussed in more detail in Episodes 3 and 4, sometimes a shifting of identities occurs so that at pragmatic moments, religious identity, for example, might be emphasised, while at other times, it might recede from public view. In this sense, identity is contextual and fashioned to be socially useful (Noble et al., 1999).

Duderija (2007), too, writing about the heterogeneous nature of identity construction amongst Western-born Muslim youth, argues for the recognition in contemporary global times of “a Muslim identity that is ‘comfortable with fluid and plural identities’ ” (p. 151). Quoting Ismail (2004), Duderija suggests that:

Muslims do not reproduce a monolithic Muslim identity. [Furthermore] Muslims’ engagement in identity construction informs us of power struggles that are embedded in material
local conditions and global processes that make use of a multiplicity of registers and frames of reference. (p. 150)

Referring to this ‘type’ of Muslim as a “Progressive Muslim”, Duderija (2007) argues that changing global conditions mean that there is now “a Muslim identity which genuinely engages with mainstream western society and yet remains genuinely Muslim [who] is not seen as contradictory” (p. 151). Quoting Gilliat, who writes about the British experience of Muslim youth, Duderija posits:

There is an important minority of young Muslims in Britain who are not only devoted Muslims, but also fully participating in the wider society when it comes to general social life ... they appear to be confident in their religious identity, and they do not rely on outward signs of this identity to bolster their inner sense of being Muslim. As a consequence they can mix freely with non-Muslims in the wider society, without feeling threatened, or compromising their Islam. They are perhaps the one’s who most aspire to being recognised as British Muslims. (p. 151)

Basit (2009) and Bonnett and Carrington’s (2000) research broadly corroborates these findings, suggesting that British young people and student teachers are comfortable with belonging to different identities, and with dual or hyphenated identities in circumstances where they are able to self-define these identities. As Basit writes: “They are comfortable with the British component of their identity, yet have other hybrid identities they are proud of” (p. 741).

Similarly, Zine (2001), in an ethnographic study of Muslim youth and their experience of schooling in Canadian secular public schools, suggests that students’ religious identities can positively inform their schooling experience in circumstances where agency is exercised: “My previous research has ... shown that Muslim students were not only able to negotiate their religious identities, but to use their identities as a means of resistance to counteract their marginality within secular Eurocentric schools
(see Zine 2000)” (p. 401). These studies, then, confirm Saeed’s experience of belonging against a backdrop of marginalisation, and inclusion in the face of exclusionary practices.

As discussed in Chapter One, while recognising the way ethnicity is produced in the rural environment is an important element in focusing a lens on the positive presence of ‘hidden Others’ (Cloke, 2006b) in these landscapes, such research also opens up a space for recognition of the ways agency allows ethnic minorities to transcend racism and difference (at the same time exposing the ‘taken-for-granted’ Whiteness of rural space). Narratives such as Saeed’s, which give attention to White hegemonic rural landscapes, contribute to a growing anti-racist literature of the rural (Holloway, 2007: Panelli, Hubbard, Coombes, Suchet-Pearson, 2009), and are an illustration of important counter-discourses of situated ethnicity in the Australian countryside. In this way, focusing attention on Other ways of belonging in the rural helps provide a more nuanced, complex conceptualisation of how minority ethnicity is performed in the countryside.

To this end, Arber (2008b) argues that a community’s sense of identity and belonging is impacted by its historical and socio-cultural context, which is inevitably shaped by how social relations are performed within the community, including normative definitions about “who-we-are and who-we-are-not” (p. 395). Arber writes, in “an unequally empowered world, ‘the some’ define their identities through the conceptualisation of others” (p. 395). Under these circumstances, stereotypes of appropriate behaviour for rural residents help sustain community solidarity, even at the risk of disadvantaging some (or many). Similarly, Bruhn (2005), writing about the connections that shape communities, suggests that constancy is a
feature of communities, and boundaries are frequently tightly guarded in communities, to the extent that “community members who violate norms may be ostracized” (p. 12). Likewise, Sibley (2006) argues that in “imaginary geographies” (p. 403), “rural spaces are bounded through fear and anxiety”, and these communities “attempt to exclude those who are deemed not to belong” (p. 401). In postmodern globalised times, however, the certainty that once attached to boundaries is eroded, to be replaced instead by border lines that strangers frequently cross (Arber, 2008b). The blurring of insider/outsider boundaries in this context highlights the complex host of possibilities for both the breaking down of boundaries and the opening up of spaces for belonging; possibilities for both inclusion and exclusion in this context.

It is my argument that in the heterogeneous social space that is the rural landscape, with its synchronous possibilities for normative and resisting codes of interpellation, a poststructural countryside is revealed where ethnic minorities, and the rural populations they go to make up, are inevitably entwined in relations that extend beyond the local, to a space where contemporary linkages to nation and the international insist on ethnic and cultural encounters (Panelli, et al., 2009). It is in this space that ethnic-minority students form positive connections with the rural environment, claiming a place for themselves in rural communities. The means by which Saeed achieves this, and the significance of the discursive frames he employs to attain intelligibility as a social subject, are further discussed in Episode 3.
5.3 First Contact

In this section, I provide an account of my first visit to Springville High School. Within the context of a ‘first contact’ encounter with the school, the themes of Whiteness and difference (how difference is denied, which students are different, and how they belong differently) are explored. This discussion has relevance because it casts light on the schooling conditions that produce Saeed’s situated educational experience.

Whiteness as a field of study has received increasing attention from the academy in recent years (Moran, 2004; Pugliese, 2002). As discussed in Chapter Two, Whiteness studies is concerned with the normalised, centralised, and privileged place of Whiteness in society. Pugliese (2002) suggests that Whiteness is an unstable, hierarchical, historically and contextually contingent category. It is inevitably entwined with other identity categories (Moran, 2004). In this episode, the privileged place of Whiteness is discursively explored using Foucault’s (2002b) notion of a “system of differentiations”. This theory is utilised to explore the way relationships of power are performatively enacted to resist heterogeneity in the schooling context. Moran (2004) tells us that: “ignorance, or repressed awareness, is a central mechanism in the reproduction of racialised systems of knowledge, power and privilege” (para. 18). It is this ignorance – or what is sometimes substantively enacted as a denial of difference – which comes under scrutiny in the episode that follows. I will show in this analysis how ethnic minority students in a rural school are rendered invisible, and constituted as ‘impossible learners’ (Youdell, 2006b) by discourses that deny difference and privilege Whiteness. I will also discuss the way multicultural curricula is discursively framed at the school, suggesting its
location within the school’s social and educational culture as a marginalised and excluded ‘ethnic’ perspective, of pedagogical interest only to ‘non-Whites’. Rather, then, than mapping ethnicity as a social experience shared by all persons, ethnicity is instead posited as a minority experience, where Whiteness is hierarchically centred as a core cultural subject position.

**Episode 2: Discourses of Difference: Tour of Springville High School, Australia, May 2005**

I am being taken on a tour of Springville High by a member of the teaching staff (male, White, in his 50s). It is lunchtime, and students are swarming around the playground and ovals as we wander through corridors and into the outdoors. It is a bright, sunny Autumn day in Springville, even if the temperature is brisk.

I am visiting Springville High to determine whether this might be a site suitable for my doctoral research. I am trying to get a ‘feel’ for this place. Will the site generate significant data? How will it compare to other schools I have visited? Will I feel comfortable conducting ethnographic research here? Am I likely to be given access? I am also using the visit to ask questions about the ethnic ‘makeup’ of the school.

When we first meet and I outline my research project, my tour guide, Mr Bradley, is bemused by my potential interest in ethnic minority students in Springville. He asks, “Do we have any?” In response, I detail what I know about the ethnic population of the school. Mr Bradley then proceeds to take me on a tour of Springville High, at pains to seek out students of minority ethnicity as we walk through the playground and around the school grounds.

Outside on one of the school’s sporting ovals, we stop to talk to a Science teacher on playground duty (male, White, 40s). I am introduced to this teacher as a researcher interested in “race issues”. My tour guide
asks his colleague, “We don’t have any race issues here, do we?” The teacher responds by telling me, “It’s assimilate or die here”.

We move on, and sometime throughout the course of our conversation I mention the words “multicultural education”. Mr Bradley responds to what I have said by telling me, in an apparently apologetic tone, “We don’t do it here. We don’t do enough of it”.

Foucault’s (1998) concept of a “grid of intelligibility” of the social order provides a useful framework for understanding how power is exercised at Springville High School. Writing about the operation of power in *The History of Sexuality: 1* (1998), Foucault suggests that power does not emanate from a central point: “I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another” (p. 92). Rather, Foucault argues, power is best understood as “being everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 94). In this sense, the “omnipresence of power” (p. 93) is suggested by Foucault. At the same time, Foucault argues that although power relations are decipherable and explicit, “an implicit characteristic” of their exercise is their “anonymous, almost unspoken” (p. 94) use.

At Springville High School, evidence of the exercise of power relations of this kind is in evidence in Mr Bradley’s account of ethnicity at Springville High. When Mr Bradley discusses ethnicity he offers a discourse of Whiteness that effectively erases minority ethnicity. The denial of ethnic difference by members of the dominant White majority in this episode highlights the privilege afforded to Whiteness in this setting, and supports Foucault’s theorisation that power relations are embodied in “state apparatus” (like schools) “in the various social hegemonies” (p. 93). When
Mr Bradley questions whether there are any students of minority ethnicity at Springville High School, he is illustrating the way rural schools have commonly been shown to render ethnic diversity invisible (Arber, 2008b; Yeo, 1999). For Mr Bradley, the school population is monocultural. It is White. This denial of ethnic difference in the school population extends to Mr Bradley’s remark to the Science teacher we meet in the playground. When Mr Bradley asks: “We don’t have any race issues here, do we?” he is playing a truth game (Foucault, 1994) where he is continuing to deny both the existence of students of minority ethnicity at the school, any “issues” that might attach to them, as well as any aberrant attitudes or behaviours to minority ethnicity amongst the dominant White population. The circulation of this discourse in the school exemplifies Foucault’s assertion that power is “a moving substrate of force relations” produced “in every relation” (p. 93).

In the everyday discourse of the playground, power is shown to emanate not from a centralising stable point, but from multiple junctures that (re)produce discursive repertoire, circulating it throughout the school population. In this sense, Foucault’s (2002b) “system of differentiations” is in evidence. As Whiteness is normatively centred through discursive exchange in the school community, so differences in status and privilege result for the dominant White majority. Minority ethnicity is performatively denied, and a “dividing practice” (Foucault, 2002b) (separating the majority White population from ethnic Others) is enacted. This power struggle effectively isolates these groups from each other, or as Foucault (1998) writes: “through ceaseless struggles and confrontations ... reverses them” (p. 92). For students of minority ethnicity, then, the terms of their recognition are set in place by the School’s White population, who determine the grounds on which
recognition is offered (Hage, 1998). For these students, abiding Whiteness invokes a pressure to ‘assimilate or die’ and to be (mis)recognised within the constraints of racialised Whiteness. Thus a tension is created between the denial of difference on the one hand (where Whiteness is differentiated from minority ethnicity in a hierarchical binary and students are made conscious of their ‘ethnic’ difference) and a pressure that exists simultaneously to take up the discursive expectations of Whiteness.

Williams (2007, p. 743) suggests that a common response in rural areas to questions of minority ethnicity is the mantra of “no problem here”; a retort that belies both the existence of people of minority ethnicity in rural areas, as well as the problems that attach to their lives in rural communities (that is, there is an assumption of no ethnic minorities in the rural and therefore “no problem (of racism) here”). This framing ensures that there is an erasure of Other ethnicities and a dominance of Whiteness in rural populations, which is confirmed in the Science teacher’s remark about the need to assimilate at Springville. While the teacher’s comment appears to be directed towards the schools’ students and their friendship practices, Mr Bradley’s remarks make clear the discourses by which the school as an institution is implicated in (re)producing Whiteness and its dominance. As Raby (2004) has written of this practice:

By not seeing colour, [they] attempt to position themselves as non-racist, yet with the consequence of producing a white centre in which the dominant group becomes universal, and making the current effects of race invisible: if we do not see race, then how can we see racism? (p. 372)

The consequence of this indiscriminate focus is to “white out” racial difference and its effects (Santoro, Kamler and Reid, 2001, p. 191). Similarly, Santoro (2009), following Causey, Thomas and Armento (2000),
associates the proclivity to regard everyone as the same as “naive egalitarianism” (p. 38). This practice:

does not acknowledge that students are different, that differences do matter and some people are treated unequally and have unequal access to resources because they are different. Students do not have the same problems: to give them ‘the same level of attention’ can ignore how schooling practices often privilege those students of the dominant cultural group while marginalising others. [emphasis in original] (Santoro, 2009, p. 38)

The often cited Australian discourse of egalitarianism allows teachers to “avoid confronting the challenges of teaching for difference, and of acknowledging that some differences do matter” [emphasis in original] (Allard & Santoro, 2006, p. 123). Troyna and Rizvi (1997), citing Young, regard such practices as a form of cultural imperialism, which consists “in a group being invisible at the same time that it is marked out and stereotyped” (p. 263).

Standfield (2004) similarly argues that the privileges that attach to Whiteness consistently go unremarked in the Australian context, while structural inequalities based on race persist. This circumstance generates a situation where White Australians unproblematically identify as anti-racist through their participation in or symbolic support of anti-racist practice, despite continuing inequality. Stanfield refers to this situation as “benign whiteness” (para. 3). This finding has similarly been reported in research on schooling and racism by Henze, Katz, and Norte (2000).

In the same way, when Mr Bradley discusses multicultural education as an “add-on” to the school curriculum, he is practising what Yeo (1999) describes as a form of “ethnic geography” (p. 4). That is, he appears to view multicultural education as something only to be offered to minority students, rather than curricula to be taught to all students, including White ones.
Banks (2009) refers to this response as an ‘ethnic additive’ approach to multicultural education, where ‘bits and pieces’ of ethnic content are added to teaching programs without the foundations of curricula ever being seriously challenged or reconceptualised. This situation privileges Whiteness in a normative sense, and judges those who are situated outside this framework against this measure (Perera & Pugliese, 1998). As Perera and Pugliese write:

We would argue that rather than existing in isolation, non-Anglo ethnicity is always constructed in a relationship with the dominant Anglo-Australian ethnicity ... Too often ethnicity is read tautologically in terms only of NESB [non-English speaking background] students. Its continuing position of power enables Anglo culture in Australia to erase its own ethnic status precisely by always locating, identifying and analyzing some other peoples’ ethnicity – Vietnamese, Greek, Lebanese and so on (Perera & Pugliese, 1994). In the process, the dominant Anglo ethnicity remains invisible, at the same time as NESB ethnicities are framed as ‘problems’ to be solved. (p. 167)

In this way, ethnicity is posited as a minority experience at Springville High School when it is framed pedagogically as an ‘add on’ to the curricula. In this discursive act the teachers in the playground marginalise ethnicity within the School’s pedagogical lexicon, suggesting that it is of interest only to ethnic Others, rather than a social experience shared by all.

Drawing on the work of Deborah Youdell (2006b), it is possible to understand how ethnic minority students come to be constituted as educational outsiders in this setting. Youdell suggests that notions of appropriate student conduct and ability provide a lens to begin to understand how certain groups come to be excluded from educational processes. Youdell argues that by virtue of their attendance at schooling institutions, students come to be created as students, but this performative practice does not simultaneously constitute the students as learners:
All school-age children and young people, I suggest, are constituted as *students* through educational discourse; their legal requirement to attend school or alternative out-of-school provision; and their literal attendance (or non-attendance). But not all of these students are simultaneously constituted as *learners*. (pp. 97-98)

Youdell goes on to suggest that it is through the day-to-day practices of schools, but most importantly through discourses of ability and conduct, that student identities are discursively shaped and made. In this setting, students are constituted as *good* and *bad* students:

The student as the subject of schooling is defined – and more importantly constituted – through discourses of ability (or intelligence) and conduct *as well as* discourses of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, sub-culture, and so on. Derrida’s identification of the operation of hierarchical binaries and the way that each terms of the binary makes the other meaningful suggests that these subjects of schooling can be understood in a good student/bad student dichotomy. (p. 98)

The qualities that Youdell suggests “good students” are likely to display are those of:

obedience, politeness, eagerness to learn, inquisitiveness, acquiescence to adult authority, restraint, cleanliness, asexuality, helpfulness, friendliness, good sense and common sense, childishness, maturity. (p. 98)

These practices intersect across gender, class and ethnic subjectivities so that these ‘good’ behaviours must be cited in relation to all “axes of identity ... in order to be intelligible” (Youdell, 2006b). By contrast, “bad students” are invoked in discourse by “that which the bad student is not – the good student” (p. 98), and are “call[ed] up [in] contemporary discourses of the struggling, the lazy, the disabled, the impaired, and the disordered” (p. 99). Within these schooling environments, then, a normative centre creates discursive frames that dictate what it is to be a “good” and “bad” student, but also an “ideal” student and “ideal” learner. To be a good student and ideal learner is to exhibit conduct and ability that conforms (to a greater or
lesser extent) to normative performative frameworks measuring student success. By corollary, to sit outside this framework is to render oneself unintelligible as a subject of schooling:

The discourses through which constellations of identity markers are constituted might make it all but impossible for some students to attain sub-cultural status within the student milieu, while the sub-cultural status of other students is all but guaranteed. And, in reverse, it might be all but impossible for some students to be recognised, or recognisable, as learners in school. (Youdell, 2006b, p. 96)

In making this argument, Youdell draws on Judith Butler’s work on recognition. These ideas, elaborated in more detail in Chapter Three, suggest that the terms by which subjects are recognised are the “effects and instruments of a social ritual” (Butler, 1997, p. 5), set within the bounds of normativity: “One ‘exists’ not only by virtue of being recognised, but in a prior sense, by being recognizable”. What it means to be human under these conditions differs according to the “racial and ethnic frames by which the recognizably human is currently constituted” (Butler, 2004, p. 90). Butler (2004) writes: “Lives are supported and maintained differently, and there are radically different ways in which human physical vulnerability is distributed across the globe. Certain lives will be highly protected ... Other lives will not find such fast and furious support.” (p. 32) Under these circumstances, “the familiar” (Butler, 2004, p. 38) becomes the normative social criterion by which lives are made human and intelligible and are given recognition and status in the social order. Social normativity, in this sense, determines not only who a student can “be”, but whether they are recognised as learners. Youdell suggests that to be an “impossible” learner is to sit outside the bounds of recognition.
At Springville High School, when the ethnicity of minority students is denied and these same students are rendered invisible, ethnic minority students are effectively constituted as impossible students and therefore as impossible learners by sitting outside the bounds of recognition. The students are recast in this performative act as invisible within the terms available of discursive legitimacy as students and learners. This situation ultimately denies ethnic minority students access to their full school learning entitlement. As parameters are placed around how the students must performatively engage with learning, as well as constitute themselves in order to maintain viability as a social subject, so the students performative choices both as students and learners are curtailed. Through a discursive regime of intelligibility (determining recognition), as well as through discursive acts of omission (in not being recognised), a relationship between recognition and social normativity is enacted which marginalises ethnic minority students at Springville High. In this way, while schooling is presented as a ‘neutral’ instrument of education, in practice it is implicated in practices of White hegemony. This idea is further explored in Episode 3.

5.4 On being more Aussie than the Aussies

In this episode I again discuss schooling inclusions and exclusions. In the context of a playground discussion at Springville High School, I explore how student identities are performatively produced by way of narrative ‘mapping’ (de Certeau, 1984). de Certeau’s argument that stories work to mark out boundaries of belonging is taken up in this episode. I use de Certeau’s theory to illustrate the way narrative is employed at Springville High to constitute students as particular sorts of ‘raced’, nationed and
religioned subjects, with implications for how students ‘do’ school and ‘who’ a subject can be within the schooling environment.

**Episode 3: How to be ‘okay’ at Springville High: In the playground, Springville High School, Australia, May 2006**

The teacher (male, White, 50s) on playground duty is showing me Saeed’s “haunts”, as he calls them. That is, the places where Saeed and his friends commonly “hang out” in the Springville High school yard. Mr James tells me that the students are “territorial”, that they will not be too hard to find because they never venture too far from their usual hiding places.

Here they are, next to the demountables – Saeed and a group of about six friends who are mostly male. Mr James describes Saeed’s best friend, Skipper, as your typical “fat Aussie bloke”. His other “best mate”, Paul, like Skipper, is from a farming background. Mr James tells me that both boys are into pig shooting and all things farming. Mr James says that he gets the feeling that in choosing these friends, Saeed is “trying to be more Australian than the Australians”; that Saeed’s accent seems to get broader when he is trying to fit in sitting in class next to these boys.

Mr James suggests that while Saeed and his brothers openly identify as Muslim at Springville High, they are not “pro-active” about their identity. He says that the brothers do not want to stand out and are not “pushing any limits”. He suggests that if the boys had a sister at the school who chose to veil, for example, the reaction from the school community to such an action would be “like a Martian landing”, and that such an event would test Saeed and his brothers’ place in the Springville High community. Mr James suggests that Springville students openly refer to Muslim students in derogatory ways, using terms like “towelheads”, but if it is pointed out to the same students that Saeed
and his brothers are Muslim, these same students will say “Oh, they’re okay”.

This episode demonstrates how talk, a form of discursive practice, is deployed to produce student identities, which in turn impacts on ‘who’ a student-subject can be. Using narrative, students are constituted as particular sorts of raced, placed, nationed and religioned subjects, with implications for schooling inclusions and exclusions. By first untangling the practices by which a student is subjectivated, I demonstrate the tools of exclusion that operate to keep ethnic minority students at the periphery of schooling contexts.

Butler’s (1997) notion of performativity suggests that persons are not simply described as subjects, but are also produced and made by naming practices. Butler argues that language has power “not only to name, but also in some sense to perform”, where “the word ... enacts what it names” (p. 43). When Mr James suggests that Saeed is “trying to be more Australian than the Australians”, he performatively places Saeed outside of what it means to be a ‘real’ Australian, casting him as “different” in this rural place. Such ‘storytelling’ is commonplace at Springville High School, with discursive performatives routinely enacted, shaping the way that ‘Australianness’ is understood and constituted in the school environment. This narrative climate has pedagogical implications for how staff and students recognise themselves as teachers and learners, in turn influencing how educational inclusions and exclusions are shaped. de Certeau (1984) suggests that stories are often told in order to map spatial boundaries; to
delimit who rightfully belongs in a geographical area and who belongs outside it. He writes:

> the story plays a decisive role. It ‘describes’, to be sure. But ‘every description is more than a fixation,’ it is ‘a culturally creative act’. It even has a distributive power and performative force (it does what it says ... it founds spaces. (p. 123)

Mr James’ narrative regarding Saeed and his friends functions as de Certeau suggests; to performatively mark the territory by which belonging is fixed.

de Certeau suggests that:

> The narration is ‘established’ on the basis of ‘primary’ stories ... stories that already have the function of spatial legislation since they determine rights and divide up lands by ‘acts’ or discourses about actions ... These ‘operations of marking out boundaries,’ consisting in narrative contracts and compilations of stories, are composed of fragments drawn from earlier stories and fitted together in makeshift fashion. (p. 122)

Mr James’ ‘spatial legislation’ about what it means to be a ‘legitimate’ (rural) Australian, fashioned together based on comparisons with his seemingly ‘true blue Aussie’ mates and what appears to be narrative hyperbole about the relative strength of Saeed’s accent, functions discursively to mark Springville as White territory where to be (ethnically) Other is to sit outside the bounds of what it means to gain acceptance and belonging.

