

SPACE, PACE AND RACE: ETHICS IN PRACTICE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE RURAL AUSTRALIA

Jodie Kline

School of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia

Sri Soejatminah

School of Education, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

Bernadette Walker-Gibbs

School of Education, Deakin University, Warrnambool, Australia

ABSTRACT

Research in Australia's ethnically diverse rural and regional communities requires an approach that is informed by notions of space, place and culture, and which recognises race as a relational social construct mediated by social and political discourse and context, and prone to change overtime. This review examines how teacher education researchers connect culturally competent research and rural ethics with the view to improving education systems, addressing rural teacher workforce issues, informing the preparation of pre-service teachers, and, most importantly, ensuring that rural students have access to educational opportunities that are engaging and meet their needs. It focuses specifically on researcher positionality on the insider-outsider continuum and how this informs ethical research in diverse rural communities, particularly those in which visible new migrants reside. Peer-reviewed journal articles that discuss how education researchers negotiate working in rural space are examined and considered in relation to discourse about ethics in practice and the insider/outsider continuum. Scholarship reflected in the literature spanned the fields of rural/research ethics, inclusive education, education research methodology and research with new migrants, minority and marginalised groups.

INTRODUCTION

Schools in Australia are more multicultural than ever before, with increasing numbers of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, who are ethnically diverse, and who speak languages other than or additional to English. Many graduate teachers, who tend to be predominantly middle-class and of Anglo heritage (McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon, & Murphy, 2011), are finding that their first teaching jobs occur in these diverse settings, and as such teacher education programs are increasingly concerned with preparing their pre-service teachers to enter and remain in such educational environments (see for example www.setearc.com.au).

Research related to teacher retention recognises: teachers' educational philosophy; their dispositions for hard work and persistence; their targeted teacher preparation that includes both academic and practical knowledge; the practice of reflection; the opportunity to change schools or districts and still remain in their profession, and sustained ongoing support and access to professional networks as factors that help sustain teachers in schools (Cooper & He, 2013). In schools identified by state governments as 'difficult to staff' teachers who stay are more likely to be culturally connected with the lives, heritages, and cultural forms of the children and families in the community in which they are working (Cooper & He, 2013). Building awareness and a sense of commitment to diverse settings in education suggests that prospective teachers need a map or maps to learn about the communities

in which they will take teaching positions. Research in the areas of equity and access and rural ethics can inform these maps.

Rural and regional Australia is traditionally characterised by strong communities with high levels of social capital and more recently increasing ethnic diversity (Major, Wilkinson, Langat, & Santoro, 2013). This idealised image does not acknowledge that many rural communities are facing significant challenges when it comes to achieving sustainability and are struggling under the influences of globalisation, rationalisation of essential services and the privileging of urban contexts in government policy (Cocklin & Dibden, 2005). Education researchers working with these vibrant communities, including teachers, are faced with unique opportunities and challenges in relation to examining education needs and informing the development and maintenance of engaging learning environments. These experiences are shaped by local history, politics, economy, demography and geography (Reid, Green, Cooper, Hastings, & White, 2010) and interpreted largely in relation to the researchers own worldviews and lived experience.

These challenges and opportunities of how to prepare teachers for such diversity is heightened in communities where the teacher's work and identity is more visible due to the size of the population. Gay (2002) argued that teacher education is the place to develop culturally responsive teachers through preparing pre-service teachers with necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to do this, highlighting: development of a cultural diversity knowledge base; design of culturally relevant curricula; demonstration of cultural caring; development of a learning community; cross-cultural communication; and cultural congruity in classroom instruction. Amaro-Jiménez (2012) also contends that many beginning teachers are ill-equipped to work with children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and posits that systematic field-based experiences are needed for pre-service teachers to experience implementing culturally sensitive and relevant practices and to work directly with culturally and linguistically diverse students before they enter the teaching profession.

Given that graduate teachers in Australia are often ill-equipped to teach in ethnically diverse rural settings, and moreover that this lack of preparation underpins high rates of attrition in rural schools, it follows that further research into these dynamics is warranted 'in situ'. However, any such research would need to pay particular heed to questions of ethics and researcher positionality, and hence the impetus for this review.

Australian rural and regional communities have been built on land which is, was and always will be Aboriginal land; the prosperity of Australia is in great part a result of dispossessing Aboriginal people of their lands. Our review focuses on ethical research practice in ethnically diverse rural communities in Australia. Although the focus of this article is on overseas born migrants, it is important to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make a significant contribution to the rich cultural and linguistic diversity found in rural communities and all migrants, including white Australians, exist in relation to Indigenous sovereignty – this is the methodological standpoint from which all research in Australia must start.

We, the authors, undertake this review as a team with differing cultural heritages and lived experiences. This work is part of our professional learning and we approach this task as non-experts. One of the researchers identifies as Indonesian-Australian. She has lived in both Indonesia and Australia and has experience researching in non-dominant cultures in Australia and overseas. The other two researchers could be described as Anglo-Australian, but like many Australians both have 'mixed' heritage and subsequently have familial exposure to a range of linguistic traditions and cultural knowledges. One identifies as Anglo-Italian and the other as Anglo-Australian. Both have worked as educators and researchers with a variety of urban, regional and rural communities. All three authors are non-Indigenous Australians.