As discussed earlier in Episode 1, Hage (1998), in a critique of ‘tolerant’ multiculturalism and its unexamined centering of White privilege in Australia, suggests that persons adopt the characteristics and cultural styles (or national character and culture) of the dominant cultural group in order to acquire national belonging: “looks, accent, demeanour, taste, nationally valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour, etc” (p. 53). However those persons who lack the physical characteristics of the dominant national ‘type’ – such as White skin or blonde hair – will
necessarily have a lesser share of national belonging than those with an entitlement to these characteristics:

a national subject born to the dominant culture who has accumulated national capital in the form of the dominant linguistic, physical and cultural dispositions will yield more national belonging than a male migrant who has managed to acquire the dominant national accent and certain national cultural practices, but lacks the physical characteristics and dispositions of the dominant national ‘type’. (Hage, 1998, pp. 53, 54)

This model of understanding allows us to comprehend the way Saeed’s ethnicity is constructed by his teacher. Although Saeed was born to Australian nationality and has acquired, and exhibits at Springville High, the nation’s dominant cultural and linguistic traits, his body morphology is deemed to render him outside of what it means to be ‘genuinely’ Australian. In Hage’s terms, Saeed’s entitlement to national belonging is impacted by his scarcity of physical national capital. Hage argues that:

regardless of how much national capital one accumulates, how one accumulates it will make an important difference to its capacity to be converted into national recognition and legitimacy. No matter how much national capital a ‘Third World-looking’ migrant accumulates, the fact that he or she has acquired it, rather than being born with it, devalues what he or she possesses compared to the ‘essence’ possessed by the national aristocracy. (p. 62)

According to this argument, Saeed will never possess the ‘essence’ of what it means to be a ‘real’ Australian, despite his efforts to acquire national capital. Regardless of the ways in which he has acquired belonging, Saeed’s recognition as a ‘legitimate’ Australian subject remains tenuous as a result of his ethnicity. He is regarded differently by his teacher because his ethnic status gives him less belonging than other Australian born citizens, situating him beyond the bounds of what it means to be a ‘natural’ Australian.
Tsolidis (2001), Allard and Santoro (2006), and Santoro (2009) have suggested that Anglo-Australian student teachers commonly fail to recognise their own ethnicity, instead understanding ethnicity as a trait of Others. An Anglo-Australian student teacher, Jody, for example, in a study by Santoro (2009), says of her ethnicity: “I always assumed that I had none – or one that wasn’t all that interesting” (p. 40). Against this backdrop, students of ethnic difference are constructed outside the normative discourses of the mainstream, where “this mainstream that our students understand to be ‘only Australian’ can also be read as the ‘real Australian’ (Tsolidis, 2001)” (Allard & Santoro, 2006, p. 117).


Nicoll proposes people of non-White, non-Anglo Celtic stock living in Australia become subject to racialisation – or ‘facialisation’ as she prefers to call it – as ‘foreign’ and ‘unAustralian’, on account of the fact that they do not visibly ‘fit’ the image of a real Australian ... Jon Stratton makes a similar point, arguing that it is easier for a new migrant of white Anglo-Celtic stock to be accepted as a ‘real’ Australian than it is for a person of Asian descent whose family has lived in Australia for generations. This is due, he suggests, to ‘Asian-looking’ people looking ‘different’ from the popular image of a ‘real Aussie’, who is typically white. The insidious effects of ‘facialisation’/racialisation on people of Chinese descent in Australia is referred to as ‘the tyranny of appearance’ by William Yang (1994: 90). (pp. 67, 68)

Despite Saeed’s quintessentially (rural) Australian interests, then, Australian friends and any distinguishing behavioural traits to alienate him from his peers, his failure to be White sees him constituted as non-Australian by his teacher. He is marked as not ‘really’ Australian. He is just trying to be the ‘real deal’ – he is just trying because he is not White, and hence is marked as different, and belongs differently, within the school.
Yet against this narrative of exclusion, it is possible to understand Saeed’s behaviour as a form of self-fashioning, whereby in negotiating a sense of self, Saeed deploys discourses in his rural milieu that enable and foster his sense of belonging and inclusion. Drawing on the work of Song (2003), Tsolidis and Pollard (2009) suggest that ethnic minority youth are skilful in drawing upon dominant and minority representations of ethnicity in order to fashion their identities. They suggest that minority students actively draw upon discourses in their surroundings that allow them to challenge dominant and racist stereotypes. Citing Song (2003), they write: “Minority individuals are capable of subverting or manipulating both dominant stereotypes and images attributed to them by the wider society, as well as scripts of behaviour imposed by their coethnics” (p. 57). Song suggests that in doing so, minority youth “are staking a claim: they are refusing to accept the view that they do not belong” (p. 57). Utilising this framework of understanding, it is possible to read Saeed’s positioning of his Australian identity as an act of agency on his part, whereby he performs against the stereotype of the outsider Muslim/terrorist by being, or at least being seen to be, associated with secular and rural interests and persons in his environment. This discursive performative, either consciously or unconsciously, draws on a historicity of discourses surrounding Muslims in the West, pushing these into the background, whilst simultaneously foregrounding discourses of the dominant majority. This uptake of markers of belonging (rural friendships and interests), and de-emphasis on markers of exclusion (Saeed’s Muslim religion), might be understood as an act of resistance signifying national authenticity, with the purpose of engendering inclusion. Saeed’s sense of belonging can also be read as emanating from
his class position. His father’s status as a successful businessman may be understood to give Saeed class confidence; a position that gives him a sense of entitlement to claims of respect. Discourses of class and ethnicity are thus seen to be closely intertwined as they affect identity and group membership.

Saeed is also recognised by many as a Muslim at Springville High School. While Mr James suggests that Saeed might be considered an unobtrusive presence in the school in the sense that, in the words of Mr James, he is not ‘pushing any limits’ in terms of his ethnic or religious identity, Saeed nevertheless stands out against the discursive frame of the normative student at Springville High. Mr James’ remark that Saeed is not pushing the boundaries of religious tolerance in relation to his Muslim identity provides evidence of the way the dominant White culture establishes and maintains these limits. The dominant culture becomes the frame by which Saeed’s religious faith must be managed (and curtailed), setting the ‘norms’ of acceptable religious expression. As Hage (1998) writes:

The power to tolerate is ... the power to position the other as an object within a space that one considers one’s own, within limits one feels legitimately capable of setting. (p. 90)

Those in a dominated position do not tolerate, they just endure. (p. 88)

At Springville High, the limits of tolerance are discursively maintained by the dominant White majority, who dictate that to be a Muslim in rural Springville is to not step beyond the bounds of acceptance as determined by the dominant group. Otherness is accepted so long as it is not perceived to threaten the existing social order. Hage (1998) writes: “The multicultural national will, like all national wills, tolerates national otherness, but only in so far as this national otherness is in no danger of constituting a counter-
will” (pp. 111, 112). In Saeed’s case, the limits of this receptivity are revealed in a discursive repertoire which speaks to appropriate ways to belong within schooling culture – a discourse which says that to be *accepted in difference* persons must not step outside the bounds of *acceptable difference* as determined by the dominant White majority. The limits of this acceptance are most in evidence in Mr James’ remarks regarding the acceptability of a veiled Muslim student at Springville High. The veil, it is suggested, would sit outside the bounds of tolerance. It would be, Mr James suggests, “like a Martian landing”. To this end, as Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) write: “the *veil* [is] a signifier of an essentialized or monolithic Muslim identity (See Rezai-Rashti, 1999)” (p. 418). It constructs the wearer in simple binary terms as a racialised Other, creating a highly visible reminder of the tensions existing between the West and Islam, or as Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) suggest, constructs an anti-Muslim discourse around the wearer: “the Muslim subject is not like ‘us’ and, hence, does not subscribe to *our* democratic and supposedly enlightened values (Said, 2003, p. xx)” (p. 418). As Zine (2008) writes, “outside the Muslim community ... the veil has come to signify backwardness, oppression and even terrorism” (p. 163). In Springville, it is suggested, the veil would interrupt the local and substantive conditions of Islam as represented by Saeed, replaced instead by an “imagined” hegemonic, essentialised version of Islam, where circulating “discourses about veiling ... confirm ... truths about ... Islam” (Martino and Rezai-Rashti, 2008, p. 419). These ‘truths’ reveal the contingent nature of the acceptance accorded to Saeed in relation to his religious faith, and suggest that Saeed’s Muslim identity carries with it a ‘citational chain’ (that is, it “resignif[ies] a prior context” (Butler, 1997, p. 14) in making meaning)
that regards Arab looking people, and Muslims in particular, as potential terrorists in the post September 11 world. As Butler (2004) writes of this phenomenon:

We now see ... a heightened surveillance of Arab peoples and anyone who looks vaguely Arab in the dominant racial imaginary, anyone who looks like someone you once knew who was of Arab descent, or who you thought was ... Various terror alerts that go out over the media authorize and heighten racial hysteria in which fear is directed anywhere and nowhere, in which individuals are asked to be on guard but not told what to be on guard against, so everyone is free to imagine and identify the source of terror. (p. 39)

Butler’s argument suggests that as a person of ‘Arab’ descent, Saeed is defined by his body, his ethnicity, and his religion, which are all considered to fall outside the normative framework of what it means to be ‘Australian’ in Springville. To ‘be okay’ at Springville High, then, is to be a particular sort of raced, nationed, and religioned student. In this sense, Saeed is constituted as a marginalised student. He sits outside the bounds of what it is to be recognised within the normative framework of what it is to be a genuine Springville High School learner. Instead, he is Othered.

And yet Mr James’ remarks regarding Saeed and his place in the Springville community speak both to and against belonging. While Saeed’s peers are clearly prepared to use racist speech against Muslims in their reference to “towelheads”, they are also prepared to defend Saeed’s right to belong. In this sense, they have an investment in being both racist and non-racist, or as Raby (2004) argues, their discursive repertoire discloses the

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15 The term ‘Arab’ is taken up in this study to refer to both Arabs and Arab-looking people. In this sense, I critically engage with the way diverse populations of people in Australia are racialised under the umbrella term ‘Arab’ as a result of the conflation of Islamic religious identity and ‘Middle Eastern appearance’ with Arab identity. In the Australian context, this conflation frequently entails the grouping of Arabic-speaking persons and persons of Middle Eastern and North African heritage with persons from Central and South Asian countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite the fact that these latter countries are not generally regarded as ‘Arab’, an association with Islam appears to conflate religious identity with an Arab cultural identity.
way “multiple positions on racism can be held concurrently” (p. 372). The
students’ speech illustrates the way they are able to make insider/outsider
distinctions between Muslims they know and Muslims they do not,
reframing racism tactically to fit their social needs. Such discourse discloses
the way boundaries of tolerance and acceptance are strategic (Rizvi, 2009);
are framed politically to construct a social space that is both complex and
nuanced.

5.5 Hate Speech

As the previous discussion demonstrates, schooling is a critical social
space in the lives of young people where identities are made and unmade.
Ethnicity is intrinsically entangled in this net of identity formation, shaped
and produced by the multidimensional, hidden and explicit dimensions of
schooling practices and cultures. Ever connected to these cultures are
broader contexts which inevitably shape how ethnicity is understood,
produced and performed in schools. In the Australian context, national and
international discourses of race, ethnicity and religion circulate in schooling
contexts, performatively enacting the boundaries prescribing how students
of minority ethnicity and religion come to know and ‘do’ school. As the
following episode demonstrates, these discourses are commonplace in the
everyday lives of rural students, illustrating the contingent nature of
minority ethnicity within the Springville High community as well as the
wider rural community.

Year 7 Science have relocated to the computer lab for this lesson. The students are about to move to the PCs located around the perimeter of the room to begin working through the cosmology worksheet provided by the teacher. But first Mr Bradley needs to explain the task in hand. The students sit at eight-seater tables in the middle of the room. Mr Bradley talks about the possibility of an asteroid hitting the earth. “Where should it hit? Where would be best?”, Mr Bradley asks, smiling.

“It should squash the school!”, one student exclaims.

“Yes!”, shouts John, excitedly pumping his fist into the air.

“Teachers’ homes”, reiterates another student.

“America, because I don’t like the place, because they rip off Australia”, chimes in another student.

“Not Antarctica, because I don’t want the polar bears killed”, says Melissa.

“Europe, because I don’t like the place, because it’s the opposite side of the world, far away from Australia”, says Annie.

“China, because it will blow up all the Chinese people and then they won’t come here and then they won’t steal our jobs”, says Sally.

“Iraq, because there’s too many terrorists”.

“In the sea all around Australia so all the boats can’t come in so the immigrants can’t come in. They bring their diseases. The cost is so bad.”

This comment causes a pause in the flow of remarks from the students. Then another student comments, “But that will cause a tidal wave”, causing the class to erupt in laughter, bringing an end to the discussion.

Once the laughter in the room has died down, Mr Bradley continues to instruct the class in the completion of the worksheet.
provided, and in due course the students move to the computers to work through the questions they have been given on planets.

In contemporary times, discourses which speak to conditions of racial intolerance, repression and violence have become commonplace in everyday parlance. These narratives of enmity circulate with uniform regularity in daily speech. At Springville High, such talk is in common occurrence, as evidenced in the above episode where students in a science class generate “hate speech” (Butler, 1997) on the topic of non-Australians, who are discursively cast as ‘dangerous’ and ‘undesirable’ outsiders. Hate speech, Judith Butler writes, “constitutes its addressee at the moment of its utterance; it does not describe an injury or produce one as a consequence; it is, in the very speaking of such speech, the performance of the injury itself, where the injury is understood as social subordination” (p. 18). Such subordinative discourse is in evidence in Mr Bradley’s lesson when students circulate and (re)produce nationalistic discourses. Both Whites and non-Whites are considered ‘ominous’ in this context, where Australian sovereignty – its jobs, economic outlook, bio-security and national security – is discursively produced as ‘under threat’. A student berates the United States for ‘ripping off’ Australia; a colloquialism that suggests an unequal partnership between two allied countries, where Australia is positioned as the ‘loser’ nation. Europeans are disliked, it is suggested, for their difference – being “far away” from Australia implies a distance of both space and kind. Asians, discursively ‘umbrella-ed’ under the catch-all label of “the Chinese”, are presented as being superfluous in number in Australia, to the extent that they take employment away from seemingly more entitled
‘natural’ Australians, and Iraq, home of the ubiquitous “terrorist” in the post 9/11 context, is presented as the prolific enemy of the Australian nation. These speech acts highlight the discursive space in which ethnic minority students at Springville High are situated, and where they must negotiate a place for themselves as students. This is a space where the dominant nationalist discourse disavows its citizens of Other ethnicity, where to be different, from elsewhere, is to threaten the place of the ‘real’ Australian citizen. It is a space where White Australians decide who is to be ‘tolerated’ and who is not (Hage, 1998). As Hage (1998, p. 90) writes, it is the dominant white majority who have the power to tolerate, while “the tolerated ... are positioned”:

they [White Australians] all shared in the making of a White national fantasy, a conception of national space where they, as White Australians, are cast in the role of governing subjects and where the non-White other is a passive object. (p. 96)

The students’ classroom conversation pays homage to this argument, highlighting the way both national boundaries and local spaces are discursively understood, composed, and prioritised to privilege White dominance and marginalise Other ethnicities. As discussed in Episode 3, just as de Certeau (1984) argues that stories mark out boundaries of belonging, so this episode illustrates the way ‘Australian-ness’ is understood and normalised in this context, as well as given performative force in its narrative repetition. At Springville High, such an environment becomes the contextual space (positioned within broader local, national and transnational discourses) against which Saeed must forge belonging and inclusion. Such a space becomes the social, cultural and educational backdrop to his everyday experience of lived ethnicity.
5.6 Conclusion: Resistance in a Culture of Repression

It is my argument that despite a contextual environment where Saeed is positioned as a marginal ethnic subject, rural Springville is a dialectic space where positive, affirming intercultural relationships at the level of the everyday coexist alongside relations of alienation and exclusion. Multiculturalism as an embodied, lived experience – a form of “place-sharing” (Wise, 2005) – has been taken up by researchers in discourses of “togetherness-in-difference” (Ang, 2001), “hope and belonging” (Wise, 2005), and the “multicultural real” (Hage, 1998). Hage describes this inclusive space in the following terms:

It is the reality of an unproblematic and pervasive multicultural interaction. It could be argued that this reality is absent in media representations of multiculturalism because of its ordinariness. There is nothing newsworthy about everyday events such as an Australian woman of British background giving her children breakfast in the morning, then picking up the children of her Indian neighbour to take them to school; Lebanese and Anglo parents chatting while their children are taking part in a sports event; a Vietnamese woman picking up her Italian friend and meeting up with an Anglo friend at the swimming pool for an exercise session; or elderly Australians of all backgrounds playing bingo together. (p. 233)

Taking up this concept, it is my contention that while power struggles and marginalisation are a part of the rural landscape, so possibilities for diversity across difference exists in these environments. I argue that it is as important to acknowledge positive rural narratives and attachments, and a more complex production of rurality than cultural homogeneity allows, as it is to represent the negative relations experienced by ethnic minorities in rural settings (Holloway, 2007; Panelli, et al., 2009). As Wise (2005) has written of giving attention to positive experiences of multiculturalism in her research on a Sydney suburb:
Against the narratives of closure and isolation ... [I] found a number of encounters that typify more hopeful relations ... While I do not wish to over-romanticise things or brush away the very real antagonisms and power differentials (cf. Hage 1998: 233), I want to emphasise that digging down into the ethnographic depths of an intercultural suburban context demonstrated to me that there are things happening that encompass this kind of hopeful, opening up to the other ... moments they narrated to me to demonstrate that the ‘other’ is ‘ok’ after all.” (p. 178)

It is this multicultural reality that Saeed speaks to when he talks of Springville being “accepting” and a place where you “fit in with everyone”. It is this belonging that allows Saeed to talk of Springville as a place where you “get on well” with everyone. It is in evidence when anti-racist talk is offered in support of Saeed around the topic of Muslims in the playground, and in everyday schooling moments such as when a teacher takes an interest in a Muslim student’s religious life. It is in the ordinary experiences of friendship, the everyday acceptances, the lived experience of tolerance, that Hage’s multicultural real is seen in rural Springville. It is these experiences that allow Saeed to enunciate a narrative of inclusion – a discourse of resistance in the face of a culture of repression. Indeed, to fail to acknowledge Saeed’s story is to deny, and subsequently erase, his narrative of situated ethnicity. This context functions as a backdrop to Saeed’s life, his ‘resistance’ a counter-narrative of rural wellbeing.

The (rural) community, with its inherent possibilities for close association and relationship, becomes an important site for delivering multicultural acceptance and belonging. Wise (2005) argues against the traditional notion of communities as places where boundaries are always tightly guarded, as spaces that necessarily privilege exclusion and closure. She suggests, instead, that communities can be places where “hopeful gestures” and “recognition” can “create a mutual opening up to one
another”, where there is the “possibility of recognising the stranger” (p. 182). While persons are connected in layers of belonging to nation and to international contexts, they are, at the same time, significantly produced in local relations. To this end, Wise suggests that “an important relationship is that between the abstract and the concrete other” (p. 183). As seen in Episode 3, this study reveals that persons are able to make distinctions between the concrete Other (the Muslim they know) and the abstract Other (an imagined community of Muslims whom they do not know and around whom suspicion is generated), where the abstract subject is connected in discourse to narratives of nation and national belonging. It is in the possibilities opened up by the local – by acts of knowing in the everyday – that potential for belonging is engendered in these unthreatening, situated encounters. As Wise (2005) writes:

it is the very fact of locality that provides the possibility for non-state, neighbourhood level relations of care, be they in the shopping centre or between neighbours. And it is the very corporeal, material and contained quality of such relations that embodies the power to become a counter-relation to a more paranoid national discourse. The challenge in a sense is how to leverage the hopeful possibilities of the local in order to undermine national discourses, or at least provide a counterbalance – a critical space of care across difference – from which those on the ground can draw some sense of comfort, care and belonging. (p. 184)

To do so is not to deny or negate the tensions, inequalities and racisms existing in rural social space, but is to register the material ways in which belonging is experienced and created against this backdrop.

Attention to (o)the(r) ways in which the ethnic minority experience is lived in the rural offers not only possibilities for learning from those who inhabit this experience, but is to curtail the hegemonic power of Whiteness over the rural landscape. It is to unsettle stereotypical portrayals of the rural
as an assumed White landscape, and to rewrite this space as it “always has been – a multicultural space” (Panelli, et al., 2009, p. 355), where interethnic social relations of hope and belonging are an everyday and recognised feature of the rural landscape.

Williams’ (2007) research suggests that Saeed is not alone in his experience of integration and acceptance in a rural landscape. Indeed, she argues that stories such as Saeed’s would be unremarkable in the rural context except that they disrupt the prevailing discourse of discord prevalent in the media and academic literature; what the author refers to as a “homogenising victimology tend[ing] to characterise many studies of ethnic minorities in rural areas” (p. 751). She suggests that rather than giving a voice to ethnic minorities in the countryside by creating a space for their positive counter-narratives of rural life, ethnic minorities are instead denied agency as affirming narratives go unreported. When positive narratives are given licence, she suggests, they are often co-opted into the discourse of ‘no problem here’, a discursive frame utilised to deny “racist realities” (p. 752), where the discursive interest is in protecting “the idealised rural imagining” (p. 752). Williams’ research, carried out in rural Wales in the United Kingdom, suggests that ethnic minorities in rural areas reconcile themselves to the nature of rural life as part of their experience of residency. Participants in Williams’ (2007) research, for example, provide the following narratives of rural life:

My friends from the city come and visit me in Torfaen and they see it as heaven. They say ‘don’t you live in a wonderful place’ and look at all the things I have got and see me as very lucky. (p. 752)

We don’t get treated differently because we don’t act differently. We just get on with our business you know, and we fit in here just like the next person does. (p. 752)
Williams suggests of these narratives that for ethnic minority rural residents there is an acceptance of the social and cultural conditions of rurality that might delimit tolerance and belonging. She suggests that ethnic minorities in rural areas show a cultural understanding of their Other status within the countryside; the way the visibility that attaches to them affects their lived experience. This acceptance of the constraints of rural living might be understood as an articulation of resistance.

In the same way, when Saeed assumes a ‘taken-for-grantedness’ about his inclusion in the community, having grown up in it and taking it as a given that he is an accepted member of the community, enjoying its ‘full’ membership rights, he is exercising resistance against normative discourses which cast him as an ethnic outsider. Instead, his friendships, and the respect he enjoys as a result of his sporting prowess give Saeed a claim to his identity and an acceptance of place within the Springville community. While there are moments of tension in Saeed’s life (notably when he must negotiate how to be a ‘good’ Muslim in the face of reports of terrorism), and conditions of schooling that circumscribe Saeed’s educational entitlement, rather than seeing himself as defenceless against this monolithic discursive backdrop, Saeed instead resists this position and carves out a space for his life to unfold in Springville. To this extent, he is exercising what Foucault (1980) calls ‘technologies of the self’, “which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves” (p. 162). This agency provides the conditions for individual action by Saeed, creating a space for resistance in the context of his schooling at Springville High.
This is, however, not to say that a tension does not remain between Saeed’s sense of inclusion and the countervailing discursive practices and narratives that operate to marginalise Saeed and curtail his inclusion in the Springville community. As this chapter shows, Springville High is a heterogeneous space where both inclusionary and exclusionary discourses and practices interweave to shape everyday schooling experiences, with both positive and negative social and educational outcomes for students. While Saeed privileges a discursive narrative of belonging at Springville High that casts his schooling in a positive light, this ‘counter-narrative’ must be viewed through a lens that takes account of the very real effect of local racisms, and national and global contexts, on Saeed’s educational experiences.

Beyond the high school gates, the ethnographic experience of Saeed gives attention to Other experiences of the countryside, de-centering White ruralities, and revealing the relational plurality of rural spaces. It gives attention to the multiple ways of belonging that exist and that can be forged in rural landscapes, inscribing and mobilising the ethnic minority experience of belonging in the rural landscape by highlighting positive connections with rural environments. Focusing attention on the ways ethnic minorities navigate the boundaries of racism and intolerance contributes to a new rural imaginary – one that recognises the layered, multiplicitous, and multiethnic nature of rural social space. It is the lived experience of ethnic minorities in the rural – the embodied social practice of ethnicity in rural landscapes – that provides hope for a realisation of multicultural belonging.
In this chapter I have explored some of the tensions of rural schooling for ethnic minority students. I have also examined the role of agency in resisting normative frames of belonging in the rural. I have argued that discourses of Whiteness permeate how rural spaces regulate belonging, yet at the same time I suggest a place for heterogeneity and complexity in how belonging is understood in the rural. In the following chapter I take up issues of racialisation and racism to examine how practices of exclusion operate in the rural. In a further ethnographic study of rural schooling, I examine how discourses of rurality and difference produce embodied schooling exclusions.
Chapter Six
Darby High School, New South Wales, Australia

6.1 Introduction

Darby High School sits at the entrance to town where the highway slows to 50 kilometres per hour – a speed that seems befitting of a sedate rural place like Darby. With a population of approximately 8,500, Darby is a medium-sized town by country standards; its fortunes fluctuating according to the viability of its livestock, horticultural, processing and viticultural industries, upon which it primarily relies. At this period in its history, the town is struggling following the closure of several major enterprises, and resultant unemployment means that the viability of the town is sporadically called into question.

Located in the Central West of New South Wales, some several hundred kilometres from Sydney, Darby, in many respects, appears typical of many country towns struggling with the dynamics of change affecting rural and regional Australia: drought, environmental stress, and an altered global, economic and social climate (Davison & Brodie, 2005; McManus & Pritchard, 2000). Historically prosperous due to income from a strong agricultural sector, in present times Darby has experienced more limited affluence. Despite these less than fortuitous circumstances, however, the people of Darby appear to enjoy the rural lifestyle that living in a bush setting affords; a country way of life for those who seek to make a living from the land, as well as for those who live in the community who are not directly associated with primary production.
In times of drought, the landscape surrounding Darby appears bleached and parched as the town’s hot summers take hold, but equally, the fields around Darby are breathtakingly beautiful as canola crops paint the landscape a bright yellow canvas. Surrounding fields are dotted with livestock that feeds the local industry, and a small town centre captures much of the history of this place in its architecture, streetscape and gardens. The wide main street of Darby extends for several blocks, and here are to be found a limited collection of shops servicing the needs of locals. There is a cinema, a swimming pool, a collection of cafes, restaurants and hotels. An increasing number of stylish guesthouses have also sprung up in recent years to service the small tourist population visiting Darby.

By way of contrast, Darby High is architecturally non-descript and aesthetically uninspiring as the town’s visual entrance point from the north. Structured around a series of concrete quadrangles and brick stairways, classrooms are filled with mismatched plastic and wooden furniture. Set amongst this eclectic ensemble are approximately 800 students, the majority of whom are Australian-born. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006b) reveals that of Darby’s population in 2006, 7.7 per cent of the population is Indigenous. 5.2 per cent of the population were overseas born, with 5.3 per cent of the town’s population speaking a language other than English at home. In 2006, eighteen Darby High School students were from Language Backgrounds Other than English. Of this number, two students were refugees from Sudan who arrived at the school in 2005 as twenty year olds.

As discussed in Chapter Five, a significant shift has occurred in rural Australia in recent years. Global demographic changes, including the
international migration of refugees from war torn countries like Sudan and Afghanistan, have impacted on rural populations (Hugo, 2005; Hugo, et al., 2006). As Gray and Lawrence (2001) write of the effect of globalisation:

> globalising processes are not necessarily making the world more uniform and standardised. There may be some synchronisation brought about by technological, economic and cultural flows, but the effect is hybridisation where cultural forms become separated from current practices and are recombined in new practices forming not a global whole but a global ‘melange’ of hybrid sites and spaces. (pp. 18, 19)

While a leading Australian demographer (Hugo, 2001) has reported that “the impact of immigration has been felt more in Australia’s major cities than in the provincial cities or rural areas” (p. 63), it would be a mistake to think of the countryside as being devoid of the effects of international migration. As the proportion of rural residents who are overseas born rises (Hugo, 2001), increasingly diverse numbers of migrants and refugees have relocated to rural areas. This change is largely a consequence of government policies aimed at dispersing refugees across Australia’s cities and into its rural and regional areas (Cassity & Gow, 2005). As a result of this change, ethnicity is reconfiguring rural populations and spaces. Darby has been affected by this change and has received a small number of Sudanese families into its community and schools. Yet despite these demographic shifts, a notable feature of Darby is its perceived ethnic homogeneity. As in the preceding Chapter, issues of minority ethnicity and Indigeneity are intertwined in Darby. Along with the Sudanese students, a small Indigenous population of students has a strong presence at Darby High School. Hence, no discussion of the invisibility/hyper-visibility of minority ethnicity in the rural should proceed without an acknowledgement of the way minority ethnicity and Indigeneity are similarly affected by
circulating discourses of Whiteness that demand the symbolic erasure, and simultaneous hyper-visibility, of non-White cultures in rural spaces. In this sense, it is worth noting that Indigenous Australians, like ethnic minorities in the rural, are similarly affected by discourses of place/non-place. These issues will be further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Darby High School was chosen as a site for this study as a direct consequence of my “first contact visit” with the school. I sought, and had been provided with, a list of schools in the Central West with “Language Background Other Than English” (LBOTE) students by an officer of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, and I was visiting several of these schools to meet with Principals to discuss possible access to the schools for research purposes. Before arriving at Darby High School, I was aware that in 2005 it had settled two female Sudanese refugees into its student body.

On my first visit, on what was to become the first of many visits to Darby High, I was taken on a tour of the school. The tour took place during lunchtime when students were milling about, playing sport, sitting in the quadrangle, doing what students generally do during lunch breaks. But noticeably, very noticeably, there were two students sitting on their own in the far distance in the middle of an empty oval – two Sudanese students. The girls’ physical isolation from the rest of the student body was striking. They cut a lonely picture out on the oval. My social justice ‘antenna’ went haywire at the sight of their seclusion, and my desire to make Darby High School one of the sites of my research was cemented in that moment (and was later confirmed as prudent when the girls subsequently recounted in interview their very intimate and painful experiences at the school).
This ethnographic study attempts to inquire into the lived experience of these, and other students at Darby High School and, in so doing, further understanding of discourses of inclusion and exclusion operating in rural schools in Australia. It is a study of the links between classrooms, schooling spaces, and processes of exclusion, and of how participants who are highly visible as a result of ‘ethnic appearance’ in a small rural community are treated in respect to their perceived difference from the rest of the community. The study also explores how the dominant ethnic majority define themselves against a minority who is racialised, vilified and excluded. In this sense, this chapter explores issues of pedagogy, place, identity and exclusion.

6.2 A Tale of Two Sisters – Mihad and Asha

This chapter focuses on the story of two sisters – Mihad and Asha. Mihad and Asha are non-identical twins. Born in Sudan to Christian parents, the family came to Darby from Khartoum as humanitarian refugees in 2004. The family’s move to Darby was sponsored by the church they now attend, where the girls’ father and church pastor share a friendship dating back some decades to when the pastor was a missionary in Sudan.

In interviews, each of the sisters has revealed a different response to having left Sudan for Australia. The decision to move was taken by the girls’ father, and the news that they were leaving Khartoum came as a shock to both girls. Mihad expresses a strong sense of grief at having left her country of birth. It is a move she wishes had not occurred, not least because the family left behind immediate family in Sudan, along with friends and established community relationships, including a much loved local church.
Mihad also appears to feel that her personal aspirations have been circumscribed in Australia. She wanted to be a writer, and now that she is no longer immersed in Arabic, she feels that she has “lost” her language, along with the associated professional choices that came with it. Asha, on the other hand, appears optimistic about the career opportunities Australia presents her with. She wishes to be a nurse, and feels this possibility would have been out of her reach financially and academically in Sudan.

Mihad and Asha are older than their peers at Darby High School. At age twenty, they were some four years older than their contemporaries when they started at the school in Year 10. While the sisters do not look noticeably older than their peers, their maturity is in evidence, stemming in part from the fact that the girls’ completed their schooling in Africa before beginning at Darby High. While the girls originally began a course of study in English at a local Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campus (a national vocational education and training provider) when they first arrived in Darby, a decision was taken that the school system would provide greater opportunities for social engagement and language improvement than was available through TAFE.

The girls’ life in school is the subject of this chapter, and what I understand of its pattern and flavour is reflected in the pages that follow. The girls’ life outside of school is mostly centred around the home, and attendance at church. At home, the sisters’ time is spent with family, in domestic chores, and study. At church, the girls’ report not having made friends, where there appear to be few people in their own age group.
The following interviews were recorded in the Darby High library. The extracts provided are part of longer interviews that took place with Mihad and Asha following observations at Darby High when the girls were in Year 11.

Episode 5: From the Outside Looking In: In discussion with Mihad & Asha

Mihad’s Story

I finish school in Sudan, but I have to do it again here because I don't have very good English .... I feel terrible because I don't have friends here ... where I have lots of friends there, so. And I have my sisters and brother in Sudan, friend, and church.

[...]

Darby is bad and it’s good. It’s good because you can learn a lot without many people talk Arabic, and it’s bad because people here don’t, I don’t know, I can’t find a friend here. So I don’t like someone, maybe. If I go to someone maybe [they] doesn’t like me ... So I don’t have a friend and we don’t go out anywhere, even with my sister. We just stay at home in the weekends and stuff.

[...]

[In Sydney] there’s many other different cultures, different people and things. I don’t find here in Darby there’s many people different ... maybe because they don’t have another country come to Darby live, another people, black people or something. And they don’t know about culture and another country ... In Sydney ... they don’t say that you black and you something or you can’t speak English or you can’t understand what I’m saying or something like that, because they all from different countries.

[...]

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I have none English when I arrive but you learn ... I’m here because I want to learn English and that’s it. I’m happy, because I can find some people they can talk to me and that’s good.

[...]

I’m just from somewhere else, so I can’t find someone really like me.

**Asha’s Story**

Well, when we came first ... I am scared ... When I came, like, the teachers they good, and some students they bad, and they’re terrible, because when we came first they don’t ask, like, “What’s your name?”, ’cause they ask “How old are you?” Some of the student ... ask stupid questions, like, “In Africa ... you live with animals?” ... Yeh, they ask a lot ... we have, like, two weeks they ask all these questions. But ... we answer.

[...]

Sometimes they say hello to you and just go ... that’s all. Like, they don’t talk to us, so yeh ... Like, we go and, like, sit with them, and ... they talk, but they, like, talk to each other. So they didn’t put us in their picture or something. So ... we’re not there.

[...]

Some of them really make you, like, I don’t know how to say but, very bad. We sit in the ground waiting for the bus and, like, he came and he saying, like, bad thing. So, I didn’t answer ... Mihad, like, she don’t like someone to talk to her like [that], and she ... got upset, and, like, she talked to him very bad, so yeh. Because, like, he, bad boy. Yeh, they happen, but not like this because we ignore them, and, like, because he really bad, we ignore him but he still talking, so Mihad she didn’t like, she just ...
When we came ... everyday we listening ... because when we came first to school, like, when we’re going to the class ... they laugh at us or something ... because, like, we have different colour.

[...]

They told us, but we didn’t thought it gunna be like this.

6.3 Strange Black Bodies in Rural Australia

Mihad and Asha’s narratives are an account of the girls’ emerging racial consciousness. In this setting, the Sudanese students come to an awareness of the way they are only ever seen as Black in this homogenous place; as the sum of their skin colour. Episode 5 illustrates how constructions of rurality are complicit in producing these practices of unbelonging, and details how racist practices can go on to produce exclusion and isolation. In this way, the girls’ stories illustrate how the dominance of Whiteness renders the Black body at once both hyper-visible and invisible. In acts of agency, however, it is possible to understand how resistance can be exercised to engender moments of belonging.

The questions posed by the Darby student body to Mihad and Asha indicate that the Black body is read as belonging to a certain race, which in turn is associated with stereotypes of ‘wild’ Africa. This experience can be seen as a process whereby Whiteness is normalised, and Blackness, by corollary, is made ‘different’, racialised and marginalised:

The parameters of what it means to be Black, and subsequently what it means to be White, are marked out through a practice of differentiation. This process of demarcation secures blackness as a ‘racial’ and ethnic identity, while simultaneously permitting the mystique of whiteness as a de-racialised, unthought-out category to continue (Jeater, 1992) ... The problem lies in the constraining dichotomy that positions [blackness] beyond the White norm, as the sub-human impossible Other. (Nayak, 1997, p. 64)
This framing ensures that Whiteness is positioned as dominant, while Otherness (in this case, Blackness) is positioned as strange and, by corollary, subordinate. Understood in terms of Foucault’s (2002b) theory of ‘dividing practices’ and Butler’s work on performativity and recognition (as outlined in Chapter Three), it is possible to see the White students’ behaviour (the questioning practices of the White students towards Mihad and Asha), as an expression of dividing practices, where the subject is “objectified” (as exotic) and “divided from others” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 208) and excluded from the dominant group. While the Sudanese girls appear to answer the questions of the White students passively (as a result of being objectified by the White students’ discursive practices), they are, as well, divided from them. Indeed, the Sudanese students are spoken into discourses of older student–wild African–Other by the performatives of the White students. This discursive practice names the Black students as ‘different’. As Butler (1997) explains: “Being called a name is ... one of the conditions by which a subject is constituted in language” (p. 2). In this dividing speech act, the Black students are racialised and essentialised as ‘different’ as a result of their Black bodies, and power is afforded to Whiteness to enact and maintain this practice. The White students’ speech acts also highlight the regimes of intelligibility through which the Sudanese students are denied social recognition. Butler suggests that “[o]ne ‘exists’ not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable” (1997, p. 5). Butler writes that we are “constituted by our relations” (2004, p. 24), suggesting that discourse functions to articulate the boundaries by which persons achieve (or are denied) social normativity, dictating their recognition (or not) in the social sphere. Hence, who a
(Black) student in Darby gets ‘to be’ is predicated on the basis of body morphology, and is enforced through the White students’ regimes of discursive intelligibility.

The question, then, of who gets to belong in this rural space is determined by the White students, who enact discursive performatives to establish boundaries of rural belonging. When Mihad suggests that rural spaces are different to city spaces in that practices of racialisation are more common in rural environments, she is recognising an association between the rural and ethnic homogeneity – one that discursively precludes people of Other ethnicities – and that produces racist practices. In this framing of the rural, rural landscapes are White spaces, where to be ethnically Other is to be “out of place” (Cloke, 2006b). This framing has material consequences for the Sudanese students, who are marginalised in both affective and spatial terms – the students are excluded both in terms of the geographic spaces they occupy within the school, as well as being situated on the margins of education.

Sibley (2006) suggests that, historically, theoretical accounts of the construction of power relations in social space have revolved around notions of boundaries and “spatial heterogeneity” (p. 402), where common bonds typically determine processes of inclusion and exclusion. In rural social space, exclusionary practices are further enabled by discursive repertoires that commonly represent the rural as “not only ethnically homogenous but as a depository of core values” (Sibley, 2006, p. 403). This association of the rural with a national “imaginary” (Sibley, 2006, p. 403) linking rural life to socially and historically constructed discourses of an ‘idyllic rural’ (where unsullied space abounds, purity, tranquillity, old-fashioned values
and close-knit communities are in evidence) have remained cogent in contemporary times (Cloke, 2006a; Panelli, et al., 2009), achieving performative force across national borders:

The British notion of the rural idyll emanates from a very select set of southern, English spaces, [but] this has not detracted from the compelling nature of such countryside imagery and its incorporation within other national representations of traditional rural life (Brace, 1999) ... idyllic notions of the rural differ between the US, the UK, New Zealand and Australia, encompassing quaint villages, fields of broad-acre farms, and lushly forested wilderness, as well as pastoral, frontier and outback landscapes. (Panelli, et al., 2009, p. 356)

Hence, pervasive stereotypical images of what the rural is remain robust in disparate national psyches, despite a lack of defining referential points containing it.

Yet notwithstanding these national differences in how the rural idyll is presented, rural communities across nations historically share a common discursive trap in constructing the rural – an “urban-as-multicultural and rural-as-monocultural dialectic” (Askins, 2009, p. 366). This discourse has transpired to racialise rural spaces as White spaces (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997; Panelli, et al., 2009). In this setting, the myth of rural ethnic homogeneity has the effect of denying both the presence of ethnic minorities in rural landscapes, as well as persons of Indigeneity (Panelli, et al., 2009) (this point is taken up in Chapter Two, and is further explored in Chapter Seven). In such an environment, for Mihad and Asha, belonging is predicated on Whiteness. When Mihad says, “I’m just from somewhere else, so I can’t find someone really like me”, the criteria and boundaries of belonging and acceptance by which the girls are performatively excluded are exemplified. Their situation as Black refugee students casts the girls
beyond the bounds of recognition in rural Darby. As Butler (1997) writes of the performatives which produce non-recognition:

normative schemes operate ... by producing ideals of the human that differentiate among those who are more and less human ... sometimes these normative schemes work precisely through providing no image, no name, no narrative, so that there never was a life, and there never was a death. (p. 146)

Mihad and Asha suggest that to be Black in Darby is, among other performatives, to be ignored, abused, isolated, harassed, excluded and made invisible. This is made possible because the discursive narratives surrounding rural space operate to privilege Whiteness and deny the legitimacy of Blackness in this space. As a result, the girls become intelligible only to those who seek to respond to them as ‘refugees’ (in this circumstance, one performative boundary (framed around the Black body) is collapsed, only to be replaced with another (that of providing ‘charitable’ help to the Black ‘refugee’ in need. This dynamic is further discussed in Episode 7, below). In these circumstances, the refugee student remains, at best, on the margins of social and educational space. Through discursive acts of omission and intelligibility, practices of social normativity racialise and exclude Black students at Darby High. In these performatives, White hegemony defines practices of inclusion and exclusion in Darby that operate, and are maintained, in the interests of the dominant ethnic majority.

Notably, however, in acts of agency best framed around what I will term a ‘gratitude and acceptance’ response, the Sudanese girls exercise resistance to their situation by choosing to patiently answer the questions of the White students. The narrative of the Black students suggests that they exercise some restraint in enacting this response; in giving attention to the so-called “stupid” questions of the White students. This performative
suggests that the Sudanese girls have adopted a ‘gratitude response’ to their position, entailing resignation and acceptance of their fate as strangers and refugees in this place, similar to the public discourse of gratitude which typically attaches to African refugees in Australia (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). In this framing, as the girls’ narrative exemplifies, the newcomer refugee is expected to exhibit suitable appreciation to their host country for allowing them to enter their territory; and the refugee is similarly obliged to show humility for the opportunities presented to them by the host, to the extent that they are expected to suppress their own needs in fulfilling this obligation. As Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2008) have written of this national discourse:

> The newly arrived Africans publicly exhibit little sense of social, civic or material entitlement. Rather, their dominant public discourse is one of gratitude: Africans are grateful to Australia for having received them and offered them a new life, ostensibly of peace and prosperity. Of course, gratitude implies the acceptance of an unequal position, as guests accepting hospitality rather than claiming rights ... (pp. 48-49)

Mihad and Asha’s narrative suggests acquiescence to this position, and in performing this discourse, the girls’ exhibit an informal acknowledgement of the cultural ascendancy of Whiteness, as well as an unstated awareness of the discursive repertoire and performatives attached to being a refugee in Australia.

When Mihad speaks to the enhanced opportunities available in rural Australia for her to learn English (due to the low number of Arabic speakers in Darby and the concurrent necessity to learn English), she is similarly exercising a form of resistance. By choosing to see the positives for learning in her situation, that is, by perceiving that the rural environment is conducive to the study of English, as well as on occasions when Mihad
speaks out against those students who racially torment her (in arguing against her attackers, and by complaining to the school about their behaviour and seeking redress), Mihad exercises what Foucault refers to as “mobile and transitory points of resistance” (1998, p. 96), where individual action pushes against the force relations which oppose it. Foucault writes (1998):

They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. Hence they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour. (p. 96)

d de Certeau (1984) also characterises resistance of this kind, suggesting that there are:

Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other’s game, that is, the space instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations. People have to make do with what they have. (p. 18)

Within the constraints applied by those who seek to exercise power over them, the Sudanese girls, with discreet but subtle resistance, mobilise against those who seek to subject them, finding spaces in which to exercise resistance, and finding places, albeit delimited, in which to affect agency. It is against this backdrop that the girls’ experiences of pedagogical exclusion in the school classroom will be explored in Episodes 7 and 8, following.

6.4 From the Inside Looking Out

Racism is a feature of rural environments, just as it is urban ones. As the following episode illustrates, the hegemonic privilege afforded to Whiteness in Darby leaves those racialised and essentialised as ‘different’
subject to racist discourses. Against normative Whiteness in this geographical space, Black students become at once both invisible and hyper-visible. The following account provides insight into social relations at Darby High, offering views of the ethnic Other by two members of the dominant ethnic majority. The following episode highlights exclusionary practices operating in Darby, as well as the way rurality intersects with ethnicity to produce rural racisms.

The following discussion took place seated around a study table in a quiet area of the Darby High library. It is an extract of a longer interview that took place with ‘Kate’ and ‘Lizzie’ following my observations of them in several classes with Mihad and Asha, including those documented in Episode 7, following.

**Episode 6: Hierarchies of Exclusion: In discussion with Kate and Lizzie**

*KE: So what do you imagine it’s like to be, for example, Sudanese or Japanese, or an exchange student at Darby High?*

*Kate: You’re not really accepted ... although they say we’re being accepted really well ... the majority of our school wouldn’t even acknowledge they’re here, I don’t reckon.*

*Lizzie: You don’t really know they’re here either.*

*Kate: They slip into the lower group [described as “teachers’ favourites – they’re ... really smart and wouldn’t do anything wrong”].*

*Lizzie: The low group ... the other groups don’t really want them with them because they’re different. They’re not the same.*

* [...]*

*Kate: The lower group would probably ...*
Lizzie: ... be more friendly and easier to get along with.

Kate: The people in our group might tease them and stuff like that so that’s why they probably go slip more in there [the low group] ’cause they’re comfortable. It’d be comfortable.

[...]

KE: Why?

Lizzie: I don’t know.

Kate: Scared to, I think people are scared to get to know them probably.

[...]

Lizzie: When you have an exchange student come here the Head Teacher will organise for where they sit. They’ll get someone to show them around, and it’s usually that group [the low group] because ...

Kate: ... they’ll accept, because they’re happy to take them. Whereas any other group would chuck a bit of a ...  

Lizzie: And there might be some people in other groups that would, but it would take a while for the other one’s to accept that they were there, like, ’cause they’re different.

Kate: I don’t know, if you were talking to one [of the ethnic minority students] our friends they’d probably be like ”What did you talk to them about?” or, you know, like that. They wouldn’t be like ”Oh, you’re talking to them. That’s alright, then”. They’d be like ”What are you talking to them about?” [accusingly].

Lizzie: Or ”What are you talking to them for?”

Kate: Yeh.

KE: What’s that about?

Kate: I think it’s just the way ... 

Lizzie: ... we’ve been brought up. You just, they don’t accept them.
Kate: I suppose, like, if we lived in the city we’re more familiar. Like, there’s more of them, isn’t there, in the city?

KE: Yes.

Kate: A lot more of them?

Lizzie: You’d see more.

Kate: And we’d be maybe more familiar with them and, but, I don’t know ...

Lizzie: Whereas here ...