We have come to believe that the conventions and approaches to research that we had previously subscribed to (though ostensibly inclusive and respectful) were likely to be inadequate for work in ethnically diverse rural and regional communities. We considered our experiences conducting qualitative and quantitative research in both densely populated, ethnically diverse urban settings and in sparsely populated communities in which the residents were, in the main, of Anglo-Australian cultural heritage, to be incomplete preparation for pursuing an education research program in

ethnically diverse rural and regional settings, particularly those home to new migrants. As such we undertook to examine scholarship in the fields of rural/research ethics, inclusive education, education research methodology and research with migrants and minority groups to uncover ways in which colleagues were able to successfully marry culturally competent research with rural ethics. To this end, literature exploring researcher positionality was investigated in recognition of the complexities of space and place and the positioning of many researchers interested in rural and regional issues as 'in-betweeners' (Webster & John, 2010, p.188) on an insider/outsider continuum.

Based on close examination of existing national and international literature we explore in this article how education researchers working in diverse rural spaces utilise ethical frameworks in their practice. The following questions are examined:

- 1) How do education researchers negotiate working in 'rural space'? How do they position themselves and their work?¹
- 2) Is there evidence enabling identification of effective strengths-based approaches to conducting education research in ethnically diverse rural communities?

These questions were adopted as we were cognisant that much of how the Western world has come to 'understand' diversity is mediated by researchers who frequently project onto the people they are observing their own often Eurocentric fears and biases (Restoule, 2013). We do not wish to perpetuate this trend, nor do we want to avoid work in complex rural spaces and risk further silencing residents who are members of non-majority ethnic groups. To examine these questions we first needed to clarify what we meant by 'ethics in practice'.

Ethical conduct is described in the Australian *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* as *acting out of an abiding respect and concern for one's fellow creatures* (p. 3). The statement sets out the expectations for research practice and should be familiar to all career researchers, higher degree by research students and academics, most of whom will have been required to complete training in this area before collecting data from human participants. Most researchers are trained in the art of securing ethics approvals and are knowledgeable about issues such as consent, confidentiality, accuracy, and protocols for data storage and reporting.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest that the research ethics enshrined in codes of conduct have limited relevance for research practice, and may indeed be understood as a separate dimension of research ethics. Further, scholars including Howley (2009) have critiqued the tendency for rural research to conform to generic research standards as these standards are not underpinned by understandings of rural lives, community and education. This argument could be extended to research with ethnically diverse peoples as it is apparent that inclusive research is sensitive to complex issues of race, culture and ethnicity which are not easily made explicit in these documents.

Researchers involved in all types of research deal with ethics in their daily activities, from the beginning to end of a research cycle. It is generally acknowledged that conducting ethical research is very complex and involves numerous factors that go beyond the control of ethics committees (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001; Small, 2001; Victoria, 2011). 'Ethics in practice' was a phrase initially coined to refer to ethical issues other than critical dilemmas in clinical practices such as negotiating relationships between doctors and patients (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Referred to in some writing as micro ethics, ethics in practice applies beyond clinical or health contexts and includes issues that warrant attention as uncomfortable experiences with potential, associated ethical implications.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 273) state *micro ethics might provide a discursive tool to articulate and to validate the kinds of ethical issues that confront researcher on a day to day basis* but it does not necessarily provide the answers to the problems. Ethics in practice is defined herein as the ethical issues faced by researchers during a research process that are not anticipated in the research proposal (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Orb et al., 2001; Victoria, 2011; Small, 2001). It is important to point out that the writing about this dimension of ethics referred to here *did not* include examination of ethical dilemmas rising

¹ For further exploration see White, S. and Corbett, M. (Eds). 2014.

in the context of research in diverse rural areas. This review is concerned with how ethics in practice are mediated by researcher positionality, and how this plays out in education research conducted in diverse rural communities.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this work, articles that discuss how education researchers negotiate ethical practice in rural space were identified via searches of six online databases: EBSCOHost Electronic Journals Service, ERIC, Education research complete, Expanded academic ASAP, A+ Education, and Academic search complete. The search criteria included: full text; peer reviewed journal articles; written in English; and published from year 2000 to present. This date range was selected for its rough alignment with substantive changes to Australian immigration policy. Several papers prior to 2000 were used to extend discussion and thus contributed to the data set.

Key search terms included: rural ethics, insider/outsider, research in rural communities, research protocols, research with/in minority and 'disadvantaged' communities. The search included fields other than Education, such as Ethics, Medicine/Health, Sociology, and Rural Geography.

The first search gave very broad results of more than 500 publications. A large number of the articles focussed on insider/outsider positioning, research protocols, and research in rural communities. Results were refined by requiring the key terms: 'rural' and 'ethics'. This resulted in a smaller number of articles which were then scanned to assess their relevance to the research questions. The final, filtered collection of articles is categorised as follows:

Table 1: Literature review: Papers retained for analysis

Key words	Number of articles
Ethics	9
Researcher positionality	17
Conceptual works	4
Total	30

Of the papers presented in Table 1, only five focus on educational research. The last row – Conceptual works – contained articles on methodology and theoretical concepts related to the topic. As this review aims to discuss the ethical dimensions of educational research in rural space, the 17 articles on researcher positionality were further grouped as in the following table.