Kate: We only have them like once, twice a year so we kind of, I suppose a lot of people kind of just ignore them which is kind of sad to say. But just, oh well, they’ll settle in.

Lizzie: They sort of really stand out in Darby because there’s not many people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Kate: Yeh.

Lizzie: There’s the Sudanese families. They’re giant families. And you can see them a mile away.

Kate: And they really stand out.

[...]

Kate: ’Cause you hear the jokes down the street, like, ’cause they got their licence and they’re black. Like, “You can’t see who is in that car!” You know like that? You hear the jokes.

Lizzie: “You can only see ‘em if they smile”.

Kate: And they’re like “And they pop their head up and they smile and then we could see ‘em”. Like, the jokes that still come up that are racist.

Episode 6 offers an account of the relationship between ethnicity and normative Whiteness at Darby High School. The episode suggests ways in which rurality in Darby is constructed as ethnically homogenous, and
suggests that hierarchies operate to situate the ethnic Other outside the cultural frameworks of dominant Whiteness. In Episode 6, Lizzie and Kate (who also appear in Episode 7, following) provide an indication of the way ethnic minority students are positioned as different by some students from the dominant cultural and ethnic group. In the view of Lizzie and Kate, who appear to self-fashion themselves as belonging to the ‘ruling’ peer group in their school, ethnic minority students sit outside of normative frames of belonging. While I do not mean to suggest in this episode that the views of Lizzie and Kate are representative of the views of all White students at Darby High School, and, indeed, shy away from suggesting that Whiteness is a homogenous category, I do want to highlight the ways in which ethnic minority students are marginalised from the dominant ethnic student population, made invisible and ignored on the grounds of bodily morphology.

For Lizzie and Kate, ethnic minority students are hierarchalised at the bottom of a social ascendancy, where, similar to Song’s (2004) representation of American racial hierarchies where “white Americans are at the top of a racial hierarchy [and] African Americans [are] at the bottom” (p. 861), Black students at Darby High are situated at the bottom of a social ascendancy scale. This cultural hierarchy, it might be argued, is reinforced, if not set in train, by the actions of the teaching staff who, in pairing ethnic minority students on arrival with local students who are perceived to be similarly marginalised and deemed to be in the “low” group, articulate and reinforce a connection between ethnicity and Otherness, a distinction that goes on to become an established social practice amongst students at Darby High. Lizzie and Kate’s narrative, in fact, suggests ways in which school
staff are implicated in segregating practices, with new students being paired with ‘low’/good students when they first arrive at the school. In this pairing, in the eyes of Lizzie and Kate, ‘low’ students, both local and ‘ethnic’, are deemed to be a good ‘fit’ for each other. The ‘good’ students at Darby High (who are also cast as discursively different by Lizzie and Kate) act as friends/helpers of the newcomer ‘ethnic’ students, with assumed skills to communicate and negotiate the newcomers’ entry into the student body. This act has discursive significance, for in the act of pairing students with a potential friend, the ‘different’ students are grouped together, and are assumed to share commonalities.

In this framing, for Lizzie and Kate, contact and communication with people of “difference” is to be avoided, accept in the most superficial sense, lest you risk the stigma that attaches to this from your peers. In this sense, fear is attached to the ethnic Other, who is deemed to be unsafe at the same time they are located as being unworthy of knowing (a position which stems from the (White) privileged position of not needing to know). As Arber (2008b) has written of this experience in her research in an urban Melbourne context:

> teachers and parents feel that the school is a safe place and that they know about and can locate the ethnic groups in their school community. Even so, they remain frightened about the presence of ethnic groups who remain not-quite-one-of-our-community, who are not-quite-located-in-our-community and who are not-quite-known-within-the-school. (p. 144)

This limited discourse, which regards those who are different from the mainstream as unknown, unsafe and strange, ignores the possible commonalities that exist between groups, and can become a reason in itself not to engage with difference (Allard, 2006). As Kate and Lizzie suggest of their ‘exotic’ peers: “it’s just the way ... we’ve been brought up. You just ...
don’t accept them.” In this remark, a connection is established between rurality and Whiteness, where the countryside’s history as a White landscape with a White national imaginary is brought into play, the premise being that rural places should remain unsullied by the presence of ethnic minorities, whose rightful place is deemed to be elsewhere. In Butler’s (2004) terms, the “familiar” in this rural context becomes “the criterion by which a human life is grievable” (p. 38). Who counts as human in this space – who is deemed to belong in terms of being seen to be worth knowing – are those who are familiar to the established inhabitants of this rural population – those who are alike, known, recognised – socially, culturally, and ethnically. As Cloke (2006b) proposes, “the lived presence of ethnic minorities ... tends to be spatialized as ‘in place’ in urban environments” (p. 384). This tendency to naturally equate ethnic minorities outside of rural areas means that ethnic minorities in rural areas tend to be regarded as ‘out of place’ – a “transgression of the orthodoxies assured by socio-spatial expectations” (Cloke, 2006b, p. 384). In this sense, to borrow again from Butler (2004, p. 32), the “cultural contours of the human” in this space have been set at the White, rural individual.

Such reasoning has important implications for understanding how racism plays out in the rural. Hall (1996b) suggests that “racism … operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (p. 445). Both Lizzie and Kate suggest that the Black bodies of the Sudanese girls and their families assume a hyper-visibility in Darby, where their Otherness against the normative framework
of Whiteness is commented on and joked about. Judged against the phenomelogical artefact of their skin colour, the Sudanese families in Darby have no position from which to establish belonging. Against the centring of a naturalised dualistic White identity, such rural imaginings work to exclude people of Other non-White ethnicities. In the framing of Butler (2004), the Black students are unrecognisable as humans in this place. Their “impossible bodies” deem them unintelligible (Youdell, 2006b).

It is interesting that Lizzie and Kate, however, appear concerned in their narrative to present themselves as non-racist. While they are prepared to relate racist remarks and practices in the interview provided, they attribute these comments and events to unnamed others. In this way, the students attempt to deflect scrutiny of their own behaviour and avoid claims of racism (Raby, 2004). In positioning themselves as such, the White students appear unaware of their systematic privilege in relation to the Black students. While normative Whiteness in Darby appears to be in no way challenged or destabilised by the presence of the two Black students, the White girls conceptually locate the ‘ethnic’ students at their school outside of their own community. As Arber (2003) suggests: “The other ... becomes seen only in relation to the norm that defines a white ... self” (p. 293). In this sense, the conditions governing operationality in Darby suggest that White hegemony is such that White students can afford to regard Black students as invisible, and not be in relationship with them. At the same time, however, Black students are highly visible, essentialised as ‘low people’, and discriminated against on this basis. This, in turn, elevates the status of the dominant White group in accordance with what they are not (Hall, 1996a) – Black, ‘low’, different.
6.5 Lessons in Rurality and Otherness

Rurality and ethnic diversity are concepts which tend not to be thought of as synonymous in the contemporary Australian setting. Borrowing imagery from rural Britain, Australian representations of the countryside are frequently steeped in notions of the rural idyll, where close knit communities and cultural homogeneity feature prominently, and images of Indigeneity are commonly absent (Panelli, et al., 2009). In this setting, as Agyeman and Spooner (1997) write: “the countryside is popularly perceived as a ‘white landscape’ (Agyeman 1989a), predominantly inhabited by white people” (p. 197). The connection of the rural with a mythology – what the rural should be like – is important for understanding how ethnic minorities can come to be viewed as “out of place” in the countryside (Cloke, 2006b). Of the stereotypes and ideologies which attach to rural communities, it has been suggested that “rural Australia is a source of national identity, both to Australians and others. Images of tough, rugged Australians, the outback and the ‘true blue Aussie’ stem from our settlement of rural Australia” (Bourke & Lockie, 2001, p. 3). In this sense, when the rural acts as “a signifier of an exclusive and white national identity” (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997, p. 197), it functions ideologically to control who belongs within a geographical space, and who is positioned outside this space. While this process of boundary setting functions at the national level, it is also localised and performed in local rural communities, with consequences for ethnic minority people residing in these spaces. Drawing on the work of Foucault (2002b) and de Certeau (1984, 1997a, 1997b), the analysis that follows illustrates the way ethnic minorities can become highly visible
objects of curiosity in rural settings, exploring how difference is produced and negotiated in a rural school. Within the context of a lesson on Early Childhood, and drawing on the broader school context within which this single lesson is situated, the themes of difference and visibility within pedagogical environments are explored.

**Episode 7: Othering Practices at Darby High School: Early Childhood lesson, Darby High School, Australia, June 2006**

The teacher and her small band of female students discuss breastfeeding. But not the Sudanese girls. They remain silent throughout the lesson. The classroom is large – purpose built for cooking – but the student numbers in this lesson are small. There are only seven girls in this Year 11 class, where the students sit on pale blue stools at cream worktops in twos and threes. Mihad and Asha share a table, but do not sit close together. Even at this “setting within a setting” they appear isolated, both from each other and all others. They stand out in this classroom and in the school – marked by the colour of their skin – highly visible (Cloke, 2006b) in this largely White, rural landscape.

The conversation is animated, prompted by occasional bursts of reading from a textbook (which every student has a copy of open in front of them), and enlivened by Miss Taylor’s anecdotes about her experiences of working in Africa: “When I was working in Africa”, she begins, children would be weaned off the breast, she says, and fed baby formula in preference to breast milk. Environmental factors like a lack of electricity, clean water, and sterilising equipment would mean that diarrhoea often resulted, she says, sometimes leading to infant death. Now, she tells the class, you see signs that read “breast is best” to encourage breastfeeding amongst the population. A student mentions a
television documentary on Africa she saw where a woman breastfed two children who were not her own. “It’s a bit impersonal”, a student comments. The teacher says that different people have different ways of doing things.

The conversation turns to the way breastfeeding purportedly boosts immunity, and Miss Taylor asks whether anyone in the class has been sick lately. One of the students, Lizzie, drawing attention to Asha and Mihad for the first time in the lesson, points out that the sisters never miss a day at school. Everyone turns to look at the twins. Under a glare of attention, Mihad drops her gaze and stares fixedly at the desk in front of her, avoiding all eye contact. Asha engages more directly with her peers and smiles shyly at those who now turn to stare at her. Lizzie comments that she often walks past the girls’ house and that, when she does, there are always great cooking smells emanating from the house. She proffers this as a reason for the sisters’ lack of illness and good attendance record. Throughout the exchange, Mihad continues to stare at the table in front of her, while her sister smiles shyly. Not a word is said by either girl throughout the entire lesson.

Foucault’s (2002b) notion of a “system of differentiations” provides a useful starting point for understanding how the Sudanese students in this episode are positioned as different to their classmates. Foucault (2002b) suggests that differences in status and privilege result when power is exercised over others. These markers of difference are in evidence in this episode when Miss Taylor begins her dialogue on Africa, effectively establishing herself as an authority on the subject, despite the presence of two African students in the room, who do not participate in the discussion taking place and, importantly, are not invited to by their teacher or other students. The authority of the White students in the room on the
subject of Africa is privileged over the knowledge and experience of the Sudanese girls’, as the White students deliver commentary on what they have learnt about Africa via the television. This privileging of the White voice on the topic of the Black subject highlights the status afforded to Whiteness in this setting, and gives credence to Foucault’s (2002b) assertion that “differences in know-how and competence” (p. 344) identify and define relationships of power. The practice also exemplifies Arber’s (2006) concern, echoing Toni Morrison, “that some people can define others and therefore themselves, whilst others are left with no place from which to speak” (p. 88). Such conduct highlights a “binary between those who know and define the world and those who are spoken for” (p. 88). While the teacher’s remark about “different people having different ways” is superficially a discourse of inclusion, classroom practice in this setting is effectively divisive as the African students are silenced by dividing practices (Foucault, 2002b). While it is interesting to speculate about the intention of the teacher in relation to engaging in an inclusive pedagogy in this instance, and to wonder whether Miss Taylor actually thought she was teaching for inclusion in introducing the topics of Africa and cultural difference into her discussion, the result of her teaching practice is nonetheless divisive. While the limits of knowing, capturing and ‘giving an account of oneself’ are acknowledged here (Butler, 2001), the requirement for pedagogies to more sensitively respond to the needs of ethnic minority students are evident in this episode. As the African students are named by their teacher as different, the Sudanese girls are performatively produced as Other by this naming practice, and silenced by it. Indeed, the silence of the “different people” in the room on the topic of Africa serves to emphasise the
sisters’ distance from the rest of the group. As de Certeau (1984) suggests, these narrative practices have performative force as they function to control not only who gets to speak, but also mark out boundaries of cultural competence, indicating who rightfully belongs in this teaching and learning space and who is an outsider in it, highlighting how relations of power are constituted to privilege Whiteness and racially silence and isolate the Other in this space.

When classroom discussion turns to absenteeism, attention is focused on Mihad and Asha for the first time in the lesson, purportedly as a result of their “strange” behaviour – the fact that they, seemingly unlike their classmates, never miss a day at school. In this scene, in common with the girls’ experience elsewhere in the school, they are objects of curiosity for the school population, marked by their strangeness, and highly visible as a result. Such visibility appears to attach to Sudanese refugees, with Nunn (2010) suggesting that “people with Sudanese backgrounds in Australia find themselves in the anomalous position of being highly visible in the public spaces they visit, due to their physical distinction from the majority of Australians” (p. 185). For Mihad and Asha, the effect of this visibility is twofold, and should be understood within the context of the sisters’ broader school experience. Firstly, the girls’ “refugee” status generates an interest that begets them special attention. It focuses a particular gaze on the girls that is the particular result of their “charitable” need. This charity towards the girls is manifest in special measures, such as extra English language instruction and a particular attentiveness from their teachers. The performative effect of this discursive practice is that the girls are constituted as ‘different’ by this circulating discourse. de Certeau (1997a) refers to
these measures as “work on the borderlines” (p. 115), where institutional action taken to address perceived inequities is targeted at visible need, while failing to address the root cause of the problem identified. This is similar to Rutter’s (1999) criticism of “humanitarian discourses”, and Choules (2006) critique of “charity discourse[s]”, which she frames as “a ‘business-as-usual’ view that tinkers at the edges of injustice leaving the underlying system in place” (p. 463). Choules (2006) suggests that the moral desire of educators in safe, stable countries like Australia to frame asylum seekers and refugees as being in need of protection is problematic in that social ‘problems’ are seen as being located with those who are different ... those with power take the benevolent and condescending role of protector and the Other is positioned as needing protection, being in some way lacking in full adult capacity. Depending on the social issue, the problem will be seen to be with the Other – those who are non-male, non-White, non-able bodied, non-heterosexual, or non-affluent. (p. 281)

Secondly, as the sisters go about their lives at school each day, they are constructed as objects of curiosity because of the colour of their skin. A particular visibility attaches to them. This visibility has the effect of attracting the gaze of others. When, then, in this episode, Lizzie offers what might be read as a gesture of friendship to the Sudanese girls by engaging in friendly conversation, the girls’ discomforted response can be analysed within the broader context of their situation within the school which sees them repeatedly subjected to the (unwanted) gaze of others. Their response to this continued attention can be read as a form of retreat. Such a response is also noted in the research of de Finney’s (2010), who also describes the attempts of racialised girls “trying to erase themselves” (p. 479) in response to their struggle with Whiteness.
The girls’ response in this episode can also be understood as an act of agency on their part. In interviews with the girls they intimated that they recognise the limits of the friendship offered to them in class; that they understand that there are qualifications attached to the friendliness afforded to them in classroom situations; that the friendship offered does not extend outside of class to the playground, and that it does not extend outside the school gates. They suggested that while they recognise that some students will be pleasant to them in some classroom situations, outside of class the same students will ignore them. In essence, they recognise that they have already been rejected by their peers; that friendliness in class will never extend to friendship. When questioned about the particular episode related above, Mihad and Asha relayed this sentiment, and a similar sentiment is echoed in the comments of Lizzie and Kate in Episode 6, also both present in the room, when they suggest that it would be socially and politically unacceptable for them to be seen to be engaging in any way with people of “difference” at Darby High School. While it is interesting to speculate about possible readings that might attach to the type of behaviour described by Lizzie and Kate (for example, that the intimacy and close contact afforded by the classroom situation engenders opportunities for cross-cultural communication; and/or a reading along a gendered axis which might suggest that in the safety of an exclusively female classroom Lizzie feels emboldened to offer friendship to the Sudanese girls, but feels disinclined to do so amongst her wider peer group, including young males, who may mediate her desire to offer ‘femininities’ like friendship and kindness to the girls), the Sudanese girls’ silent response to Lizzie’s interest in their lives in this episode can be read as a rejection of her offer of friendship, such that it
was; as a refusal to engage in friendship on the grounds that it was offered and, as such, as an act of refusal on their part to engage with the dominant ethnic group on its terms.

Lizzie’s method of engaging Asha and Mihad by making reference to their ethnic food practices also reinforces the girls’ sense of Otherness. In communicating with the sisters’ on this topic, Lizzie draws on a marker of the Sudanese girls’ difference – the ethnic food they prepare and consume – to try to make conversation, which can be understood to have the effect of alienating Asha and Mihad from the exchange taking place. Rather than acting as a tool of cultural translation, Lizzie’s limited discursive repertoire with the sisters and her focus on the girls’ food practices actively disengages them, as Asha reveals when she remarks on the inability of the local students to engage her in their cultural frames: “they didn’t put us in their picture”. It also further highlights the normative power of Whiteness in the room. Hage (1997) suggests that appreciating Otherness “is dependent on an experience of power and safety” (p. 142), which is in evidence in this context when Lizzie chooses both the timing and the topic of engagement with Mihad and Asha. By setting the agenda for dialogue, Lizzie illustrates what de Certeau (1997b) refers to as “the power that one group exerts over others by defining in its own terms the protocols of the encounter” (p. 161). In this response, Lizzie also embodies what Hage (1997) has problematised as “ethnicity largely as an object of consumption” (p. 99), which “conceives of a multiculturalism from which migrants are totally absent. Only ethnic culinary experiences and ethnic flavours are present” (p. 143). Thus, when Lizzie appropriates the subject of the Sudanese girls’ food, the situation highlights the way ethnic food has been taken up superficially and
experientially by Lizzie, allowing her to maintain a safe cultural distance from the ethnic subject whilst affirming her cultural dominance over them.

6.6 Fitting in/Sitting Out

Diversity is a common feature of the contemporary classroom (Allard, 2006; Nieto & Bode, 2008), with issues like disability, religion, language and ethnicity all contributing to a student population rich in heterogeneity. This climate has implications for teaching practice. In this environment, Boling suggests (2007), teachers “are expected to demonstrate the knowledge and dispositions necessary to help all students learn” (p. 217). It is not sufficient to teach to one group of students whilst ignoring the needs of others. Diverse classrooms demand that teachers adapt their instruction to support the learning of all students. The episode that follows illustrates how this process has failed to manifest for Mihad and Asha, with discursive practices around gender and ethnicity framing and marginalising the students, contrary to the model of teaching for diversity outlined above.

Episode 8: Unsporting Behaviour in the Classroom: Sport, Lifestyle & Recreation lesson, Darby High School, Australia, June 2006

The chosen sport for the day is indoor soccer. There are three females in this class of seventeen Year 11 students. Fourteen boys and three girls. The lesson runs for one hour, but two of the female students, Mihad and Asha, refugees from Sudan, sit on the sideline for the entire lesson. There is no discussion around this behaviour between teacher and student. The girls’ simply walk to the edge of the pitch at the beginning of the lesson and take a seat on the floor. Mr Scott, the teacher, does not approach them for the next hour.
Play commences and the game is raucous. There is a lot of physical contact between male participants, some of which is related to the match underway. There is also much swearing, all of which goes unchecked by Mr Scott. Mihad and Asha watch attentively from the sideline.

At the end of the lesson I ask Mr Scott why Mihad and Asha sit out of play. He says these are not the sort of boys who will “slow down for a group of girls”. At the end of the term, he says, when the curriculum switches to a focus on individual sports like golf and tennis, he expects the Sudanese girls will participate in sport.

In Episode 8, the actions of the teacher in ignoring Mihad and Asha’s learning needs, effectively sidelining them from the lesson, illustrates how identity categories can operate to subjectivate and marginalise female ethnic minority students in educational settings, reproducing social inequality. In line with research examining the relationship between sport, ethnicity and gender, this episode highlights the way “dominant competitive sport practice not only is produced within gendered and racial/ethnic power relations, but also functions to establish and strengthen these relations” (Elling & Knoppers, 2005, p. 259). Reading ethnicity and gender through multiple lenses at once, as Butler (1990) urges, Mr Scott effectively constitutes Mihad and Asha as ‘foreign female’ students in his inability to include them in the soccer match being played. Rather than creating a space for play for the girls – explaining the rules of the game to them, creating a match environment where they feel comfortable participating, teaching them how to play soccer – ethnicity articulates with gender in this classroom environment and Mihad and Asha, who (culturally and socially) do not fit
in, are forced to sit out of the match and the lesson. Indeed, they appear, according to Mr Scott’s remarks, to sit out of team sports altogether. Hegemonic modes of masculinity, as well as ethnicity, are thus privileged in this scene, where Mr Scott appears unable or unwilling to engage with the girls’ gendered and ethnic Otherness. As such, it is ignored, as they are, and Whiteness is foregrounded:

Whiteness becomes understood as ‘having no culture’, about being accessible to everyone and as the condition of the normal ... In a world that is material and not merely symbolic [White bodies] define the nature of the physical places and spaces, which can be inhabited, how and by whom. (Arber, 2003, p. 294)

Scenes such as this one, where dominant ethnicities and masculinities function discursively to mark territory, are commonly cited in the schooling literature (Martino & Beckett, 2004), with Skelton (2000) suggesting that: “it is not just boys who attempt to keep football as an all-male preserve, as many studies also point to similar attitudes amongst male teachers (Connolly, 1994; Renold, 1997; Skelton, 1998)” (p. 9). Writing about gender, Skelton suggests that while not all male teachers act in ways that marginalise girls in relation to football, exclusion is commonly achieved by two means: “by preventing them gaining access to the means of playing the game; and, by denying the possibility of girls possessing requisite skills” (Skelton, 2000, p. 12). Foucault refers to these practices as “knowledge relationships” (1998, p. 94), where power is produced by those who choose to keep hold of proficiencies, denying them to others who are then marginalised from power. In school settings, this commonly occurs when male teachers fail to assist girls’ access to the ball, as well as in generating masculine, hegemonic cultures within games and sporting arenas that favour boys (Skelton, 2000). In this episode, the Sudanese students are discursively
produced as ethnically “different” subjects by the sporting practices that transpire, and are simultaneously interpellated as gendered subjects when Mr Scott names them as “female” subjects who the boys will not slow down for. The boys in the class set the culture of play, marking its boundaries as masculine, physical, rugged, competitive, adventurous and loutish, which has the effect of silently excluding Mihad and Asha from participating. For, it seems, if the Sudanese girls cannot fit into the existing culture of the classroom, it will not be adapted to accommodate their learning needs.

It has been argued that “sport provides a sense of identity and serves as an important means of attachment to a ‘community’” (Leaman & Carrington, 1985, p. 207). Indeed, Elling and Knoppers (2005) have raised the possibility that: “ethnic minority girls need to participate more in sport due to the potential sport has for social integration” (p. 262). Where such attachment fails to manifest as an effect of the discursive practices of gender and ethnicity, social marginality results. For Mihad and Asha, their right to play on terms suitable to them is not recognised in the classroom setting they find themselves in, and so they are sidelined. Only the rights of those who are “already recognized” (Butler, 2004, p. 87) in the dominant culture are upheld in this lesson. What functions as normative in this classroom is White, macho, male behaviour, and to understand and acquiesce to the rules of this culture entitles the holder to play and learn. Discursively, to operate outside the norms of this code is to be regarded as different and unfamiliar. It is to sit outside the parameters of what it is to be human (Butler, 2004), as Mihad and Asha find to the detriment of their learning and educational inclusion. The implications of this positioning for an education policy that
works with and for diversity is further explored in the conclusion to this chapter.