Table 2: Literature review: Papers on researcher positionality retained for analysis by sub-category

Contexts	Articles
Researcher positions and negotiations	
1. Insider/outsider dichotomy - 13	Crow et al., 2001; Duku, 2007; Egharevba, 2001; Innes, 2009; McAreavey & Das, 2013; Moran, 2007; Victoria, 2011, Bozalek, 2011, Staples, 2000; O'Connor, 2004; Ryan, Kofman & Aaron, 2011; Yakusho, Badiee, Mallory & Wang, 2011; Hellowell, 2006.
2. Insider/outsider continuum - 4	Bridges, 2009; Webster, 2010; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Breen, 2007.

Most of the articles included in Table 2 problematize the insider-outsider dichotomy; only the papers that discuss in detail the multi-faceted nature of researcher positionality appear in the final group. This base group of papers and the references cited by these authors provided a substantial base for exploration of the research questions. With reference to this literature, the following section provides an overview of findings in relation to: defining rural contexts (demography and workforce); notions of space, place and ethnicity (education research theory); the insider/outsider continuum (researcher positionality); and ethics in practice (research practice). The discussion builds from this, looking at the relationship between these elements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Rural demography and the rural workforce: The research context

Rural locations are typified by great distance from urban centres and limited access to further education and training (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2007) – rural, as used in this article, does not extend to remote locations as resettlement programs do not target these areas. Rural education research and policy consistently highlights that rural and regional communities experience rates of socio-economic disadvantage that are higher when compared to metropolitan settings. Children in rural and regional Australia are reported as tending to have poorer outcomes on a range of education measures than students living in urban settings (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010; Handal, Watson, Petocz, & Maher, 2013).

In recent decades many inland rural communities have concurrently faced population decline (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2008) and rapid change in their cultural make up, including the cultural makeup of sections of rural and regional Australian society that have traditionally been mono-lingual and Anglo-Australian (Santoro, 2009). The Australian Census of Population and Housing reveals that 28 per cent of Australia’s population are born overseas, a further 20 per cent are second generation Australians with at least one parent born overseas and 53 per cent of the population are third generation Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Of Australia’s over-seas born population 82 per cent lived in capital cities compared with 66 per cent of all people in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Recent arrivals, defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as those who have resided in Australia for less than 12 months, were found to be more highly urbanised than established migrants with only one in ten living outside a major urban area (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Immigration policies introduced in Australia from 1996 have emphasised settling more migrants, in particular new arrivals, in regional areas to address labour shortages. Between 1996 and 2003 about

25,000 visas were granted under various state migration schemes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Regional resettlement targets introduced in 2004 aimed to locate up to 45 per cent of refugees in regional Australia (Major et al., 2013) and in 2010 the Sydney Morning Herald reported that between 1996 and 2009 the number of refugees settling in regional Australia increased from five to 17 per cent (Horin, 2010, July 10). Since the election of the Abbot led coalition government, discussion of immigration has focused on offshore processing (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). It is difficult to ascertain current internal policy as the phrase 'regional resettlement' has been co-opted and now refers to the processing and resettlement of refugees in neighbouring countries.

Coupled with movement of migrants into rural towns and regional centres is broader counter-urbanisation in which people relocate from major cities to rural communities and larger regional centres to secure affordable housing and social connectedness (Race, Luck, & Black, 2010). This counters the myth that demographic change in Australia is a one-way stream of people out of rural communities to larger regional centres and capital cities (Race et al., 2010). For example, Lyons (2009) reported that employment opportunities, community connectedness and lifestyle were among the main motivations for teachers working in rural schools.

While there is evidence of movement into regional and rural communities and numerous cases where rural communities have successfully attracted teachers and health professionals (TERRANova, 2012), in general attracting these professionals is a major challenge. In relation to the education sector, Australia's rural schools are regularly staffed with graduate teachers and tend to experience high teacher turnover (Roberts, 2005). Attracting culturally competent staff is a further challenge. Small scale research has revealed that pre-service teachers' understandings of their own and their students' cultures are 'simplistic' (Santoro, 2009). If it is this understanding that graduate teachers take with them as they enter the teaching profession it follows that outcomes for students will be compromised.

There have been sustained efforts to examine the preparedness of teachers for working in rural schools with the view to improving outcomes for all rural students (see the research programs conducted by Country Education Project, Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia and the SiMERR National Research Centre). The research underpinning this review of ethical rigour in rural education research is sensitive both to the opportunities available to rural students, teachers and schools in relation to learning and employment pathways and to the challenges posed by distance and, in many instances, limited amenities in rural and regional communities. However, we argue that there is a gap in the research literature when it comes to articulating the ethical dimensions of research practice in diverse rural communities.

Space, Place, Race and visibility: Theoretical perspectives and guidelines informing research in diverse rural communities

Notions of space and place underpin much of the recent research published about rural Australia and have the potential to inform a rural research ethics framework, a framework which was not apparent in the research papers identified through this review. The interrelationship of place, space and identity unify beginning teachers' understandings of who they are and are becoming in a specific time and geographical location, raises questions about subjectivity: who we are, power: what we can do, and desire: who we might become (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). Often this research also focuses on the deficit perspective of rural life that includes a lack of resources etc. (Drummond, Halsey, & von Breda, 2012; Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007).