6.7 The Politics of Difference

Evolutionary scientists working in the field of population genetics have long questioned the validity of ‘race’ as a scientific concept (Barbujani, 2005). Erikson (1996) proposes two reasons for the lack of consensus over race as an appropriate descriptor of population variation. Firstly, he suggests that boundaries between races have become so diluted by population exchange that it is now meaningless to speak of fixed racial categories. Secondly, he suggests there is no accurate way to sort people into valid genetic clusters because phenotypic variation is not a reliable predictor of genetic difference. As Barbujani (2005) writes: “humans do not come in neat racial packages” (p. 222). This understanding means that race is now commonly considered to be a social construct, where the ongoing power of the concept to order social relations is nevertheless recognised by social scientists (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Luke & Carrington, 2000; Song, 2003; Warmington, 2009). In this setting, racial markers such as skin colour and hair texture play a role in structuring social life. These markers of difference, carried in the body, play a role in demarcating boundaries between those who are considered to naturally ‘fit’ within a social space, and those who operate outside it (Hage, 1998; Tsolidis, 2001). This delimitation is premised upon an understanding of identity that posits that “identities are constructed through, not outside, difference”, where “identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’,
abjected” (Hall, 1996a, pp. 4, 5). As Luke and Carrington (2000) suggest: “‘race matters’ … race markers do count in the way people perceive and interact with others, [and in] the way ‘racialized’ persons construct and negotiate their own identities in everyday public life …” (pp. 5-6).

As the following analysis illustrates, foreign ‘looks’ play a role in fixing a participant’s identity in place in the context of Darby High School. In this setting, in common with other research (Hage, 1998; Tan, 2006; Tsolidis, 2001), and as discussed in Chapter Five, “‘whiteness’ and ‘Australianness’ [are] viewed as synonymous” (Tan, 2006, p. 67). Tan (2006) refers to this process as ‘the tyranny of appearance’, where participants, despite having identities grounded in Australia, find these identities continually under challenge as a result of looks which do not fit with those considered typical of ‘real’ Australians. Tsolidis has written similarly of “The hegemonic definition of Australian ... [which] does not extend to Greek, Italian, Arab or Vietnamese, regardless of length of residency” (p. 15), due to “a common conception that those with British ancestry are the ‘real’ Australians” (p. 14).

In the context of Darby High School, this process of boundary setting renders the outsider highly visible and “out of place” (Cloke, 2006b). As power relations are played out in social and spatial terms, this order produces a “taken-for-grantedness about what is ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’” (Cloke, 2006b, p. 384). These exclusionary social spaces or “imaginary geographies” (Sibley, 2006, p. 403), which Sibley (2006) notes can be “highly structured, strongly classified, hierarchical systems” (p. 402), ideologically regulate and police difference, serving to marginalise
Otherness and those considered to be outsiders. These themes will be further explored in the discussion that follows.

6.8 Hien’s Story

Hien is a former pupil at Darby High School. She was born in Vietnam and lived in Darby for a number of years with her parents and brother (who was also a student at the school) before the family returned to Sydney. A teacher at Darby High, who remained in contact with Hien, put me in email contact with Hien and we exchanged a small number of emails about her experiences of living and studying in Darby. An extract of our email correspondence is provided below:

Episodes 9: Asian Girl With Black Hair

Subject: RE: being a student at Darby High School

In Darby and Darby High School in particular are completely a different place to me compare to Sydney. Out of the whole school, only my brother and I are asian. My brother could stand the way of being treated different by other students so he left school in the middle of year 9. So I ended up the only asian in the school.

Not only my grades but also students from other grades think i can't speak english, so every time they saw me on school playground, they speaks japanese or chinese and asked me do i understand or can i speak english. I answered them "yes i can speak english" but those questions repeatedly over and over many times and when it got to the point that its annoying me and i know that they don't want to know who i am in a friendly way but just to tease me because i'm asian. Time went by and the students got used to seeing a asain girl
at school, they actually forgot about me. I sat by myself in
class, lunch time i hided myself in the library and that's
how i know Mr Willis, and he's the only one I could talk to
at school.

when people look at me, they don't care whether im
vietnamese or chinese, they look at me in an asian figure.
they wont say vietnamese girl, rather they called me an asain
girl in town. So i guess they dont know about the cultural
differences, just the appearance, girl with black hair, brown
skin, black eyes....etc.

My family had a bakery in town and have had many
difficulties and problems with the locals. If we park our car
too long infront of their shop, they would just go straight
to the police station and the next minute an officer would
come and tell us to move our car because we interfer their
business. And because my parents are not good at speaking
english, they can't explain or talk to the customers. they
only can use the common phrases like hello, how are you, may
i help you and thank you have a nice day.

The kids in town just come in steel our drinks,
throw rubbish into the shop. We reported to the police but
they said they need evidence, so we had surveillance camera,
then they said "no, its too blurry, evidence not good
enough". so we just had to gave up. From my family
experience, i think that for an asain to mix in with a white
society is very hard no matter how hard you try, still there
is a different. Darby inparticular, is a small town, people
grows in a white community and suddenly they met people
without white skin and blond hair so being curious they want
to know who are these people, how they got here and why
they're here. so i think its understandable. still, its
annoyed me to be treated as an outcast.
6.9 Subjectivating practices at Darby High School

Hien’s reflection on her time at Darby High illustrates the way discursive practices within the school community act as “dividing practices” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 326) around the notion of ethnicity, how race identities are constructed through linguistic practices, and the way discursive practices are deployed to mark social and spatial boundaries.

Using Foucault’s (2002b) notion of subjectivation, which suggests that in order to be viable social subjects persons must behave in ways that are recognised and legitimated, it is possible to see how Hien has been discursively positioned as an Asian subject by other students in the school. When Hien reports that students “don’t care whether im vietnamese” and instead only see her as “an Asian figure”, she offers an understanding of the fact that her identity has been reductively abridged. For these students, there is no distinction made between Chinese, Japanese or Vietnamese persons. They all look the same. As Hien infers, there is an implicit understanding of Asian racial authenticity based on appearance alone, and she provides an explanation for this: “So i guess they don’t know about the cultural differences, just the appearance, girl with black hair, brown skin, black eyes”. These colour categories of “black” and “brown” sit in stark contrast to the normative Whiteness of Hien’s fellow students. In this ethnic hierarchy, Hien’s ethnicity is highly visible and differentiated from that of her peers, with the result that her value is reduced below that of her White fellow students. This “system of differentiations” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 344) privileges Whiteness, which is viewed as being synonymous with ‘Australianness’ (Hage, 1998; Tan, 2006; Tsolidis, 2001). In this schema,
“Asian looks” become a marker of “foreignness” which designate the wearer as belonging to another place; a place outside Australia, and most certainly a place outside rural Australia and Darby High School. Hien is thus an “outcast” in this rural space. She is “out of place” (Cloke, 2006b; Cresswell, 2006). Judith Butler (1997) provides a theoretical perspective on this practice when she writes:

To be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are. Indeed, it may be that what is unanticipated about that injurious speech act is what constitutes its injury, the sense of putting its addressee out of control ... Exposed at the moment of such a shattering is precisely the volatility of one’s “place” within the community of speakers; one can be “put in one’s place” by such speech, but such a place may be no place. (p. 3)

Hien’s Asian identity is not just descriptive, however. Drawing on Butler’s (1997) notion of performativity, it is possible to see that Hien is not only described as an Asian subject through the discursive practices of her peers, but her identity is also produced by this naming practice. As Foucault (2002b) writes of the exercise of this type of power:

This form of power ... applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. (p. 331)

In this way, Hien is also subjectively positioned as Asian when the students speak to her in Chinese and Japanese. Having an Asian appearance or a foreign look is equated with a lack of English in this school environment. Hien’s description of herself as Asian, as opposed to Vietnamese, illustrates the way she has adopted the language of those who exercise power on her,

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16 Japanese language and culture have a strong presence at Darby High School for historical reasons. It is unclear, then, whether students are actually speaking Japanese to Hien or whether they are, in fact, mimicking the language in a ‘mock-Asian’ style. In either circumstance, it is considered that both types of speech acts are potentially injurious to Hien.
and in this way has become subject to their “dividing practices” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 326). In a Foucauldian sense, Hien demonstrates not only how she is divided from those around her as they selectively ‘tease’ and isolate her, but also how she is divided inside herself in terms of her identity – the awareness she is made to have of her Asian identity subjugates the expression she has of her Vietnamese identity. When the students determine that a linguistic differential must be attributed to Hien (through the act of speaking to her in Japanese and Chinese) and ignore her protestations that she can speak English, Hien’s characterisation of this behaviour as “teasing” is perhaps better (re)classified as racist behaviour. Indeed, when Hien says that “they don’t want to know who i am in a friendly way”, she might be thought to be more directly expressing her feelings about the behaviour of her peers than when she describes the students’ behaviour as “teasing”. In relation to place, the act of speaking to Hien in a foreign language renders Hien both everywhere and nowhere. She is homogenously Asian – situated outside rural Australia, but placeless in the sense that any Asian language will do.

Hien tells us that Darby is “a different place” to the city. She describes Darby as a “white community” where “suddenly they met people without white skin and blond hair”. Hien’s narrative makes it clear that she and her family made attempts to resist the prevailing power they felt was being exercised on them, but self-exclusion and retreat seem to have been among the few options they felt was open to them to escape the racism that attached to them. Hence, Hien’s brother left school in response to the isolation he felt, Hien’s family left town, and Hien hid herself in the school library. This is not an imagined marginality that she chose, but an embodied
one to which she was subjected. Hien’s narrative of the effects of Whiteness on her situation, in this sense, illustrates what Foucault (2002b) describes as “instrumental modes” of power which are operationalised “by the effects of speech” or “by the threat of arms ... [or] by systems of surveillance” (p. 344). It is clear that Hien believes that those with White skin and blonde hair regulate and control Darby, as they have her life at school. But these problems extend beyond the school gates when she writes of problems with locals encountered in the family business, be it through acts of vandalism, theft, or perceived official indifference. She provides, for instance, an example of surveillance of the family’s car, interactions with the police (or what Foucault (2002d) calls “this new technology of government” (p. 410)), where the family vehicle is monitored in terms of where it is parked and for how long. This narrative of surveillance provides evidence of the discursive relations of power enacted in Darby around notions of ethnicity. On this topic, Foucault (2002a) discusses what he terms “this society of supervision” (p. 58), suggesting:

We live in a society where panopticism reigns ... A constant supervision of individuals by someone who exercised a power over them – schoolteacher, foreman, physician, psychiatrist, prison warden – and who, so long as he exercised power, had the possibility of both supervising and constituting a knowledge concerning those he supervised ... it was organised around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not ... In panopticism, the supervision of individuals is carried out not at the level of what one does but of what one is. (pp. 58, 59, 70)

The example of Hien’s family, then, suggests that they are surveilled because they do not meet the criteria for being seen as legitimate, White Australian members of the Darby community. They are under surveillance, as Foucault suggests, not for what they do, but for who they are – Asian, non-Australian, outsiders, Other.
6.10 Conclusion: Reading, Writing and Rural Racism

Schools, in the words of Kamp and Mansouri (2010), “are a major social change agent capable of challenging social inequalities” (p. 733). This potential is ever important for refugee children who rely upon schools to provide opportunities for learning, stability, and social engagement (Matthews, 2008), as well as being places where new learning identities can be forged and belonging might be experienced (Oikonomidoy, 2010). This chapter, however, presents compelling evidence of schooling and classroom spaces where everyday acts of racism and exclusion abound. This is in evidence in the treatment of Black refugee students as highly visible, out of place, out of nation, and as unintelligible subjects. Such circumstances suggest that a significant turn is needed in the way (rural) schools understand and respond to their geography, as well as in the way they respond to refugee students’ experiences of inclusion within, and exclusion from, discourses of rurality and national belonging as articulated in localised practices of schooling.

To make this argument, I draw on the work of Noble and Poynting (2010), who examine the spatial regulation of cultural difference, and the way acts of incivility and violence against ethnic Others operate pedagogically to regulate spaces and delimit opportunities for being. As the authors’ suggest: “racialising acts of everyday incivility not only limit the citizen-rights of the targeted to be in a given place, but ultimately are experienced as an attack on their being, their humanity” (p. 491). I also take up the work of Rizvi (1993) who, in relation to schooling, suggests that understandings of race are articulated and “socially organized through the
practices of pedagogy and curriculum” (p. 126). Noble and Poynting (2010) argue for recognition of the way racism produces and is produced by the interaction of racist discourses circulating at global, national and local levels. The relationship that these discourses have is one of scale, where racist discourse at the national level may have consequences in the everyday, for example. Such practices have the effect of normalising racist discourse which, in turn, teaches others in the reproduction of these practices, producing “a pedagogy of unbelonging” (p. 495). In this sense, they put forward the notion of

the pedagogical process of racism; how the big things of racism (such as the global vilification of Muslims and Arabs) give the ‘permission to hate’ (Perry 2001) which underlies everyday incivilities, and the ‘little things’ of racism produce the capacities for large-scale racist action. [emphasis in original] (p. 493)

This argument has connections to Butler’s (1997) notions of historicity and citation, where there is recognition that practices like racist speech have performative force in the ‘now’ because of the meaning they derive from their past circulation. Noble and Poynting (2010) suggest that the consequences of such action is that “a pedagogical process is underway, as some Australians learn to feel less like citizens” (p. 500), demonstrating the way in which “social anxieties are mapped onto geographical space” (p. 500), taking away from these persons “the possibility of full participation in spaces of local and national belonging” (p. 501). This understanding suggests a process whereby Black bodies can come to not belong in the rural, which is, to borrow a phrase from Noble and Poynting, represented as an “icon of white ‘Aussieness’” (p. 499). These findings are in keeping with other research suggesting that to be Black in Australia is to experience higher levels of racialisation and exclusion (Matthews, 2008). As a
participant in Matthews’ study observed of refugees in his school: “it seems
to be the black colour of the skin that really raises the racial issue to a higher
level” (p. 38). Commensurate with this argument and with the findings
outlined in this chapter, I suggest that rural areas are configured so as to act
as particular depositories of practices of racialisation. I suggest that this is
due to their small size and their representation as ethnically homogenous. In
the rural, geography informs the experience of racialisation as differences
become more obvious in small, White spaces (Haugen & Villa, 2006;
Hubinette & Tigervall, 2009). As Hubinette & Tigervall (2009) have found:

The differences are obvious – when it comes to being stared at
on the streets for example – within small homogenous cities
than in more ethno-racially mixed mid-sized and big cities. The
homogenous small town is often mentioned as a problematic
location for migrants and minorities, but big cities are not
necessarily spaces of tolerance. (p. 344)

Taking up Youdell’s (2006b, 2006c) reference to processes of subjectivation
where ‘ethnic’ bodies are constituted outside normative frames of Whiteness
in discourses of race, nation and religion, I suggest that a further dimension
of subjectivation is common in the rural, where bodies are also ‘placed’.
That is, ‘ethnic’ bodies and cultures are read as being out of place in the
rural due to their ‘natural’ association with urbanised spaces (Cloke,
2006b)17. Thus bodies are raced-\textit{placed-}nationed and religioned in rural
spaces through discourses governing normative practices of Whiteness,
belonging and culture. Yet unlike for Saeed in Chapter Five, Mihad, Asha

17 So too, Indigeneity is symbolically erased so as not to unsettle or disrupt prevailing
discourses of normative Whiteness. Non-white bodies and cultures, it is suggested, cannot
be allowed to challenge predominant cultural and political notions of Australia as a ‘White
Nation’ (Hage, 1998). This configuration of national identity, however, is undone in
pragmatic moments when Indigeneity and its expression are deemed politically useful (for
example, in promotional advertisements for Australia where the nation’s relationship with
its Indigenous forebears is highlighted for economic ends). This circumstance highlights the
prevalence of the place (or non-place) of Indigenous Australians in the rural and the
dialectic tensions in play where Indigeneity is at once erased and treated with “wilful
blindness” and, at the same time, (tokenistically) heralded.
and Hien are not sheltered from such experiences by citizenship or a long association with the rural. They do not enjoy the benefit of ‘insider’ status to generate belonging in rural Darby. Instead, they are cast as outsiders, and appear unable to bridge the divide separating them from the dominant White majority and their normative frames of reference and ‘being’.

At the heart of this chapter are questions over what it means to belong, and the conditions for rural belonging. Central to these questions is a recognition of the centring of Whiteness in rural space, an association between the rural and ways of understanding national identity, and a recognition of the way ethnicity engages with community in localised ways.

In conceiving how rurality is constituted, it seems clear that while global forces may have liquefied community borders (Massey, 2005), some spatial boundaries remain tightly guarded. To begin to reconfigure this picture, Neal (2002) citing Parekh (2000), urges “a rethinking of the national story”, asking “how has the imagined nation stood the test of time? What should be preserved, what jettisoned, what revised or reworked? How can everyone have a recognised place within the larger picture” (p. 458). Such questions have both national and pedagogical import, as issues of difference and belonging continue to beleaguer the Australian nation and its pedagogical spaces. The undertaking for schools and educationalists is to find ways to respond to the geographical orientation of racism in ways that create understanding of, and problematise, how rural spaces function. As McInerney, Smyth and Down (2011) suggest:

The ties that bind us have global connections but are anchored in a strong sense of locality ... [there is a] need for a critical reading of the physical, social and cultural attributes of the place(s) which shape students’ identities. (pp. 3, 10)
Such practice entails the discursive interrogation of notions such as ‘race’ and ‘space’ in education, and an approach to pedagogy where local discourses are opened up to questioning in ways that challenge prevailing inequalities in education. Rizvi (1993), for example, provides an example of a classroom process in need of revision where primary-aged students in the United Kingdom were asked to pictorially represent crime. In most cases, the children drew pictures of robbers who were Black and victims of crime who were White. At the end of the lesson when children were asked to describe their drawings, none of the children referred to colour, “despite the fact that the representations of robbers were inherently racialized and gendered” (p. 131). I would argue that the children’s representations were also a product of place and geography. The teacher, too, failed to comment on these social constructions, “allowing [their] reproduction to go unchallenged” (p. 131). This example highlights the way a lack of reflexive practice in classrooms can become part of the process of sustaining students’ constructions of racism.

Challenging the current educational dynamic involves a capacity on the behalf of teachers to recognise racist discourses in play (whether they be ‘charity’ discourses in response to refugee students, or other discourses of Whiteness), and to encourage critical thinking around existing power relations. Not only do teachers need to understand who their students are (Delpit, 1995, cited in Santoro, 2007, 2009), but they also need to comprehend “how their own ethnic identities shape their teaching identities” (Santoro, 2009, p. 41). This involves an ongoing need to educate teachers to understand the ‘ethnic other’ in conjunction with the ‘ethnic self’ (Santoro, 2009), so that the centrality of Whiteness is challenged. This process of
critical reflection “is integral to the development of teachers’ understanding of ‘their social identity in relation to the identities of their students and especially as related to differences of privilege, relations of power, and oppression’” (Santoro, 2009, p. 41). It would seem that it is only when Noble and Poynting’s (2010) ‘pedagogy of racism’ is arrested, when pedagogies and curricula are better oriented to the politics of identity and geography, that change will occur for students of minority ethnicity in schools. Such change will require schools to exercise imagination and critical thinking in devising and implementing pedagogy and curricula in ways not previously undertaken (Rizvi, 1993). Rizvi suggests, in fact, that in order to challenge the hegemonic influence of current discourses of exclusion in schools, “children ... need to be equipped with critical skills that enable them to imagine alternative moral configurations” (p. 137). To dismantle the power of existing discourses of unbelonging and to present an alternative pedagogy of inclusion would appear to be a critical task in the continuing development of an effective multicultural education.

In this chapter I have analysed how schooling exclusions are produced in relations of power framed by rural discourses of boundary and belonging. Considering the particular case of refugee students in the rural, I have shown how belonging is premised upon Whiteness, and how schools are implicated in the spatial regulation of belonging on these terms. In the following chapter I continue this analysis of rurality and difference to examine how Muslim students in the rural are constituted by discourses of religion and cultural difference. Taking up the stories of two refugee students from Afghanistan in rural Australia, I consider how schooling
inclusions are premised upon the successful take up of normative rural performativities.
Chapter Seven  
**Gundah High School, New South Wales, Australia**

7.1 Introduction

Gundah High School is architecturally different to many other public high schools. The first impression upon entering the school grounds is that public funds have been invested at this school. There are no ugly brick buildings. Instead, classrooms are housed in spacious, well lit, blocks. There is an overriding sense of purposeful, modern design, which is heightened upon entering the school’s recently built staff and teaching spaces. They are equipped with the latest technology and are attractively furnished. It is not a private school, but by the standards of public education, Gundah High School is well resourced and visually appealing.

The school sits on the outskirts of Gundah, overlooking a sprawling valley. Located in the Western school district of New South Wales, Gundah High School has approximately 800 students. The town of Gundah is large by rural population standards. 30,000 people live in this populated inland city, which is located some half a day’s drive from Sydney. The large population enables the town to support a number of industries, rural and otherwise. The town is known primarily for wheat and wool production, but other industries like tourism are expanding. The population and location of Gundah means that it has become a central site for many of the region’s industrial, agricultural, medical, cultural and lifestyle facilities.

Of the approximately 800 students enrolled at Gundah High School, approximately two per cent of the school population (20 students) are from Language Backgrounds Other Than English. Six of these students are
refugees from Afghanistan. Twenty per cent of students at the school are Aboriginal, compared to 12.1 per cent of Gundah’s general population (ABS, 2006c). In comparison with the national average of 2.3 per cent Indigenous persons in Australia, Gundah can be considered to have a significant Indigenous population. As I will go on to discuss, this population of Indigenous students at Gundah High School has important implications for understanding how different populations of students are created in discourses of schooling ability. As will be outlined below in Episode 13, the performative relationship between ethnicity and Whiteness at Gundah High School has significant implications for students’ schooling success, both as this pertains to Indigenous and refugee students.

Gundah has attracted a small number of Afghan refugees to the town to take up employment at the local abattoir (consistent with research that reveals that refugee populations in Australia are encouraged by government policy to move to rural areas to take up employment in rural industries like meatworks and harvesting (DIAC, 2010; Hugo, et al., 2006; McDonald-Wilmsen, et al., 2009)). Most of these refugees appear to have spent time exiled in Pakistan before arriving in Australia on humanitarian visas. Of the participants’ families in this study, not all of the Afghan residents of Gundah work at the abattoir. While a majority do, others have started their own businesses in Gundah as an alternative to working for another. This appears to have occurred in cases where there has been family support in Australia to enable such a pathway, and in circumstances where individuals have spent a significant number of years in Australia building up a knowledge of Australian business systems and culture.
This chapter focuses on the stories of two Muslim refugee students from Afghanistan – Hanif and Khatria. The students’ narratives are recounted in this chapter because they tell us something of what it is like to be a Muslim student in a large rural place, as well as, in Khatria’s case, what it is like to be a recently arrived refugee in a rural school. Hanif and Khatria’s stories allow exploration of the web of relations governing ethnicity, religion and class in rural space, as well as illustrating how ethnic and religious subject positions produce, and go on to construct, schooling inclusions and exclusions. Against an ideological backdrop of Whiteness (Hage, 1998), I discuss the lived experience of Hanif and Khatria in relation to issues of rurality, religion, subjectivity and schooling success.

7.2 Khatria’s story

Khatria is a 16 year old girl who arrived in Gundah from Afghanistan, via Pakistan. At the time of conducting this research, Khatria had been in Australia, and at Gundah High School, for approximately 16 months.