Research in diverse rural contexts is also informed by Smith's (1999) work in the area of decolonising methodology, which offers a thorough and compelling alternative to Western paradigms of research, and Connell's Southern Theory which brings to the fore the wealth of theory from the 'global periphery' and considers how Southern perspectives can disrupt and enhance notions of social-scientific knowledge and promote respect for the intellectual traditions of the global South (Connell, 2007). Smith's work specifically aims to develop Indigenous peoples as researchers, and as such Indigenous peoples, in this case Māori, are the target audience. Wilson (2001), in her review of Smith's book highlights that while 'the current and future role of the non-Indigenous researcher is marginal to the 'decolonizing methodologies' agenda' (p. 217), there are many learnings which non-Indigenous researchers can receive from Smith's work. She refers to the need to reflect critically on

our values and belief systems and recognise how 'norms' are created, and the importance of being open and aware of diverse worldviews.

Wilson identifies the potential for the fundamental ideas presented by Smith, in particular her emphasis on developing 'critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices' (Smith, 1999, cited in Wilson, 2001, p. 214) to be applicable for researchers conducting research with Indigenous people. Wilson also notes the importance of Smith's discussion about 'centring our concepts and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes' (Smith, 1999, p.39, cited in Porsanger, 2011, p. 107)². It appears that the same principles apply to conducting research in partnership with ethnically diverse communities – failure to recognise Indigenous belief systems is problematized by Connell and Smith and it is apparent that failure to recognise the diverse beliefs system of new arrivals in Australia is equally problematic.

How we come to know and understand ethics in rural communities is closely linked to how we critically reflect on our own cultural beliefs in order to be able to begin to move away from a white, Western understanding of ethical practice. This section has identified the significance of this reflection in order to recognise and embrace diverse perspectives potentially overlooked in rural spaces.

Space and Place

The above section highlights the ways in which the concepts of 'space' and 'place' help to provide us with a contextual framework for ethical practice. What is also highlighted is that rural social space is complex, contradictory and diverse. If education research tells us that developing understandings of rurality is a key to preparing pre-service teachers for a successful career in rural locations – it could be argued that the same applies to rural researchers. Rural social space develops out of the interrelation of Industry, Environment and Indigeneity, which Lock et al. (2009) see as connected both in practice and in place and further it is 'the practice of place' coupled with history, tradition and conventions that provides and produces social space. The way in which these factors interact and interrelate suggests that there may be ways for rural social space to be rethought and represented (Reid, Green, White, Cooper, Lock, & Hastings, 2008, cited in Lock et al., 2009) to counter deficit understandings such as those which frame teaching in rural schools as a ticket to a 'better place' (Reid et al., 2010).

Insider/Outsider continuum

The keys to ethics in practice in rural and regional contexts are the ways in which the concepts of insider/outsider researcher are considered. Discussion of this continuum incorporates consistent acknowledgement on the ethics of researcher positionality. The recent publication edited by White and Corbett (2014) makes a major contribution to understanding rural education researcher positionality with chapters exploring conceptualising rurality, ethical practice and relationality, but as the Editors' note, there are few resources that provide support for education researchers. The edited collection, though extremely valuable, does not draw comprehensive attention to emerging communities comprised of new migrants thus there is an opportunity we argue to supplement this work. This collection, like the work of other authors exploring relationality, reflexivity and researcher standpoint, enables movement beyond consideration of contested notions of defining researcher status to consideration of the ethics of researcher positionality.

Reference to researcher standpoint refers in this instance refer to what Haraway (1998) refers to as the need to ... *seek perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, that promise something quite extraordinary, that is, knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organised by axes of domination* (p. 585). Rural standpoint as outlined by Roberts (2014) requires approaching research in rural communities in a manner that communicates a valuing of these communities, conducting research that disrupts and rejects urban centric discourse and considers spatial justice (Soja, 2010) and problem over method (Roberts & Green, 2013). Reflexivity for researchers at its most basic level is ...*to*

² see also Chilisa, 2012 for discussion of decolonisation of Western research methodologies

reflexively examine the conceptions they hold of the rural communities that are home to their research (p. 165). According to Roberts (2014) rural standpoint is important because otherwise 'rural' becomes simply a descriptive category considered in relation to the dominant urban centred paradigm. Attention to reflexivity and researcher standpoint are necessarily embedded in the articles examining insider/outsider positionality.

Punch (1994) identified numerous features that have significant impacts on qualitative research, and which also link to the concepts of standpoint and reflexivity such as personality of the researcher, geography, gate keepers, status of the researcher, and other factors such as age, gender and ethnic background. To examine how education researchers have addressed ethical concerns faced in ethnically diverse rural settings, a focus was placed on the factors associated with the researcher's positionality in the research, in particular their position on the insider/outsider continuum.

This review focuses on provision of definitional work about insider and outsidership as for the authors it is this definitional work that is an appropriate starting place for understanding positionality. Consequently, little space is available for vigorous discussion of the planning, application or impact of the researcher positionings detailed. This sprawling summative work identifies for readers studies and approaches that may be of interest. This exploratory work does not aim to produce a simple checklist for ethics in practice, but rather to contribute to a broad framework communicating existing conventions for researching in diverse rural communities that can then be extended and troubled by experts in the research fields.

Much of the recent work on the insider/outsider continuum has emerged in health and community development, or in the Australian context, related narrowly to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their communities. Regardless of the discipline, it is recognised that sharing one or more identity markers with participants does not equate to insider status and that the variations in rural communities mean that researchers who appear to represent some aspect of an insider positioning are unlikely to embody the heterogeneity within a particular rural community. Breen (2007) in her work on qualitative methodologies conceptualises the role of the researcher as 'in the middle', highlighting DeLyser's (2001, p.442) observation that research involves the navigation of complex 'insider-outsider issues'. She suggests that researchers rarely discuss their positionality, but that this often influences researchers choice of topic, access to participants and data analysis (Breen, 2007). Similarly, Naples (1999) suggests the insider-outsider binary fails to recognise insidership and outsidership as constructed and shifting identities, and masks relationships of power that exist between participants and researchers.

Traditionally an 'insider' researcher is defined as a researcher who shares the same or similar characteristics as the community members with whom s/he is working, such as sex, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation (Staples, 2000). An 'outsider' researcher is a 'stranger' to the research context (Wilkes, 1999). Merton (1972, p. 21) provides a simple distinction *insiders are the members of specified groups, collectives or occupants of specified social statuses; outsiders are the non-members* (cited in Bridges, 2009, p. 107). However, increasingly this dichotomy has been challenged and has given way to more complex understandings which speak of the insider/outsider continuum in which the multifaceted nature of human identity is recognised as constructed (Hall, 1996; Naples, 1996), and, as Sen (2006, p. 215) argues, the plurality or multi-dimensional character of identity is recognised – *diverse diversities* as opposed to *sectarian singularity*.

Researcher positionality on the insider/outsider continuum

In the previous section we have discussed the more commonly understood discourse surrounding the notion of what it means to be part of the insider/outsider continuum. What we argue in this section is the relationship between researcher positionality and their experiences negotiating ethics in practice, particularly as it relates to working with diverse rural communities.

Merton (1972, cited in, Hellowell, 2006, p. 484) defines *the insider as an individual who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members*. There are various ways for a person to be considered an insider. Apart from length of residence and degree of participation in local community,

Crow, Allan and Summers (2001) find that a person's position in a community is shaped by social class and employment status, household type, position in kinship network, age and gender. Moreover, Moran (2007) suggests position is dependent on knowledge cultures depicted in a range of cultural factors including daily language use and behaviour. In line with perception that position is differentiated according to characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, class, age and sex, Staples (2000) identifies that each position has different opportunities and challenges with regard to several factors: role and responsibility, knowledge and perception, experience and interest, communication and cultural competence, relationships and linkages, and legitimacy and trust.

The insider position of a researcher appears to be primarily identified through cultural background, defined narrowly by ethnicity and language. On this basis, this paper found two different research contexts of insider positions. The first is a context in which the researcher shares similar cultural background with research participants, while the second is where the researcher who comes from a different cultural background is able to recognise some commonality with the research participant in order to be legitimate as having 'insider status'. As previously discussed, both positions are heavily contested. In the following sections we illustrate the increasing difficulty of the insider perspective by highlighting the increasingly complexities of diverse communities in rural areas and the ways in which we are able to establish the position of insider.

Race and ethnic diversity

'Race' as used in Australia is not synonymous with 'diversity', the latter of which in the Australian context appears associated with a range of markers of difference including ethnicity, cultural practices, age, socio-economic status and residential location. In her commentary on multiculturalism in Australia with specific reference to visible migrants Henry-Waring (2008) noted *the current climate is one in which the reality is based on assimilation rather than integration and despite claims to the contrary, even if we do assimilate, we remain marginalized*. She claimed *...multicultural life in Australia can never be fully realised or experienced - it remains at best, merely an empty symbolic signifier which veils the intrinsically racist nature of Australian society* (p. 2).

Researchers exploring race and ethnic diversity have identified ways to recognise the historic institutionalisation of racial and ethnic discrimination (Delgado & Stefania, 2001; Ford, 2012) and suggest that race can be understood as a relational social construction that mediates identity and lived experience (Haney Lopez, 1994). It is recognised that structures of whiteness are the dominant norm. Arzubiaiga and colleagues (2008, p. 314) perceive culture as *ubiquitous, dynamic* and as having *historical roots*, rather than as an *exclusive possession of certain groups in society*.

We recognise that there are many forms of diversity at play in Australia's rural communities; the literature searches focused on ethnic diversity which is highly visible, in particular diversity resulting from recent waves of immigration into rural communities. It is readily acknowledged in the literature selected for review that the experiences of new arrivals and new and emerging ethnic communities vary significantly and have different socio-political histories, experiences of formal and informal education, cultures, religions and languages. 'Visible' migrants include refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Afghanistan and the Congo. The term 'visible migrants and refugees' has been used by Millsom Henry-Waring (2008, 2012) in recognition that skin colour is a key marker of difference. Other visible markers include religion and language. Henry-Waring (2008) used 'visibility' to explore how migrants and refugees are defined as different and to argue that visibility has differential impacts on the educational experiences for migrants and refugees within rural Australia.