I was introduced to Khatria through her Year Advisor at Gundah High School, and at our first meeting I discussed the possibility with her of participating in this research project. She appeared excited about the prospect of involvement, and of having her experiences at Gundah High School researched and communicated. When Khatria’s parents were contacted, however, for informed consent for Khatria to participate, they refused permission for her to be involved in this study. No reason was given for this refusal, although Khatria’s Year Advisor, who helped to negotiate possible access to Khatria, suggested that the refusal was the likely result of
parental wariness pertaining to the differences between my position as a White researcher and her parents’ position as Muslim Afghans. While any number of possibilities exist as to why my request for access to Khatria was met with refusal, Hamzeh and Oliver (2010) suggest that gaining research access to Muslim girls can be particularly problematic, where “relations of power, authority and difference” (p. 166) – specifically, being Muslim enough and being modest enough – can impact a researcher’s likelihood of being given permission to conduct research with young Muslim women. The problems recounted in Hamzeh and Oliver’s research may or may not have come into play in this instance. While it is possible that informed consent may eventually have been granted had I persisted in seeking parental consent, and perhaps more particularly if I had adopted a more complex, creative and sensitive approach to gaining the parents’ favour (Hamzeh and Oliver, 2010), I nevertheless proceeded with the research project at Gundah High School without Khatria’s formal involvement. This did not mean that I did not come into contact with Khatria. I did, and frequently. As I went about observing Hanif in his day-to-day life at the school, I was commonly in a position to informally observe Khatria as she and Hanif shared classroom and other schooling spaces. Initially I had no intention of documenting or analysing these observations as part of this study. I had, after all, no formal permission to do so. But then a compelling event occurred (see Episode 13, below) which challenged me to rethink this position, urging me to consider including Khatria in this study, albeit in a limited way, and despite the lack of permission attaching to her.

The event represented below in Episode 13 occurred at a school presentation day, where the events recorded were open to members of the
public, parents, staff and students of Gundah High School. It is on this basis that I have included the episode here, because rather than being a ‘private transaction’ that only my position as a insider-researcher gave me access to, it was, instead, an event that was open to the public, including interested local media. The episode is presented with the aim of understanding and challenging schooling injustices – another compelling reason for the events of ‘Presentation Day’ to be recorded in this study. The event captured is, I believe, important for its capacity to illustrate something of the relationship of ‘gratitude’ (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008) existing between refugee students and schools, as well as highlighting the recurring discourses of Whiteness framing refugee students possibilities for ‘being’ in the rural. As discussed in Chapter Six, this gratitude response entails newcomer refugees exhibiting suitable acknowledgement to their host country for allowing them to be in their nation, and the refugee displaying appropriate humility and thanks for the opportunities presented to them by the host country. While my analysis of Khatria’s schooling life is necessarily limited by my lack of direct access to Khatria, including her thoughts and reflections on the event presented, I offer a limited but critical account of her experience at Gundah High School, as it was expressed to me in a few public moments of schooling life.

7.3 Hanif’s story

Hanif is a sixteen year old boy who lives in Gundah. Hanif identifies as Afghan, despite having grown up in Australia. Hanif’s family recently moved to Gundah from the state of Victoria, Australia. Despite only having been at Gundah High School for a little over half a year, Hanif is popular
with his peers. As I will go on to show in the analysis that follows, this 
popularity, and the behaviours that go towards constituting it, are implicated 
in the subject positions that are available for Hanif to take up. Perhaps 
Hanif’s popularity stems, in part, from the fact that he smiles a lot 
(cheerfulness is a self-acknowledged part of Hanif’s character). Whatever 
the reason for his popularity, Hanif’s remarked upon charm has not gone 
unnoticed by his teachers. A female teacher in her late twenties at Gundah 
High School recounted a story of meeting Hanif on his first day at school. 
She appeared to visually swoon as she relayed how he opened doors for her 
as they strolled around the school, and she openly spoke of his “cheekiness” 
at Gundah High. This playful character is frequently in evidence on any 
school day spent in Hanif’s company. Girls are typically the target of 
Hanif’s merriment, and comments relating to their bodies and clothing are 
not uncommon. Such remarks have led to circumstances where Hanif has 
been counselled by teachers about the appropriateness of such behaviour. 
Other issues like swearing have also been raised for negative mention in 
these discussions. Despite these discipline issues, however, Hanif is 
generally considered to have adjusted well to life at Gundah High School. 
Though a student of modest academic talent, Hanif is mostly considered to 
work well in class, and is well-regarded by teaching staff.

Away from school, Hanif spends a considerable period of his time 
helping his father operate a family-owned clothing shop in Gundah. As the 
eldest of three brothers and a sister, Hanif is often to be found in the shop, 
and during the occasional period when his father has travelled overseas, 
Hanif has had primary responsibility for operating the family business. This
task, his teachers have suggested, has potentially impacted on Hanif’s schooling.

Hanif considers himself Afghani, despite having been born in Pakistan. Hanif also identifies as a Muslim. At Gundah High School, Hanif’s identity is firmly fixed by his peers and teachers as Afghani.

The following interview was recorded at Gundah High School in December of 2006. The extract provided below is part of a longer interview that took place with Hanif following observations of him at Gundah High School when he was a student in Year 10. A full copy of the interview transcript is provided in Appendix One.

Episode 10: ‘Most of them are friendly’: In discussion with Hanif

[I’ve lived in Australia for] 13 years ... we went to Melbourne. That’s where we first started. And then because of my Dad’s business, it’s not in Melbourne it was in Gundah, he said let’s all move up there. [...] I wasn’t born [in Afghanistan]. My parents moved from there to Pakistan because there was a war happening. And I was born there ... And then ... we came [to] Melbourne. My Dad started working, so we started going to school. Dad thought if we come here [to Australia] it’s a better education. ‘Cause over there the war was happening and no one could study and all that. So that’s why we came here. [...] [Gundah is] a nice place. Friendly people. Most of them are friendly. And you can make lots of friends here. And if something happens you’ve got someone to help you out. Like, at the school you’ve got teachers to help you, you’ve got some students, some don’t care,
but [that] doesn’t really matter. It’s a nice place. It’s not like Melbourne, but for a country [place] it’s alright ... In Melbourne, where I grew up, there were just, like, Muslims, and I only ever had Muslim friends ... here there’s, like, five, six, seven, eight [Muslim] families.

[...]  
[Being Afghani, i]t’s just like a normal person. Doesn’t really matter. There’s not much difference ... It’s like I’ve been here always.  
[...]  
If you’ve grown up doing that [fasting], then it’s going to be easy for you ... They’ve never seen people like us, so maybe they might think ‘he’s just on a diet’ or something. But some people do know its Ramadan and they just like muck around with you and go “here, have a drink”, or something ... the students they know I’m a Muslim and they just make jokes about it so it doesn’t really matter. They take it really seriously as well sometimes. Like James in Commerce class, like, someone bagged [my friend] because he’s Afghan and he’s Muslim and [James] stuck up for him ... [A student said:] Oh, you stupid bloody Afghan Muslim, or something like that ... And [James] beat up the person that [said] it to [my friend]. So some people really understand the culture and they know who you are. Like, he’s a good friend now. And he makes jokes about us [laughs], but it doesn’t matter ’cause he’s a nice person. And during Ramadan, when I was fasting, he goes ‘I’m fasting’, so he was trying to be supportive of us. He’s a good person. And some of the teachers, they support us as well.

[...]  
It’s pretty much easy ... They know who I am, like Muslim, Afghan. And I know who they are. So it doesn’t really matter. We can just like get along straight away ... You’re just people.
Michael Woods (2006) has suggested that countryside debates over rural social issues – once framed by conceptions of rurality dominated by arguments over (agricultural) land use – are now being replaced by “questions of rural identity, the meaning of rural community and the rights of rural citizens” (p. 580). As this ‘politics of the rural’ unfolds across country areas, questions about living on the land are increasingly being replaced by questions about rural boundaries – who is entitled to live on (or in the) rural land(scape) – an idea which is tied to notions of who rightfully belongs in the rural landscape, and inevitably to notions of inclusions and exclusions in rural space. As Woods argues:

politics in the countryside has undergone a significant shift in emphasis in recent decades, which may be characterized as a transition from ‘rural politics’ to ‘a politics of the rural’. Whereas ‘rural politics’ refers broadly to politics located in rural space, or relating to ‘rural issues’, the ‘politics of the rural’ is defined by the centrality of the meaning and regulation of rurality itself as the primary focus of conflict and debate. (p. 579)

These debates are intimately connected to the operation of power in the rural landscape; an understanding which cannot be separated from a knowledge of how power relations are discursively configured in rural social space in relation to issues of national belonging.

This broad conceptual picture provides a framework for understanding how Muslim students experience inclusions and exclusions in rural educational contexts, as rural schools are entangled in the making of rural boundaries. As Episode 10 illustrates, Hanif’s story is positioned within broader discourses of rural life, and exemplifies the contests that arise around questions of rural identity, and the regulation of belonging in rural communities and schools. As Hanif’s story illustrates, and as discussed previously in Chapter Two, rurality is not a single social space (Massey,
2005), but is rather a series of competing spaces that cut across the same geographical landscape. Within the same rural boundary a multiplicity of discourses of inclusion and exclusion coexist. Hanif’s narrative speaks to this argument in the sense that he relates a series of competing narratives of inclusion and exclusion in the schooling landscape.

As discussed in Chapter Five, I want to draw attention in this study to everyday moments of ‘hopeful belonging’ (Wise, 2005) in the rural. Arguing against the tendency in academic analysis to depict relations of ethnicity purely in oppositional terms that neglect more complex, everyday, situated analyses, Noble (2009) suggests that: “Cohesive communities without difference do not exist ... our place in the ‘social’ is better seen as a complex series of relations to diverse groups” (p. 879). Read against this position, Hanif’s story appears as another counter-narrative to typical tales of marginalisation of ethnic-minorities in rural places. Hanif urges us to see Gundah High School as a supportive, accepting community; a place where he has found friendship; a place where he fits and belongs. As he suggests of this experience: “It’s like I’ve been here always ... They know who I am, like Muslim, Afghan. And I know who they are. So it doesn’t really matter. We can just like get along straight away ... You’re just people.” This narrative speaks against dominant discourses of rural racism (Candlin, 2000; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Cloke, 2006a; Cloke, 2006b; Cloke & Little, 1997; Garland & Chakraborti, 2006; Hubbard, 2005; Millbourne, 1997; Neal, 2002; Sibley, 2006) which suggest that experiences of marginalisation are the norm for people of minority ethnicity in rural areas, and instead suggests that experiences of belonging and acceptance have a place within rural worlds. At the same time, however, Hanif’s story can also be
understood in terms of the subjectivities and discursive repertoire that he appears to have to take up in order to be intelligible in this rural place. When Hanif, for example, relates how students from the majority White ethnic group make jokes about the Afghan students’ religious and ethnic identities, there is evidence of more typical marginalising and racialising practices at work in the school grounds. In such speech acts, Hanif is constituted as an outsider to rural life as he is produced in discourses of rural Whiteness (Panelli, et al., 2009) and White national belonging (Hage, 1998). Hanif’s response to the racialised discourse he relates highlights the way he negotiates his life at school by choosing to cheerfully respond to incidents of racial and/or religious discrimination against him and his refugee peers. He does this most notably by simply shrugging off incidents as if they did not happen; as if they are of no consequence. This strategic act (Poynting, 2009) of ignoring an event and/or its perpetrators allows him to move on from the ‘injurious speech act’ and ‘failed performative’ (Butler, 1997) and concentrate on the positives in the rural environment. Hanif’s behaviour can thus be read as an act of agency, where he relies upon ‘self-technologies’ (Foucault, 1999) to ‘talk up’ his inclusion within the ethnically homogenous rural community he finds himself in, and modifies his thoughts so that, at times, and contrary to the evidence around him, he constructs a narrative of inclusion for himself. In this sense, Hanif can be understood to be participating in acts of narrative agency that generate inclusion by playing down differences between himself as the student of difference and the student majority, and focusing more on the points of identification between these groups. This finding is similar to Oikonomidoy’s (2007) assertion that Muslim students create counter-
discourses in response to the subtle and overt religious discrimination they experience. On the manoeuvres Muslim refugee girls in the United States adopt to resist being discriminated against, Oikonomidoy suggests that:

Acts of ignoring or creatively transforming the uncomfortable situation into a joke may be indicative of the students’ efforts to overcome the obstacles that were hampering the quality of their relationship with their peers. It might be that they were trying to create a sense of belonging among their peers and focus more on the commonalities versus the differences ... These small acts of resistance could also be interpreted as struggles to belonging. (p. 24)

Hanif’s behaviour is also consistent with Raby’s (2004) research suggesting that students are commonly able to identify racism in their schools, but appear invested in downplaying it. To this end, Hanif appears to make light of the racism in his school in order to ‘talk up’ his inclusion within the student body. He speaks, for example, of ‘most’ students at his school being friendly, and of ethnic and cultural differences ‘not really’ mattering in terms of his experience of belonging at the school; the inference being that it is only a few kids who are racist and that he ignores this behaviour anyway. In such talk, Hanif’s investment in denying racism is underscored. Yet, despite Hanif attributing racist practices to particular individuals, racism appears to be systemic at Gundah High School – a problem for the school, in evidence in the school’s centring of Whiteness, in racist practice, and in the educational disadvantage evident amongst its Indigenous population (this disadvantage will be further explored in Episode 13, below).

An important element enabling Hanif’s positive outlook appears to be the support he receives from friends and teachers from the majority ethnic group at the school. While the racist remarks against Hanif are potentially injurious, and to this extent might be thought to constitute him as an outsider at Gundah High School, the circumstances of his peer
friendships and support at the school from teaching staff combine to give Hanif a sense of belonging. This outcome might be understood as a particular effect of rurality, where the conditions of rural space – as Hanif describes it, having White friends in the rural due to a scarcity of other Muslims in the rural landscape – afford enhanced opportunities to engage with students from the dominant ethnic group. This finding is reflected in the research of Edgeworth and Eiseman (2007), who also found examples of increased opportunities in the rural for intercultural ‘knowing’.

Yet in a contrary narrative of exclusion, Hanif’s story regarding the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims, and the rituals of fasting associated with it, suggest that non-cultural traditions at Gundah High School are situated outside a homogenous rural cultural core (Raby, 2004). In this configuration, practices that are culturally unfamiliar to local rural students, who traditionally have little experience of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural traditions, are regarded with suspicion. Raby (2004) has written of this phenomenon, suggesting that in circumstances where:

the trends of the school are homogenous ... a student who is a new immigrant is expected to conform to this style or face difficulties ... In these instances, it is those who are seen to be ‘publicizing their cultures by wearing it on their bodies’ (Yon, 2000, p. 77) who are the ones segregating themselves ... When kids pick on each other for wearing clothes or eating food that’s ‘different’ this may seem less like racism on the surface and yet can be identified as examples of ... ‘new racism’ (Yon, 2000), or what Rizvi (1993) identifies as current, popular racism, in which cultural practices signify racial essence. (Raby, 2004, pp. 376-377)

Hanif appears to make sense of those in the rural who would condemn his practice of fasting by resisting their efforts to shut down his ‘deviant’ behaviour. Rather than being hindered by his detractors, Hanif appears confident of asserting his Muslim identity, and hence capable of
withstanding efforts to ‘normalise’ him into mainstream culture. Haw (2009) refers to such behaviour, common amongst second-generation Muslims, as a “toughening of identity” (p. 375), where, in response to the pressures of being Muslim in a non-Muslim environment, Muslims strongly assert a religious identity in order to have a stable identity position (even as this religious identity marginalises them). Such individuals seek a “‘purity’ of identity not clouded by confusion” (p. 375), which is sort “in part through a resistance to how they are being socially constructed” (p. 376). Haw (2009) acknowledges that the internal dialogue contemporary Muslims have over their identity is both complex and contradictory. This take up of shifting identity practices would appear to be in play for Hanif who, at times, appears to forge his identity in opposition to the White majority, while at other times, in apparently contradictory moments, seeks ‘hyper-normativity’. Such practices will be further explored in Episode 11, below, in relation to Hanif’s take up of subjectivities at Gundah High.

As discussed in previous chapters, national and rural discourses of Whiteness interweave to regulate ethnicity and its expression in the rural. In schools in the rural landscape, these discourses of Whiteness are expressed in ordinary moments of schooling in the form of, for example, jokes about Islamic religious practices, and racist remarks against refugees. Yet against these practices and discourses, everyday moments of ‘hopeful belonging’ (Wise, 2005) exist to provide an authentic sense that rural social space is a place of genuine belonging for ethnic minority students. This belonging is not just narrative in nature, but is embodied and realised in students’ day-to-day lives. Together with students’ active and purposeful take up of tactics that aim to de-centre Whiteness and resist racism, such moments of
‘togetherness-in-difference’ (Ang, 2001) present a nuanced picture of how ethnic minority, refugee and Muslim students ‘belong’ in the rural, and the terms on which such belonging occurs. As I will go on to discuss in the remainder of this chapter, Hanif’s story suggests that rural identity and the regulation of belonging in the rural is a contradictory and complex story, where discourses of inclusion and exclusion co-exist to both hinder and enhance students’ lives.

7.4 Playground of limited possibilities

In this episode I explore the discourses within and against which a Muslim student in the rural constructs his identity. Drawing on the work of Amanda Keddie (2007, 2011) on identity, particularly her arguments as they pertain to rurality and being Muslim, this episode illustrates how rural schooling contexts are implicated in the making of ‘hyper-normative’ identities. By ‘hyper-normative’ I mean the normative behaviours that are taken up to garner recognition, which, in this instance, are enhanced and amplified to increase the extent to which a student appears to be ‘just like’ their schooling peers. I discuss how in order to fit in, a Muslim student adopts the hetero-normative behaviours of his peer group at school (in direct contrast to his religious life at home), in order to be culturally recognisable in the rural. In this sense, this analysis explores issues of subjectivity, power, agency and place.

Episode 11: The ‘risky business’ of belonging: In the playground, Gundah High School, Australia, November 2006

The bell has rung signalling an end to lunch, and most of Year 10 are milling in the playground outside the school canteen waiting for their
teachers to arrive at the hall for their Physical Education class. Students stand in small and larger groups talking. Hanif is in conversation with a blonde-haired girl, ‘Rachel’. They are talking about the upcoming Year 10 formal (dance), and who is likely to be voted ‘Best [looking] Girl’ and ‘Best Arse’. Hanif tells Rachel that she will win. She playfully shoves him away. A second girl, ‘Annie’, joins the conversation and Hanif tells Annie, while visibly turning to admire her bottom, that she too will win the ‘Best Arse’ category of the competition on Formal night.

When I later ask Hanif about this incident and, more particularly, about his relationship with Rachel, he tells me that he has no interest in Rachel and that he was just ‘playing around’. He explains that his religion prevents him from having a ‘girlfriend’, and that when the time is right, a marriage will be arranged for him by his parents. He also says that he will not be attending the school formal.

There is a dearth of research investigating how the pressures of ethnicity, nation and religion unfold in rural schooling contexts. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the tensions of rural Whiteness can leave ethnic minority, Muslim and refugee students ‘out of place’ in countryside educational settings (Panelli, et al., 2009). In this episode, I attempt to explain this web of relations further by illustrating how students are positioned in the rural within the terms of available discourses (Keddie, 2007), and how these discourses influence the take up of dominant subjectivities. In the rural, the pressures of recognition can be particularly pronounced due to the fact that, oftentimes, students will be one of only a few ‘Other ethnicities’ in a rural place.

In this analysis I take up Butler’s (1997) notion of ‘recognition’ (as outlined in Chapter Three) to discuss the way students seek to be viable
within normative frames of reference. In the playground scene outlined above, Hanif shows how the take up of hetero-normative behaviours can become a ‘passport’ to fitting in with his peers. To constitute himself as recognisable to his teenage friends, Hanif plays down his religious differences and takes up the secular and sexual discourses of his peers. In acts of flirting and coquetry with young (non-Muslim) girls that might be viewed as immodest (contrary to al-ihtisham) in Islamic terms (Mernissi cited in Hamzeh & Oliver, 2010), Hanif presents himself as ‘just like the next (rural) guy’ at Gundah High School. Indeed, Hanif takes up discourses that associate “successful masculinity” (Keddie, 2007, p. 188) with ‘laddish’ accomplishment and gallantry (Keddie, 2007). Noble (2009) suggests that exploring the spatial dimensions of how subjectivity is expressed in everyday, situated encounters means accounting for the way young Muslim men seek ‘competence’ in relation to their place-based identities. For Hanif, this seems to involve ‘hyper-normative’ displays of masculinity that give him sub-cultural status (Youdell, 2003), but that sit in direct contrast to his religious beliefs about appropriate relations between the sexes.

It could be argued that such behaviour is a direct consequence of gendered place relations. Hanif’s take up of hyper-masculinity might be understood as a particularity of rural space, where gendered discourse has been argued to maintain established forms of traditional masculinity (Bye, 2009; Keddie, 2007; Kenway, et al., 2006; Little & Panelli, 2007). Bye (2009) suggests, for example, that in the rural, ‘successful’ masculinity can depend on the performance of public displays of ‘appropriate’ masculinities, such as the take up of “intense masculine” displays (p. 280). Wise (2010) has also suggested that: “embodiment of our social location manifests ‘in
our actions, our modes of appearance and through a bodily *hexis* or bodily bearing – posture, manners, ways of speaking – for example (Noble and Watkins, 2003: 522)” (p. 922). For Hanif, ‘doing’ gender appropriately in the rural appears to involve knowingly ‘playing’ with discourses of courtship that he has no serious intention of taking up. Thus, in acts of limited agency, Hanif momentarily puts aside his religious beliefs and practices to attain peer recognition. To this end, while Hanif’s values never appear to be seriously under threat, they are contested in socio-spatial terms. In the words of Ghazala Bhatti (2006), this is a “risky business” (p. 143), where belonging to a minority ethnic group engenders behaviours that put at risk both one’s values and one’s take up of a ‘good’ student identity.

Keddie (2011) suggests that such behaviour amongst Muslim youth is not uncommon. In her work with Muslim girls in British schools, a participant noted that:

> it’s about fitting in, they see the white kids, they see them and they think ‘oh god, maybe I’m not dressed appropriately and maybe I’m not talking appropriately or my behaviour is not like theirs’ and they want to be popular ... they aspire to be like that. They just want to fit in. (p. 184)

By way of contrast, Corbett (2007) suggests that such practices might be the result of agency and ‘mobility capital’, where students who have experienced life outside the rural and who might be considered less “trapped in place” (p. 785) than their ‘born and bred’ rural peers, enjoy the ability to ‘abstract’ themselves from place by constructing “imaginary” selves: “They saw social space, abstracted about it, and planned their moves within it. Their ability to see and manipulate social space and then to exercise choice within it was a part of their cultural capital within school (Corbett, 2007, p.
Corbett’s analysis promotes the idea of Hanif as an active subject in resisting normative codes of interpellation.

Critical analysis of Hanif’s narrative reveals his sensitivity to the White cultural ‘norms’ of his schooling environment, against which he must pitch his identity. Drawing on these ‘norms’ to constitute himself with power and agency, Hanif takes up a complex and contradictory positioning to acquire status and viability in his rural schooling milieu (at the same time as he is positioned, both theoretically and practically, as different). These acts of positioning highlight the need for educators to be increasingly aware of the net of discourses that create and stifle identity possibilities for students. This involves educators being conscious both of their own discursive positioning, as well as of the discourses of gender, ethnicity, religion and rurality that weave together to construct and constrain the subjectivities of their students.