In focusing specifically on new and emerging ethnic communities within rural Australia it is understood that new arrivals, regardless of their ethnicity, are highly visible also due to their population size. It is also understood that regional resettlement programs and requirements for international work visas mean that many of the people new to rural Australia from overseas are separated from their families. Further, it is acknowledged that while Australia's overall sex ratio in 2011 was 98 males per 100 females, this ratio is not consistent for groups within the overseas born population, for example there are 144 Nepalese born men for every 100 Nepalese born women and 49 Thai born men for every 100 Thai born women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

ETHICAL AND POSITIONAL DIMENSIONS TO RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

The literature reviewed above highlights the contested ways in which the insider/outsider binary raises ethical considerations and begins to explore how researchers might go about engaging in ethical research no matter what their position. To date we have focussed on the various ways in which rural communities are conceived alongside discussion of consequences and understandings of place and space within these communities. The discussion now focuses on conceptions of insider/outsider continuums and on implications for ethics in practice for researchers working with new and emerging ethnic groups within rural communities. In focusing separately on insiderness and outsidership we are not intending to reproduce these as closed constructs but rather draw attention to the essentialised elements of each as well as how they interact and change over time.

When working in an Aboriginal community, Innes (2009) identified that although being Indigenous, she also considered herself as an outsider as she did not know the majority of the members of the community involved in her study, and her status as a researcher, set her apart from the participants. Similarly, O'Connor (2004) as a result of her work with contemporary Irish immigrants, argued that although she is a member of this ethnic group, the nature of insider position is *incomplete and unstable* (p. 169). She found that her insider status was challenged as she recognised the heterogeneity of the participants in terms of geo-political, regional and religious origins. Adding to this conversation, Victoria (2010) argued that as she revealed her commonalities with participants such as ethnic background, native language, and immigration experience, she encountered ethical dilemmas during her research journey. On the one hand, sharing commonalities confirmed her insider status but it drove her to become 'native' thus blurring her role as a researcher.

The experiences of peer and community researchers hired by researchers who are outsiders also revealed difficulties with the rigidity of the insider-outsider dichotomy (Ryan, Kofman, & Aaron, 2011). O'Connor (2004) and McAreavey and Das (2013) found that hiring gate keepers to gain access to participants from target communities can reduce the feeling of 'insiderness' among these researchers. The challenge of diminishing insider status has also been voiced by researchers who research their own community in their home countries (Duku, 2007; Yakusho, Badiee, Mallory, & Wang, 2011).

Given the limitations associated with insider research, our attention turned to the potential benefits of outsider positioning. Okin (2005) and Bozalek (2011) contest the notion that only those with intimate experience of social phenomena or culture can conduct ethically sound research within their communities, and that in some instances those external to a community or cultural group may be able to offer valuable critique and uncover power relations or oppressive practice. Bozalek (2011) also claims those located outside a culture are more likely to assist with identification, interpretation and analysis of practice if they first find out as much as they can *from its members* about the culture and the meanings of its practices and differential allocations of resources. Given this proviso, it is argued that outsiders can potentially be better analysts of the relevant culture than the members themselves.

Okin (1995) is cognisant of ethical concerns about outsiders conducting research, particularly in vulnerable communities, but justifies involvement of what she terms a 'committed outsider' in the research process, claiming that these researchers are well positioned to constructively critique any inegalitarian norms of a culture they are observing. Likewise, Bozalek argues that while an insiders marginalised status may give *a more encompassing view of the world in the research process than that possessed by those in a dominant position, this is not always or necessarily the case* (Bozalek, 2011, p. 472).

Bridges (2009, p. 105-107) identifies three educational contexts in which the *possibility and limitations of outsider understanding continue to demand attention*: 1) *religious understanding* (see Alexander & McLaughlin, 2003); 2) *ethnographic research, including classroom research with Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities or people of a different gender, sexuality or ethnicity from their own*; and 3) *education for intercultural or international understanding*. A key critique of outsider research is that outsiders attempt to *gain possession of and take credit for insider understanding*, raising questions about the ethics and politics of outsider research (Bridges, 2009, p. 106). Conversely, Schutz (1944, 1967) suggests that outsider status is attributed to those who lack an 'inherent' interest in the community as well as those

who try to be permanently accepted by the group they are working with. This raises the question about the purposes and aims of research and how we as researchers conceive of our roles as researchers.

Researchers were found to negotiate issues associated with their insider-outsider positionality in a variety of ways, depending on the research contexts. Razavi (1992) cited in Bridges (2009) attends to the difficulty of researchers asserting a binarised insider or outsider positioning, noting that even those researchers working in communities of which they are members cannot be clearly positioned as insiders as by virtue of entering the community as a researcher they create distance between themselves and participants.

Innes (2009) revealed that in order to gain credibility and trust from members of the Aboriginal community members she was working with she sought approval for her study from the Chief and Councillors. To get trust from the wider community members, she built connection by disclosing background information during a focus group discussion. Although there was a feeling that people would still participate in the study even without exposing her identity to the community, she noticed that the participants' interest in her study increased and they treated her differently, she referred to this as being seen as 'more than just a researcher' (Innes, 2009, p. 456). Consequently, during data collection, the participants were more open, which ascribed to her closeness to the participants as an advantage of having insider status.

Similarly, O'Connor (2004) and McAreavey and Das (2013) identified that insiderness status can be enhanced by being open to gate keepers and participants. Both studies found that through disclosure of personal information, researchers are able to recognise commonality that they share with participants, such as sharing the same migration experience with them (O'Connor, 2004); experience of tensions caused by racism and negative attitudes toward migrants (McAreavey & Das, 2013), and sharing of some characteristics, such as language and culture, gender and power (McAreavey and Das, 2013). How this might translate to educational research with pre-service teachers who are not necessarily located with/in communities for lengths of times is difficult to ascertain.

Ryan, Kofman and Aaron (2011) highlight ways in which the insider position actually creates dilemmas. In one study, an issue of confidentiality arose as the participants became concerned about the possibility of gossip which is potentially a consequence of the visibility of the researcher in these spaces. In this case, the peer researcher addressed the dilemma through *distancing themselves from the community organisation and claiming more of an outsider, professional status...to stress their university links* (p. 55).

Researchers in the studies of Duku (2007) and Yakusho, Badiee, Mallory and Wang (2011) observe that their insiderness became weak during the research cycle as issues of power and cultural fluency were exposed. In the case of Duku (2007), the researcher's insiderness status was confirmed in the initial period as she shared cultural knowledge and language with the target community reflected in several signs of welcome, such as called by clan name, referred as 'my child', and offered full hospitality. However, the insider status is changed as an impact of engagement with theoretical social and cultural assumptions, and social and personal interactions. In this case, the researcher draws on theory that insider status is a *social historical constructions whose meanings are in flux* (Eppley, 2006, cited in Duku, 2007, p.6). Moreover, she became aware that her academic and professional status as a researcher created power inequality. In this case, participant resistance to calling her by her first name made her wonder about the quality of her data collection. She also found that her *linguistic abilities did not translate into cultural fluency* as she underestimated *the richness and diversity of the local native language* (Duku, 2009, p.8).

Similarly, all researchers in the study of Yakusho, Badiee, Mallory and Wang (2011) report the development of outsidership for researchers who have returned to their communities after years living in other countries. Dilemmas of coming home to research include feeling the need to defend and refuse critics; difficulties saying 'no' to requests; and difficulties accepting the home country's law/ regulations. To address these ethical dilemmas, they discovered the appropriate time to disclose personal information, to set boundaries, and to combine personal with professional activities. They

also recognised the need to identify their similarities and differences to the community. In the case of Egharevba (2001), the researcher had an ethnic background different to the participants and did not share the same language and culture. In this study identifying commonality with participants, specifically shared experiences of racism, enabled more open dialogue.

Discussion about insiderness and outsidership shows that researcher's positionality is contestable and unstable. While the range of studies shows the potential dilemmas of claiming a binarised position, they also indicate the ways researchers have overcome ethical concerns. An alternative approach is to conceptualise researcher positioning from a non-dichotomy perspective, such as adopted by: Breen (2007); Bridges (2009); Dwyer and Buckle (2009); Naples (1996); and Webster and John (2010).

Naples (1996) observed that outsider-insider positions are not static positions but are ever changing, shaped by the dynamic relationships between race-ethnicity, gender and class relations. She suggests, like others before her, employing the *ethic of caring* (Naples, 1996, p. 89-90) involving *dialogue, emotion and empathy* as a methodological strategy to negotiate and renegotiate relationships with community which we would argue challenges the more traditionally conceived objective/scientific notions of research linked to more quantitative understandings of methodology. Eppley (2006) also suggests outsider-insider positions are not fixed or a dichotomy but shifting positions situated within a continuum. She observed that insider and outsider are *socially constructed and entails a high level of fluidity that further impacts a research situation* (Eppley, 2006, p. 5). As a researcher, reflecting an outsider position does not mean a researcher has to give up insiderness status as both positions can be present simultaneously.

Breen (2007) and Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that perspective of dichotomy did not allow space for changing perspectives. On the contrary, the non-dichotomy stance is based on the ideas of *fluidity and multilayered complexity of human experience* (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60). The basic principle for the non-dichotomy perspective is that *there is no self-understanding without other-understanding* (Fay, 1996, p. 241, cited in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) draw on Aoki (1996) to suggest that insider and outsider can be conjoined using a hyphen, representing *a third space a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence as well as conjunction and disjunction* (p. 60).

Being in the space in between - the third space - a researcher is able to gain a deeper knowledge of the experience under study and the impacts beyond her/his role as a researcher. The disadvantage of having the continuum perspective is 'a heightened sense of vulnerability'. With the space in between a researcher cannot be either an outsider forever or an absolute insider. Breen (2007) argues that the continuum perspective enables her to gain the advantages of both positions while minimising the disadvantages. Similarly, Bridges (2009, p. 105) notes humans always hold both positions and combine elements of *the self which we share with our fellows* and Razavi (1992, cited in Bridges, 2001, p. 108) argues that researchers entering their own community will always reflect a degree of outsidership as a researcher. Webster and John (2010, p.187) reconceptualise non-dichotomy perspective using Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a collaborative learning space across cultures. Its main principle is similar to the conceptualisation offered by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) and includes recognition of the changing natures of researcher and participants' roles. Called 'third space' - a place of in-betweenness, it is described as *a space all participants could engage in a dialogue of key ethical concern* (Webster & John, 2010, p. 188).