### 7.5 Dance class

In this episode, I consider the issue of teaching for diversity. In the vignette and transcript that follow (Parts i and ii of Episode 12), I illustrate how teachers’ knowledge of their students impacts their ability to respond in culturally appropriate ways to an increasingly diverse student population (Santoro, 2009). Delpit (1995, cited in Allard, 2006) argues that “in order to teach you, I must know you” (p. 327). This argument is taken up in this analysis to investigate the importance of knowing one’s students (Santoro, 2009) in order to produce socially just classrooms. The pedagogical knowledges and practices that are required of teachers to produce classroom environments that understand and respond to the needs of students who sit
outsides the dominant cultural majority (Santoro, 2009) are thus explored in this episode.

**Episode 12. Part i. Physical Education lesson, Gundah High School, Australia, October 2006**

Three Year 10 Physical Education classes combine for a lesson in the hall attached to the school canteen. Lunch tables are pushed to the edge of the room to make a space for dancing – the focus of today’s lesson. The hall is spacious, and is rimmed outside with trees on one side, where the room overlooks an extensive plateau of rural landscape in the distance. Students stand in rows, a metre apart, facing the front of the room. On a sandy-coloured parquetry floor, students are instructed in the finer points of the ‘Nutbush’ by three teachers who demonstrate how the dance unfolds. The dance is practised over and over as the music plays on repeat. This is an ‘individual’ dance, and students participate with varying degrees of enthusiasm. After 15 minutes or so of ‘nutbushing’, the teachers announce that it is time to move on to the bush dance. At this point in the lesson, the Muslim students move off the dance floor and proceed to sit on chairs positioned at the side of the room.

**Episode 12. Part ii: Hanif discusses Dance class**

*You’re not allowed to, like, touch girls [during Ramadan] … At first my teachers didn’t believe me … She goes “No, you’re dancing” … So then [the teacher] said “Dance!” And I said “no, I’m fasting”. And then she said “Okay, you can stay back then” [for detention]. But my other teacher he knows about it ‘cause he’s heard it at [another local school] … and he said [explaining Hanif’s reluctance to dance to the*
other teacher] "Oh no, they don’t have to do it”. So some teachers know and some teachers don’t know.

The Australian teaching profession is predominately Anglo-Australian (Allard, 2006; Santoro, 2009). This composition of the teaching workforce sits in opposition to Australia’s student population, which is increasingly heterogenous (Santoro, 2009). In this analysis, I draw on the work of Allard (2006) and Santoro (2009) to argue that schools, and the professionals who populate them, require a better understanding of diversity and difference in the way they enact pedagogy. This entails highly skilled professional teachers having greater appreciation of culturally relevant pedagogies and practices to support their work in the classroom; an increased awareness of their own ‘ethnic’ identities; and broader cultural knowledge to move them beyond their own (White) worldview and “taken-for-granted cultural values” (Santoro, 2009, p. 42)\(^\text{18}\). As Santoro explains:

Knowing what and how to teach culturally diverse students is dependant upon teachers understanding their students’ learning needs and recognising how and when those needs are different from and/or similar to the needs of students from the dominant cultural majority. (p. 36)

In ‘Dance class’ above, we see an example of a teacher’s failure to recognise religious difference in her classroom, and its effect on a Muslim student, who is disciplined for his beliefs due to the teacher’s lack of cultural knowledge and experience of Islamic religious practice. Failure to ‘know’ her students in this instance, and approaching her classroom as if all learners are undifferentiated and generalisable, is troubling for a number of

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\(^{18}\) The tensions and limitations of ‘knowing’ the Other/another are acknowledged here (Butler, 2001), but it is posited that this does not negate teachers’ ethical and professional responsibilities in relation to teaching with and for diversity.
reasons. Firstly, such a construction suggests the assumption of a homogenous, essential (White) culture for all students. In this configuration, all learners are treated the same, and are expected to conform to the same ‘norms’ of (White) culture (Santoro, 2009). Secondly, the teacher enacts a ‘system of differentiations’ in the classroom (Foucault, 2002b), where “every relationship of power puts into operation differences that are, at the same time, its conditions and its results” (p. 344). In this example, the teacher chooses a dance activity that becomes both the ‘condition’ and the ‘result’ of Hanif’s exclusion. Failing to teach for diversity – choosing a teaching activity that is not available to all students to participate in – becomes the means to disenfranchise some students from the learning experience. As Santoro argues: “teachers must know what is culturally relevant to their students and must recognise when existing curriculum fails to build on or acknowledge the cultural knowledge students bring to their learning” (p. 39). Santoro’s research with rural pre-service teachers points to a lack of knowledge of other cultures amongst students who have grown up in culturally homogenous rural communities. While it is impossible to say what factors contributed to the teacher’s ignorance in this situation, ‘Dance class’ points to the continuing importance of educating teaching professionals for competence in culturally diverse contexts. Santoro (2009) summarises key knowledges in this regard as: “knowledge of pedagogy and practice, knowledge of students and knowledge of self” (p. 34). As this episode illustrates, failing to teach for diversity can mean that some student groups miss out on the educational access and success that should accrue to all students, regardless of ethnic, religious or cultural differences. To address this concern, Allard (2006) suggests asking the question: “What is
working now and for whom and under what conditions?” as a means for teachers to attend to important aspects of pedagogy to work effectively with diverse students. This would appear to be a critical step in seeking to develop a more culturally responsive teaching response, and, as Ladson-Billings (1995) has suggested of such practice, “[it’s] just good teaching!”

7.6 Presentation day

In this episode I explore the schooling experiences of Khatria – the only female student from Afghanistan at Gundah High School at the time of my research. In a speech given at a school awards ceremony celebrating Khatria’s academic achievements since arriving in Australia as a refugee, Khatria is presented as an “ideal client of schooling” (Youdell, 2006b, p. 97), where her success is publicly hailed as a triumph over social and political adversity. Judith Butler’s (2004) notion of “normative schemes of intelligibility” (p. 146) is taken up in this episode to explore the processes by which Khatria is subjectivated, as well as the processes by which she is constituted as a ‘good’ student and an ‘ideal’ learner. Her story illustrates how Arab students are named and made by schooling discourses of ability, as well as how she is positioned as being in need of “rescue” by (Western) discursive practices of schooling. Khatria’s story is illustrative of the way issues of power, ethnicity, class and gender connect to shape practices of schooling, particularly as these practices shape student academic performance and agency.

The transcript that follows is of a speech given at an awards ceremony at Gundah High School in 2006. Given by a member of the school’s Executive
staff, the speech was presented to an audience of approximately 800 school staff, students and families attending the Presentation Day ceremony.

**Episode 13. Presentation Day at Gundah High School, December 2006**

The next award, the Gundah Teachers’ Association Award, is presented to the student who has shown commitment and success towards Year 10 studies. Khatria Nazari has shown commitment across many subjects and she has a very interesting story.

Khatria has only lived in Australia for 16 months. She was born in southern Afghanistan when the Taliban government was in power. As a female in this society she was not allowed to attend school. Her family fled the country when Khatria was 10 years old and they moved to Pakistan. This was the first time that she attended school for only one hour per day at the American Language Centre.

When she was 15 years old Khatria moved to Gundah and attended her first ever real school. In 2006 Khatria has successfully completed Year 10 and has achieved outstanding results. She has received a ranking of 2nd in Advanced History and 3rd in Visual Arts, and also received certificates for sustained commitment to learning for Advanced English, Advanced Geography and Advanced Science.

Khatria is an example of what can be achieved by any student if they choose to take the opportunities available at this outstanding educational facility.

Congratulations Khatria and her family.

Please put your hands together for Khatria Nazari.

**7.7.1 Rescuing the ‘ideal’ learner and student**

Youdell’s (2006b) notion of the performative constitution of the student as a ‘learner’, drawn from Butler’s concept of performativity (1997),
is taken up in this analysis. This argument draws on understandings of ‘ideal clients of schooling’ in educational sociology, an idea which is premised upon the concept that “the exclusion of certain groups from educational processes in terms of their location outside the schools formal, informal, explicit, implicit and tacit assessments of who approximates this ideal” (p. 97) is normative in educational settings. Youdell, who with David Gillborn (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000, 2004), has suggested that ‘ideal’ students are constituted by discourses of ability and conduct, has argued that students are not just thought of and described (named) as ideal students, but are also created and produced as ideal learners. In this sense, Youdell makes a distinction between students and learners. That is, between those students who merely attend school, and those who are provided with opportunities to actively engage in learning opportunities (as outlined in Chapter Five). In keeping with this idea, I argue that at Gundah High School, Khatria is rewarded for being both a ‘good’ student and an ‘ideal’ learner, as she is performatively constituted at Presentation Day in this image. In Khatria’s case, intellectual capacity, hard work and struggle are rewarded and highlighted in the Presentation Day speech. Khatria is not alone, however, in being represented as ‘ideal’. In the speech presented, the Australian education system, and Gundah High School in particular, are also cast as ‘ideal’, as the educational saviour of Khatria – the ‘in need’ Afghan refugee. Prior to arriving at Gundah High School, the narrator suggests, Khatria did not have access to a “real school”, so that in less than 18 months Gundah High has taken Khatria from a position of no formal schooling to educational “success”. It is ‘the West’ that is credited with this result (with Gundah High School at the forefront of the campaign), having saved
Khatria from the supposedly ‘backward’, unenlightened Arab society from which she came, which did not see fit to educate girls. Even in the country of safety to which her family first fled, Pakistan, educational deficiencies are noted by the author of the narrative – that Khatria only had access to interrupted schooling, so that the West is arranged in a hierarchical binary (Derrida cited in Youdell, 2005) with the Arab world, which is deemed to be inferior in its treatment of women in comparison with the more progressive, wise and knowing West. This privileging educational discourse relies upon a citational chain that invokes images of an oppressive Islam in its treatment of women. Both Pakistan and the ‘extremist’ religious group, the Taliban, are invoked and tied up in this configuration, where Arab society generally is represented in the citation as ‘backward’, ‘strictly’ religious, ignorant and ‘evil’. As Butler (2004) suggests, in contemporary society, there is a tendency to situate Arab persons as outside of what it means to be human, hence the suggestion in the narration that Khatria has enjoyed a lucky escape to the land of opportunity – Australia.

In the narrative presented, a ‘charity discourse’ (Choules, 2006) is also invoked (as outlined in Chapter Six), where it is implied that Khatria has been the lucky recipient of Australia’s, and more particularly, Gundah’s, humanitarian largesse. To this extent, Khatria’s own efforts in achieving academic success are discounted, and institutional structures and arrangements are given credit for promoting the refugee student’s newfound good fortune. In the speech, Khatria is made intelligible and recognised (Butler, 1997) as one of ‘us’ (embraced by the West), however such recognition inevitably depends upon Khatria renouncing her association with the ‘evil’ Arabs of her past, to align herself with her Western saviours,
who determine the racialised terms of her recognition. On this basis, Khatria must acknowledge the role of her rescuers in her success, and pay (if only silent) homage to their argument that her homeland is the place of Arab persons who would de-value her. In de Certeau’s (1984) terms, such a speech act is a “culturally creative act” (p. 123), where Gundah is constituted by language as a place of ‘real schooling’ and, by corollary, Khatria is discursively made real to her Western benefactors by her successful adoption of their terms of conduct and ability (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000). Limited terms of belonging are thus on offer to the Arab student, who seemingly must continue to display the attributes of the ‘good’ student and ‘ideal’ learner in order to continue to enjoy social recognition. 

Of recognition, Davies (2006), drawing upon the work of Butler on subjection, suggests that subjecthood relies upon recognition (of and by the subject) in ways that are intelligible, and that failure in this regard can lead to a loss of context. She writes: “Students work very hard to embody themselves as appropriate and appropriated subjects, and losing their footing – being seen to be incompetent or inappropriate – can be very painful” (p. 433). Thus, students work hard at attaining “mastery” as subjects (Butler, cited in Davies, 2006) in order to be intelligible in schooling contexts.

Research suggests that these performative acts of recognition, where belonging is bestowed upon ‘ethnic’ students in Western educational contexts as a reward for ‘model’ behaviour, are not uncommon. de Finney (2010), for example, has written about diverse ethnic minority and Indigenous girls in Canada and their experiences of living as minorities to Whiteness. Despite multicultural discourses that purport to challenge inequalities in schooling, there:
is the expectation that girls will be ‘model Indians and minorities’; stereotypical archetypes of the colonial imaginary. Unlike explicit acts of racial discrimination and violence, which might be condemned in liberal contexts, these reductive archetypes appear to celebrate difference and are therefore deemed acceptable – even desirable – perpetuating the myth of Canada as a safe multicultural harbour. (p. 477)

Poynting (2009) has also written of young Muslim women in Australia and how they engage in the “strategic adoption of dominant cultural forms” (p. 375) at the expense of their own origins. Poynting suggests Muslim girls will do this in order to, in the words of Hage (1998), accumulate Whiteness – the currency of belonging. To this extent, they can be “made to feel” (p. 375) like they are caught between cultures, as the dominant culture sets benchmarks for appropriate ways of being that are unattainable for the Muslim girls due to their lack of ‘natural’ Whiteness, and as they are forced to consider how to hold on to their origins, religion and culture in the face of cultural practices that encourage them to adopt the cultural norms of dominant Whiteness. As Poynting (2009) writes:

A whole generation of Muslim young women in Australia is being hectored to integrate to the supposed Australian values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality, to prove to ‘Anglo’ Australians that they themselves have just such integrity. (p. 385)

Keddie (2011), too, has written about Muslim girls in British schooling contexts, where “Western versions of autonomy and success continue to be privileged in schools and continue to characterise the ways in which Muslim girls are constructed and supported or ‘empowered’ (Haw, 1998)” (p. 177). Keddie’s finding mirrors the conclusions drawn in this episode, where a Western narrative of success is imposed upon Khatria at the same time as it racialises her in the image of the West, and shuts down possibilities for her identification with her Arab self.
In considering the extent to which the practices I have discussed deny other possibilities for being for Muslim students in Australia, I also acknowledge a complexity of discourses likely to be at play in shaping Khatria’s schooling experiences that are not taken up in this episode. I acknowledge, for example, alternative circulating discourses that might, for example, open up spaces of possibility for Khatria. I also acknowledge Khatria’s potential to act with agency in actively constructing her identity against the discourses that are cited above. As I have already suggested, my analysis in this episode is limited by my lack of direct access to Khatria and her thoughts on the events that I have related. In saying this, however, it remains important that educators be increasingly aware of discursive positionings around gender, religion, ethnicity and place in schools, and that in their work with Muslim young people, as well as in their work with students from the dominant ethnic majority, that teaching professionals continue to work to disrupt the privileges of Whiteness in ways that move schooling closer to producing education that is socially just.

7.7.2 Intersections of race and class

‘Presentation day’ highlights the discourses of dominant Whiteness within and against which a ‘Muslim’ ‘refugee’ student in rural Australia is encouraged to define her identity. Against a backdrop of Western ethnocentrism, belonging is predicated on success as it is defined by the refugee’s new country of residence and, more particularly, her new schooling situation. Against this discursive repertoire, in a second tier of analysis, I want to suggest that interrelating discourses of class and ethnic hierarchy also align to privilege some students over others in the rural. It is
my argument that in discourses of inclusion that give hierarchical status to some ethnic subjectivities over others, as well as in discourses of class that frame students’ concept of schooling ability, academic privileges flow to White students at Gundah High School, while leaving Indigenous students trailing behind. While no empirical data is offered to support this analysis (it was not my original intention to study Indigeneity in the rural so I am therefore left with no recourse to an episode of empirical data to support the analysis offered), a cumulative analysis based on my time in the field at Gundah High School is offered of the relationship between minority ethnicity and Indigeneity in the rural school under review. This analysis is necessarily limited by a lack of empirical data, but is offered nonetheless as a critical reflection of my understanding of the workings of minority ethnicity in the rural and its connection to Indigeneity and schooling.

Students from Afghanistan at Gundah High School are ethnically differentiated from their Indigenous peers at the school. This occurs in a number of ways – in matters of policy, where resources are allocated uniquely to Aboriginal students, and differently again to Language Backgrounds Other Than English students; but also in a embodied sense, where Afghan students are considered to possess more of the biological markers of Whiteness that align them with the dominant ethnic majority (and differentiate them from the large number of Indigenous students at Gundah High). In keeping with Colic-Peisker’s (2005) research, where a refugee participant from Bosnia in Australia was told “At least you’re the right colour” (p. 620), refugee students from Afghanistan at Gundah High are compared favourably to other ‘ethnic’ students at the school. In an example of this, Khatria and Hanif’s Year Advisor at Gundah High
suggested to me that because of the ‘Whiteness’ of the Afghan students’ skin “you wouldn’t even know” they were from another place. It is my argument that such positioning gives the Afghan students hierarchical privilege at Gundah High, where status is accorded with Whiteness. This means that in practices of ethnic stratification, hierarchies exist between non-White raced bodies at the school in what Song (2004) refers to as a “white-to-black status continuum” (p. 862). In this configuration, the Afghan refugees are more intelligible to their hosts under normative frameworks of Whiteness than the Indigenous students at the school, who carry a citational legacy of academic failure with them into schooling contexts (Gray & Beresford, 2008). While this is not to say that refugee students are the culturally ‘unmarked’ peers of the White students (as discussed, they are discursively positioned as ethnically distinct from their White host population and experience schooling exclusions as a result), it is to acknowledge their access, above and beyond that afforded to Indigenous students at the school, to a White cultural position in relation to a number of schooling entitlements. One of these entitlements is academic success, which, as has been illustrated in the episode above, is made available to refugee students on limited terms.

At Gundah High School, refugee students are represented as being concerned with schooling success, a position that is attributed to parental expectations, and an understanding that their new country of residence provides opportunities for educational success that should be advantageously taken up (Basit, 2009; Bhatti, 2006; Modood, 2004). Khatria and Hanif’s families, for example, have high expectations of their children in terms of academic ability, and the students are expected to fulfil
these expectations. Such hopes are in keeping with the refugee families’ newly middle class status in Australia. Modood (2004) suggests that minority parents’ high educational ambitions for their children, as well as the enforcement of appropriate behaviours in their children, can become the condition of academic success necessary to give children educational mobility, despite ethnic and class disadvantage. Thus, in these circumstances, it is social capital and ethnicity determining the conditions for schooling success. Neither ethnicity nor class alone tell the full story of the students’ likelihood of schooling mobility. Rather, this position, coupled with their access to a limited form of hierarchical ‘Whiteness’, gives the refugee students access to what Twine (1996) refers to as a ‘white cultural identity’. This ‘status’ positions them differently at Gundah High School to their Indigenous peers, who come to schooling from a position of historical disadvantage, where schooling expectations of Indigenous students have been low, and practices of racialisation in relation to these students have a long history of producing schooling disadvantage (Rahman, 2010); a position that has been referred to as having an “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006 cited in Gillborn & Youdell, 2009). Thus, despite their relative disadvantage as ‘refugees’, refugee students are discursively afforded access to the high expectations that are a necessary determinant of schooling success. Indeed, Pini, Price & McDonald’s (2010) research suggests:

how highly prized middle-class students and parents are in the rural school ... through their class status, middle-class citizens are seen to embody virtue and morality so their participation as students at the school ... affords the school a ‘good’ reputation. (p. 23)
Hence, “social stereotyping” (Modood, 2004, p. 93) – being framed as ‘good’ students – gives the refugee students status beyond that given to the Other of the Other at Gundah High – the Indigenous students. The result, in terms of educational outcomes, is that a polarity is created between ‘White’, ‘Other Than White But Not Black’ (Arab), and ‘Black’ (Indigenous) bodies at Gundah High School. For the students at Gundah High School, the geographic circumstances of rurality, and the particular positioning of refugee and Indigenous students in the rural, contrasted against a homogenous White centre, engenders experiences of academic success for a White and ‘Other Than White But Not Black’ core group of students, while discourses of class and rurality are inscribed on Indigenous bodies to circumscribe their educational futures.

7.8 Conclusion: Hierarchies of belonging in the rural

There is a suggestion in this research that belonging in the rural is predicated on bodily morphologies that arrange in discourses of racial hierarchy. I have already discussed how dominant Whiteness means that Other bodies and cultures sit outside normative frameworks of rurality and are then subject to exclusionary practices (which may or may not succeed). I also want to suggest that hierarchies exist between non-White raced bodies and cultures in practices of ethnic stratification. A hierarchy exists not only between Black and White bodies and cultures, then, but between Black bodies and cultures and those that are Other Than White But Not Black. In

Please note that in keeping with the broad focus of this research, this discussion relates primarily to minority ethnicity in the rural. Having said this, my use of the term ‘Black’ here applies to Indigenous students as much as it does to Sudanese students in the rural. The term “Black” is used here to refer to the exclusion of both the Sudanese and Indigenous students in this study. Indigenous Australians have historically been constituted as ‘black’
Chapter Six, Black bodies and cultures were shown to be ‘impossible’ within prevailing discourses of rurality and nation. Conversely, in Chapters Five and Seven, I have shown how students with Arab (Other Than White But Not Black) bodies and cultures are able to redeploy these exclusionary discourses to find spaces of belonging. While this inclusion is provisional and not guaranteed, some Other Than White But Not Black students appear to have opportunities for belonging and educational success that are denied to the Black students in this study. In practices that appear to suggest that race and ethnic identities are understood as authentic, the bodies and cultures of the Arab students are constituted within a hierarchical relationship with White bodies as ‘lesser than’. However, because these students are not Black, they appear to be afforded a higher degree of recognition and status than Black students. This practice would appear to suggest a hierarchy of Black > Other Than White But Not Black > White. In this framing, White bodies and cultures are ‘in place’ in the countryside, at the pinnacle of discourses of belonging, while Black bodies and cultures, the oppositional binary of Whiteness, are ‘out of place’ in the rural. Arab bodies and cultures, which are constituted as a lesser form of Blackness in a hierarchical understanding of race, are also out of place in the rural, but to a lesser degree than Black bodies and cultures.

While this argument is presented in light of the knowledge that Black-White binaries are commonly criticised in academic theorising, as well as against claims that in contemporary times, particular groups, such as Muslim and Arab persons, for example, suffer the most extreme forms of
exclusion (Modood, 2005), I want to put forward the tentative suggestion that in the context of rural space, against a dominant and pervasive rural narrative of Whiteness, a history of White homogeneity, and a history of colonisation and displacement of Indigenous persons, ethnic hierarchies are made possible by the longstanding association of Whiteness with power, prestige and belonging. This is not to suggest that this is the only hierarchy at play in the rural, or that other distinctive hierarchies do not also assemble along various other dimensions of experience and biography to complicate this argument, but it is to draw attention to the visibility of Blackness in the rural against a discursive formation that makes Blackness ‘impossible’. As I have acknowledged, this viewpoint is complicated by other discourses framing belonging (such as class, gender and representation, for example) that interweave with other forms of stratification. I have shown how the positioning of Arab bodies and cultures as impossible in times of terror, for example, will delimit possibilities for belonging for these students under this circumstance, and being born in an Australian rural place, for instance, has been shown to increase an ethnic minority student’s cultural capital and possibilities for inclusion. I do want to suggest, however, a racial paradigm of entitlement to national belonging and rural belonging grounded in phenotypic discourses of racial hierarchy. While I want to be careful not to suggest a false essentialism in the notion that Black persons suffer the most extreme forms of racism in the rural, and argue against a commonality of experience of ethnic minorities as outsiders to Whiteness, I am suggesting that Blackness in the Australian rural context appears particularly fraught (both as it effects Indigenous persons and refugees, as well as other Black ethnic minorities). This is to acknowledge the way within broader discursive
narrations, some identities are made possible or even likely, while others are rendered impossible.