The above discussion suggests that researcher positionality occurs on a shifting continuum rather than as a fixed dichotomy position. The purpose of examining positionality and how this influences researchers' negotiations of ethics in practice was to identify strengths-based approaches to conducting ethical research in diverse rural communities. While the literature searches did not uncover examples of rural research in which researchers made their positionality explicit and linked this to ethics and their practice, they did make clear a number of considerations fundamental to ethical practice in diverse settings.

Bridges (2009, p. 120) suggests generic ethical considerations for researchers as follows:

- 1) humility in acknowledging one's own lack of understanding;
- 2) respect for and sympathy with others' desire to construct their own understanding of their lives and practice;
- 3) caution about importing external frameworks of understanding which might be oppressive rather than emancipatory;
- 4) sensitivity in negotiating alternative and especially threatening understandings;
- 5) wariness of the potentially exploitative nature of outsider enquiry, especially commercial and professional academic enquiry; and
- 6) respect for other people's desire for privacy.

Moreover, González, González and Lincoln (2006, cited in Lincoln & Gonzales, 2008) suggest five ways to decolonialise methodology and research, such as: working with bilingual data; considering non-Western cultural traditions, multiple perspectives in texts, multi-vocal and multilingual texts; and attending to technical issues to ensure accessibility. Drawing on Smith (1999), Chinn (2007) considers decolonizing methodologies as:

... critical communication strategies that explicitly engage participants in examining lives, society, and institutions that challenge dominant perspectives through the lenses of marginalized (traditional, local, Indigenous, sustainable) and dominant cultures (capitalistic, consumer oriented) (p. 1254).

Chinn's methodology (2007, p. 1254) employs five methods including *indigenizing, connecting, writing, representing, and discovering* to inform research practice. In line with decolonising methodology, Nicholls (2009, p. 124) proposes how outsiders can work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a *reflexive process of collaborative sense-making*. She suggests that *researchers need to engage with reflexive evaluation of collective and negotiated design, data collection and data analysis to consider inter-personal and collective dynamics during the research process* (p. 117). Bozalek (2011) regards Participatory Learning and Action which enables researcher to acknowledge privileges and marginalisation through encounter with difference, as appropriate for decolonising methodologies. She suggests that it is important for researcher to understand their positionality and to have both insider's and outsider's position in interacting across differences.

Hernandez, Nguyen, Casanova, Suárez-Orozco and Saetermoe (2013) provide suggestions on how research design and methodology have ethical implications when researching immigrant communities. In the design stage it is important to address the protection of participant identity and their authentic experience through employing *research with* rather than *research about* (p. 47). In regarding methodological decisions, considerations have to be given to issues related to research question, validity and sampling, and informed consent procedures. These considerations appear to have resonance for research in ethnically diverse rural settings, including schools, though the issue of working with minors was largely overlooked. This requires attention by rural educators and researchers.

CONCLUSION

In reviewing the literature at the intersection of rural ethics, inclusive research and researchers' positionality, it became apparent that there is a dearth of writing that makes explicit how *education* researchers position themselves and their work in diverse rural space. Further, the existing literature provides erratic directions for how to plan and practice ethical education research in Australia's ethnically diverse rural communities. It is only by coupling contributions across disciplines and topics that we can begin to build a sharper picture of what might constitute ethical practice in these settings. We have been able to provide only brief glimpses into approaches that have the potential to be applied to conducting education research in ethnically diverse rural communities - limited space and the authors' lack of familiarity with the language of the field prohibited full engagement with all relevant concepts including rurality, standpoint, reflexivity, relationality, race, whiteness and race logics.

What has been gleaned through the current review is that many academics from education, social science and the behaviour sciences have contributed to a robust body of research on researcher positionality and have started to connect the status of researchers on the insider/outsider continuum to their research practice. We argue that in combination, reflection on ethics in practice and consideration of the insider/outside continuum has the potential to help position the researcher and research, and to enable researchers to identify appropriate parameters for how research is conducted in our culturally diverse rural communities. However, these are not aspects that practitioners are routinely forced to articulate through formal ethics applications, at least not in a consistently robust fashion.

This literature base provides a foundation from which others articulate broad conventions for 'practice-in-the-moment'. It is apparent that principles of reflection, respect and understanding of inter-cultural differences are relevant to research with ethnically diverse rural communities. Disclosure of the social theory that informs practice and analysis is also essential given that theoretical frameworks coupled with the researchers' worldviews and lived experience leaves a distinct stamp on research outputs. Moving forward, we tentatively suggest the development of flexible frameworks for education research in ethnically diverse rural communities that would guide researchers through the research cycle. While this will not address all the concerns raised in this review, it would place issues of ethics, integrity, rurality and inclusivity on the education research radar. In suggesting development of 'protocols' it is important to note the words of caution stressed by Guillemin and Gillam (2004) and Howley (2009) who see limited value in generic codes of conduct for research practice in rural communities.

Regardless of the positionality of the researcher, it is apparent that ethical research cannot be difference-blind, researchers need to be sensitive to what is not said, rapport is critical, and high quality research requires attentiveness to how participant and researcher values and beliefs emerge through the research process. These are ideas captured in part by the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (2003) and implied in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007), but which appear to require further attention to promote ethical research in the rural communities in which visible minorities reside.

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