In this chapter I have discussed the subjectivities that make possible and impossible belonging in the rural, particularly as this pertains to Muslim identity and the expression of Islamic religious practices in rural schools. In the following chapter – the conclusion to this study – I consider the implications of the analyses I have offered for educational practice. My analysis considers how pedagogies might be reconfigured to engender a more socially just education for all students.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion

In this study I have presented a more complex understanding of rurality than prevailing discourses of homogeneity make possible. I suggest that the rural is a heterogenous space where a multiplicity of spaces of possibility operate simultaneously to allow for multiple and divergent experiences of belonging. By this I mean that rural space is not a single social space, but is a multi-layered social space. Against a backdrop of exclusionary discourses and practices in the rural, some students speak of belonging as their dominant experience of schooling. Other students speak of the rural as a wholly exclusionary domain. In a poststructural countryside, both of these understandings are possible. The rural is, at once, both a place of inclusions and exclusions; a place where racism is ever present and where moments of opening up to the other are also possible. It is a rural of heterogeneity and possibilities for multicultural belonging. This narration of the rural sits in opposition to historical representations of the rural as racist and wholly exclusionary. I suggest, instead, a more inclusive countryside where, against a backdrop of discursive racism and exclusion, rural spaces exist as places inherent with possibilities for knowing in intimate and everyday ways and provide unique opportunities for close contact with, and recognition of, the ‘ethnic’ stranger. The rural is presented, thus, as a space that is discursively complex and nuanced, with possibilities for both unbelonging and multicultural acceptance. One of the tasks of educators contemplating a new politics of rural education is to consider how space can be reconfigured to better accommodate Other
bodies. In order for new ways of belonging in space to emerge, new spatial practices need to be imagined. What these practices look like, and what they mean for educators and practices of schooling is considered below.

8.1 A pedagogy of belonging

In this chapter I argue the need for a *pedagogy of belonging*. By this, I mean a pedagogical endeavour that critically engages with hegemonic discourses of identity and space to trouble schooling exclusions in the rural. Such a practice needs to take the form of a counter-narrative to unbelonging and exclusion, and lead to the re-imagining and transformation of education practices. Such an approach has relevance not just for rural education, but for education in all local spaces.

Engaging with students’ situated knowledges would appear to be a first step in constructing a counter-narrative of belonging. I want to argue strongly for the *power of knowing* in forging intercultural understanding in schooling contexts. Indeed, as this study has shown, it is in the possibilities afforded in the rural for close association and *knowing*, that opportunities for intercultural relationships and belonging are engendered. It is these processes that I take up here as a realm of possibility for pedagogical change. As this study has shown, in local spaces of knowing, possibilities exist for responses to racism that draw upon students’ existing ways of making sense of difference. As I have already suggested in this study, students appear to draw distinctions between ethnic minority students they know and those they do not know. They differentiate between that which has been ‘realised’ in their surroundings (Others they know), and that which is abstract (Others they do not know and have not yet directly experienced).
Making connections between students’ experience of the world and broader social relations in order to articulate discourses of belonging is a critical framework of engagement with students’ ideas of ethnic difference. In this sense, I argue that changes in student thinking will not come about by force of intellectual reasoning alone. Instead, pedagogical practices are needed that actively engage with students’ existing local, lived realities in ways that open up these knowledges to new discursive regimes. In rural educational contexts, this entails a discursive response to what has been argued is a discursive (mis)representation of rurality and ethnicity. Whiteness, it has been shown, is the perspective from which all else is understood. New pedagogies and curricula of belonging are needed that address the ways in which normative constructions, such as Whiteness, rurality, and ethnicity, are produced in discursive relations. A reflexive ‘pedagogy of belonging’ would attempt to challenge the orthodoxy of these constructions in everyday moments of schooling, in ways that engage more actively with classroom spaces and curricula. What this study has shown to be absent in our classrooms is dialogue that deeply troubles and disrupts pedagogies of unbelonging. Curricula and pedagogy that critically engages with prevailing discourses and subjugated knowledges have the potential to interrupt the hegemony and invisibility of these practices. Critical teaching that challenges and unsettles practices of subjectivation and the discourses that make these possible, of the sort I have demonstrated throughout this study, are part of a pedagogical routine that can make explicit, as well as disrupt, schooling exclusions. Such work has implications both for the practice of teacher education and for the practice of teaching in schools.
8.2 Implications for teaching

As this research has shown, within prevailing pedagogies there is a lack of understanding by teachers of the exclusionary effects of treating all students as if they are the same. Such understandings perpetuate the belief that equality is created through a regime of equal treatment. While it would seem that many teachers are comfortable accommodating differences like physical or intellectual disabilities, for instance (and would not dream of treating all students the same in such circumstances), this thinking does not extend to subjectivities like ethnicity, for example, where there is a false belief that ‘special’ measures are a privilege resulting in the unfair treatment of majority students. Yet pedagogies are required that respond to who students are, and a learning culture is needed that responds to the diversity of this individualism. A pedagogy that privileges a false homogeneity needs to be replaced with a pedagogy responsive to heterogeneity in order to undo a schooling situation that privileges those students who come to school already equipped with identities that ‘fit’ within existing normative structures of education. Within this framework, students should be regarded as individuated learners, rather than as ‘refugees’, ‘Muslims’ or ‘ethnics’, for example; naming practices that are constitutive of essential subjecthood and that discursively trap students in identities of exclusion and marginalisation. A recognition of the way this discursive response ensnares students in discourses of high visibility but low educational attainment is required to enact a more socially just education. Critical recognition is needed of the unequal access children have to the dominant culture, and engagement is needed with pedagogies that question and challenge the very prevalence of this culture. A pedagogy is required that resists such
monolithic and ethnically undifferentiated understandings of students. These understandings would appear to have particular importance for how teacher educators work with pre-service teachers to build their professional capacities.

As part of this process, and drawing on the work of Santoro (2009), I suggest that educators need to come to understand and recognise their own ethnicity so as to undo the ways in which Whiteness is privileged and ethnic minority students are framed as being outside of normative frameworks of intelligibility. Santoro (2009) argues for recognition of the ‘ethnic self’ and the ‘ethnic other’ by educators and pre-service teachers, in particular; that teachers need to understand their own ethnic identities (knowledge of self), and “know themselves as ethnic and encultured” (p. 41) in order to affect the ways that learning cultures are made available to all students. This would seem to be an integral condition for a new pedagogy of belonging. Such a position involves teachers understanding their own discursive construction, as well as the discourses that shape and constrain student-subjects, in acts of understanding that ultimately shape possibilities for agency and transformation in education. To this end, teachers need to be actively mindful of the way their discursive regimes and practices enhance and constrain student subjectivities, and purposively reflect on these processes in practices of professional development.

Teacher education should also provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to consider how spatial relations impact social relations in schools. Such an endeavour should consider the discursive repertoire in play in local schooling spaces and its impact on schooling inclusions and exclusions. A pedagogy that engages with local spaces of ‘knowing’ and quotidian
diversity to consider counter-narratives of belonging might be taken up as a tool to encourage thinking around discourses of unbelonging and their points of resistance. Teacher education that encourages pre-service teachers to understand their identities in spatial terms is also required. Pre-service teachers need to understand not only their own ethnic identities and those of their students, but how these identities are produced in relations of space and place to affect the making of student subjectivities. Pre-service teachers might then be asked to consider how pedagogical routines can be put in place to trouble normative relations to produce socially just and inclusive schooling spaces.

8.3 Implications for future research

The challenge for future research is to understand how to best prepare teachers to work effectively with discursive pedagogies that challenge existing inequalities in schools. There is a need to develop specific strategies for teachers to use in classrooms, as well as a need to understand the points of frailty and resistance of such strategies.

Situated analyses of classroom practice, where teachers take up understandings of power and knowledge of the kind offered in this study to explore ways to trouble educational inclusions and exclusions in everyday practices of schooling, would appear to be a way forward in developing detailed understandings of the effectiveness of discursive pedagogies in schooling. Such an approach has import for thinking through implications for teacher knowledge, student knowledge, curricula and pedagogy, as well as future spaces of research in identity politics. In working with teachers to pursue a counter-narrative of education, important accounts of what a
pedagogy of discourse might look in practice can emerge. The tactics and
day-to-day practices that might best be taken up to unsettle schooling
inequalities can be considered, as well as their success in interrupting
normative regimes of understanding.

As I conclude this work, I hope to have provided a challenging
analysis that encourages teaching professionals to creatively transform
education in sustained and sustainable ways that reconfigure schooling
environments in more socially just ways. In what I suggest is ultimately a
‘hopeful’ account of everyday schooling in the rural, I urge education
professionals to engage in stirring conversations with students on subjects
that are currently silenced, and to engage with the ways we create meaning
in local spaces. This entails attention to both explicit and latent forms of
pedagogy to interrupt prevailing discourses of exclusion. It is ultimately
about creating a different kind of schooling and new possibilities in (rural)
education. It is about good teaching.
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Appendices
Appendix One

Full transcript of interview with Hanif

Provided below is a full transcript of an interview conducted with Hanif at Gundah High School in December 2006. As discussed in Chapter Four, interviews are provided in full for purposes of comparison, so as to make the process of transcription transparent, as well as to indicate the extent to which extracts (re)present the students original comments. Please note that the edited extracts of this interview included on pages 215 and 228 of this study are highlighted below in bold.

KE: So I might start by asking you questions about Gundah and what it’s like to live in this rural place. I might get a bit of background from you. So you came in April to this school? Is that right?

Hanif: Yeh, 4th of April, I started.

KE: I was actually here at the school on your first day, ‘though I didn’t meet you at all. Just by coincidence I was here at the school on your first day. And you came from Victoria?

Hanif: Yeh, Melbourne.

KE: And so, when did you arrive in Australia? How long have you been here?

Hanif: 13 years.

KE: And so you’ve spent most of your life ...

Hanif: Yeh, we came in July ’93, and we went to Melbourne. That’s where we first started. And then because of my Dad’s business, it’s not in Melbourne it was in Gundah, he said let’s all move up there.
KE: So why did you go to Melbourne if your Dad’s business was in Gundah?

Hanif: Ah no, he started the business in 2000, and there was a shop here in Gundah so we moved here.

KE: So he had a couple of sites. Is that right?

Hanif: Yeh, we were going to move at the end of the year, but it was going to take too long so we just moved straight away.

KE: So did you have family or something in Melbourne?

Hanif: Just relatives.

KE: That’s why you went there? And so you were living in the city of Melbourne?

Hanif: No, you know where Geelong [regional city] is? Like, one hour away.

KE: But Geelong’s not really rural. It’s more, just a ... It’s not rural like Gundah is.

Hanif: No, it’s not like Gundah. It’s got other places around it.

KE: So you came to Australia in ’93. So how did you ...

Hanif: We got sponsored by Aunty.

KE: And were you humanitarian refugees? How did you get out of Afghanistan? How did that work for you and your family?

Hanif: Firstly, I wasn’t born there. My parents moved from there to Pakistan because there was a war happening. And I was born there. In 1990. And then in ’92 my little brother was born, and then we came here in ’93. Then, we lived in Melbourne, my Dad started working, so we started going to school. Dad thought if we come here it’s a better education. ‘Cause over there the war was
happening and no one could study and all that. So that’s why we came here. My Aunty sponsored us, and then my Uncle sponsored family friends, so we both came together, at the same time.

KE: And do you have other family in Gundah?

Hanif: No.

KE: So there’s just your Mum and Dad and you and your brother?

Hanif: My two little brothers and my baby sister. She’s one and a half.

KE: And your brother, is he at this school?

Hanif: No, [Hanif identifies the schools his brothers attend].

KE: So can you describe Gundah for me in your own words? How would you describe it to someone back in Victoria or Pakistan?

Hanif: It’s a nice place. Friendly people. Most of them are friendly. And you can make lots of friends here. And if something happens you’ve got someone to help you out. Like, at the school you’ve got teachers to help you, you’ve got some students, some don’t care, but doesn’t really matter. It’s a nice place. It’s not like Melbourne, but for a country [word unclear] it’s alright.

KE: How is it not like Melbourne?

Hanif: In Melbourne, where I grew up, there were just, like, Muslims, and I only ever had Muslim friends.

KE: So in Geelong there’s a big Muslim community?

Hanif: Yeh, like Afghan. And there was, like, Lebanese. It’s all mixed up, so. And we knew most of them. ‘Cause we have this big party after Ramadan, eat and go to the houses and … We knew most of them. And in here there’s, like, five, six, seven, eight families.
KE: And what about physically, in terms of the landscape? How would you describe it to somebody?


KE: So what do you do in town? What do you do to amuse yourself?

Hanif: Nothing. Just go work at the shop with my parents. Or I sit home, or I play soccer. That’s about it.

KE: Can you just think for a moment back to when you first arrived at this school. What were your first impressions of the school?

Hanif: I knew this guy from the mosque, so he introduced me to his friends, which became my friends ...

KE: And who are his friends?

Hanif: Paul, and most of the Aboriginals, and some white people as well.

KE: What did Paul tell you about it?

Hanif: He said it’s got good teachers, and you can make lots of friends, sporting, that they like NFL and gridiron, and he goes most of the Aboriginals are fighters and stealers and all this. But I already knew that, so. That’s about it.

KE: And so how do you feel about living here now in Gundah?

Hanif: It’s alright, but if I had a chance to go back to Melbourne I would. Because all my friends are there. And I grew up there, so. But I’m here for now, so, I can’t change it. It’s just for my Dad’s business that we’re here. We’re gunna be here for 4 years [the lease for the shop] after this. Maybe after I graduate Year 12 maybe I’ll leave or maybe I’ll stay.
KE: And do your parents want to stay?
Hanif: My mum would want to go back, but my dad would stay. Plus we’ve got a house in Melbourne.
KE: Why would your dad want to stay?
Hanif: ‘Cause of the business, plus these days it’s money, ‘cause without money you can’t do anything, so he wants to do his side of the family so we get a better education. In our culture, once you’re old enough you take care of the family, leave your parents to relax at home, so I was thinking when I graduate Year 12 send them back to Melbourne and I’ll just stay in Gundah. If not that I might go and open a business in [a nearby country town]. Like a big family, spread out. Even my little brothers, it’d be like a ...
KE: So how does that fit with Mechanical Engineering? How does that fit with the clothing business?
Hanif: If it doesn’t work out with the mechanical engineering then just take over the family business. ‘Cause I like cars, ‘cause my dad used to be a mechanic when he first came here. So I got addicted to that. But now he’s got this business I’ve got addicted to this. I’ve got two options once I finish school. Like, next year I’m doing a traineeship for mechanics, and once I finish Year 12 I can go and do my 2nd year apprenticeship, or if not that, I can go and do my first business.
KE: Do you want to go to university?
Hanif: I want to, but it’s like school, you have to study more and I don’t like that.
KE: So what’s it like to be from an Afghan background at Gundah High School?

Hanif: *It’s just like a normal person. Doesn’t really matter. There’s not much difference.*

KE: Is there any difference?

Hanif: Yeh, there’s not much of us. ‘Cause in Melbourne there’s more of us than other people, so if something happens you’ve just got cousins or something.

KE: So how does that work here in terms of groups?

Hanif: Most of the Aboriginals here don’t like the white people, not at the school but outside the school. But inside the school they’re, like, friends. They muck around with each other, just like normal people. So they don’t care who you are. But some of them can overreact sometimes.

KE: What’s the overreaction about?

Hanif: Like, they might say ‘you stupid white this’ and all that.

KE: So have any issues come up for you around your ethnicity? Around your background?

Hanif: Nuh.

KE: None at all?

Hanif: Nuh. *It’s like I’ve been here always.*

KE: What about for the other Afghan kids?

Hanif: They don’t say there’s issues. They just need more time to read because they’ve been here less time than us and some words may be confusing.

KE: What about issues around cultural understanding of your religion?
Hanif: No.

KE: What about during Ramadan? How did that work for you at this school? Was there an understanding of what your needs were?

Hanif: If you’ve grown up doing that [fasting], then it’s going to be easy for you. But for me I did it the whole month, thank God. But it was easy for me because I’ve been at a Muslim school in Melbourne since Grade 3 and we practised it then, so I got used to it. And when I came here it was just, like, normal. But I just see people eating ... They’re just like normal people. They’ve never seen people like us, so maybe they might think he’s just on a diet or something. But some people do know its Ramadan and they just like muck around with you and go here have a drink or something. But it was easy for me.

KE: And at dancing in PE?

Hanif: Yeh, you’re not allowed to, like, touch girls.

KE: And so your teachers didn’t have an understanding ...

Hanif: At first my teachers didn’t believe me ... She goes “No, you’re dancing.” ‘Cause I muck around with the teachers sometimes. So then she asked Khatria and then Khatria said yes, but then [Khartria] goes that she’s not fasting, and then [the teacher] thinks I wasn’t fasting. So then she said “Dance!” And I said “no, I’m fasting”. And then she said “Okay, you can stay back then” [for detention]. But my other teacher he knows about it ‘cause he’s heard it at [another local school] and so he heard about it and he said “Oh no, you have to do it”. So some teachers know and some teachers don’t know.
Hanif: We were talking in Commerce yesterday about maybe we should have our own facility when it’s Ramadan, like just away from the eating areas, and all this ... So we were talking yesterday maybe we should get our facility ... I might bring it up or something. And we might need a praying room ... ‘Cause me and [my Muslim friend] we were talking about this when we first came here ... maybe we should bring it up, but we got quiet, I don’t know why ... But if you don’t have more of you, nothing happens ... But maybe we were too scared or something. Or maybe they can give us time on Fridays to go to the mosque, because Fridays is a special day for us. Like, church is like Sunday for you, and for Muslims you have to go Friday prayer, and you just pray.

KE: So what interest do students and maybe teachers take in your background?

Hanif: Yeh, most of them do. Teachers and students. It’s like the students they know I’m a Muslim and they just make jokes about it so it doesn’t really matter. They take it really seriously as well sometimes. Like James in Commerce class, like, someone bagged [my friend] because he’s Afghan and he’s Muslim and [James] stuck up for him.

KE: So what did the person say?

Hanif: Oh, you stupid bloody Afghan Muslim, or something like that. No it was during recess, I think. And [James] beat up the person that did it to [my friend]. So some people really understand the culture and they know who you are. Like, he’s a good friend now. And he makes jokes about us [laughs] but it doesn’t matter ‘cause he’s a
nice person. And during Ramadan, when I was fasting, he goes ‘I’m fasting’, so he was trying to be supportive of us. He’s a good person. And some of the teachers, they support us as well.

KE: Is there any tension for you between trying to be this good Muslim with religious values, I think strong religious values, and amongst your Aussie peers there aren’t necessarily any religious values. You could argue that there are a complete lack of values amongst the ‘normal’ Aussie teenager on display sometimes in some ways ...

Hanif: Yeh, there is ...

KE: And so how do you balance that? I mean I heard you having this conversation before PE one day when you were all planning for the formal and doing that little survey thing, and you were doing the whole ‘best arse’ thing, you know?

Hanif: Yeh.

KE: And you were cracking on to that girl you like who sits next to you in PE, chatting her up.

Hanif: Rachel. [laughs]

KE: And you were going ‘Oh, you should get best arse’

Hanif: Oh, I muck around.

KE: Well, I wondered whether you feel any tension between these values of Australian society that are very much evident in the school culture at times that your peers would want you to be part of to fit in, and the values of your religion?

Hanif: It’s pretty much easy.

KE: How?
Hanif: It is for me. They know who I am, like Muslim, Afghan. And I know who they are. So it doesn’t really matter. We can just like get along straight away ... You’re just people. You’re not some perfect guy who doesn’t make mistakes. No one’s perfect. So it’s just like that.
Appendix Two

Interview schedule for ethnic minority students

Ethnicity

1. What is it like to be <ethnicity> at <school>?
2. What issues have come up for you around your <ethnicity> background?
3. What interest do other students and teachers take in your background?
4. Can you tell me about any times when the other kids at your school have been interested in hearing about your <ethnicity> background?
5. How do students respond to other students who come from a cultural or linguistic background different from their own?
6. What makes you happy/unhappy at school?
7. How would things need to change for school to be a better place for you? What would need to happen?

Rurality

1. Talk to me about/describe <place> for me.
2. How long have you lived in <place>? Can you reflect on when you first arrived in <place>/school>? How did you feel?
3. How do you feel about living in <place>?
4. Why have your parents chosen to live in <place>? How did you come to live in <place>?
5. Are there many people from other places/cultures in <name of town>? Do they fit in? Why? Why not?
6. How is the bush different to the city?
7. Do you see yourself leaving <place> when you get older, or will you stay in <place>? Why?
Appendix Three
Interview schedule for ethnic majority students

Rurality

1. Talk to me about/describe <place> for me.
2. How long have you lived here? Have you ever lived anywhere else? How is <place> different to here? How is it the same?
3. Have you ever been to the city? What do you know about <for example, Sydney>? Tell me what you think cities are like? How is <for example, Sydney> different to here?
4. What kind of people live in the city?
5. What kind of people live in the bush?
6. What kind of things do you do here that you wouldn’t do in a city? (or in a smaller town)?
7. Do you see yourself leaving <place> when you get older, or will you stay in <place>? Why?

Ethnicity

1. What do you imagine it is like to be <ethnicity> at <school>?
2. How do you feel about kids who are different?
3. How do students from English speaking backgrounds respond to students from language backgrounds other than English?
4. What does it mean to be part of the majority cultural group at this school? In this community? Who belongs to the majority cultural group?
5. Are there many people from other places/cultures in <name of town>? Do they fit in? Why? Why not?
6. What do you think it would be like to be <ethnicity> in a place like <name of town>?
7. Do you think you’d feel differently about <ethnicity> if you lived in the city?
8. How do students respond to other students who come from a cultural or linguistic background different from their own?

Racism

8. What does the word ‘racism’ mean? What does racism looks like?
9. How do you feel about racism?
10. Does racism occur at this school?
11. Can you tell me about a time when you might have witnessed racism?
Appendix Four
Interview schedule for school staff

Multicultural education in practice

1. I’m interested in the topic of ethnicity and schooling. What can you tell me about the interplay of ethnicity and schooling at this school? Are you able to give me any examples?
2. Can you give me a ‘historical window’ into what has happened at this school in relation to ethnic minority students?
3. What is the school’s response to cultural and linguistic diversity?
4. What should schools do to respond to cultural and linguistic diversity?
5. What role can schools play in responding to diversity?
6. How does this school respond to diversity in its student population?

Teaching

1. What values are particularly important at <name of school>?
2. How does the school go about embedding values in its teaching and learning activities, either formally or informally?
3. Do you see part of your role as being about teaching values? What values? How do you teach them?
4. Can you tell me how you cater for cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom?
5. How does the fact that you are teaching in a rural location affect the way you teach?
6. How does it affect the way students learn?
7. What does it mean for the school that it is situated in a rural area?

Racism

1. Can you tell me about any racist incidents at the school that you have had to deal with? How did you deal with them?

Rurality

1. Talk to me about/describe <place> for me.
2. How long have you lived here? Have you ever lived anywhere else? How is <place> different to here? How is it the same?
3. How is the bush different to the city?

Ethnicity

1. What do you imagine it is like to be <ethnicity> at <school>?
2. How do students feel about kids who are different?
3. How do students from English speaking backgrounds respond to students from language backgrounds other than English?
4. What does it mean to be part of the majority cultural group at this school? In this community? Who belongs to the majority cultural group?
5. Are there many people from other places/cultures in <name of town>? Do they fit in? Why? Why not?
6. What do you think it would be like to be <ethnicity> in a place like <name of town>?
## Appendix Five

### Data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Interview Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saeed Asha Mihad Hanif Khatria</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview schedule for ethnic minority students (Appendix Two)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email communication</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Interview schedule for ethnic majority students (Appendix Three)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 1, Principal 2, Head Teacher 1, Head Teacher 2, Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview schedule for staff (Appendix Four)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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