Abstract
How do teachers make sense of ethnic and classed differences? Frequently students from non-mainstream cultures and of lower socio-economic status are constructed in the literature and through practice as ‘deficit’ and consequently become marginalised. A range of short-term, ‘quick fix’ policy and curriculum approaches have aimed to address the ‘problems’ of those ‘othered’ from the mainstream due to their perceived difference. These have had little effect on improving educational results for students of specific ethnic and/or class backgrounds whose outcomes remain below the national average.

Poststructural theories offer opportunities to think about how teachers are positioned within discourses of identity. Our research (and others’) suggests the need for teachers to interrogate their assumptions about class and culture and how these are played out in their pedagogical relationships with students.

In this paper we report on a small research project that investigates the professional practices and personal beliefs of teachers. Empirical data from this study will build knowledge about how difference is constructed and diversity is ‘taken up’ by teachers as they engage with secondary students who have Language Backgrounds Other Than English and who are economically disadvantaged.
Contextualising Difference

The impetus for addressing socio-cultural and socio-economic differences among students, and within teacher education programs in particular, has increasingly become recognised in Australian research and literature, as well as internationally. At least three different discourses can be identified that support the need for the teaching profession to learn to work with diversity in far more productive ways. Firstly, a significant proportion of school-age students whose ethnicity, socio-economic status or ‘race’ mark them as different from that of the middle-class, Anglo-(Australian) mainstream, continue to fail to achieve educational outcomes that are equivalent to their peers (Teese et al., 1995; Teese & Polesel, 2003; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Giroux, 2004). The failure of such a significant proportion of students is no longer morally or socially acceptable. In the past, these students were viewed as ‘lacking’ and in need of remediation. However, within poststructural theorising, the construction of such students as ‘deficit’ has been critiqued, relations of power that operate through curriculum and assessment practices have been identified and there has been a subsequent focus on how discursive practices in education position these students unfairly as ‘less able’ (Gay, 2001). International research (Rasool and Curtis, 2000; Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, 2000; Delpit, 1995) and studies in Australia (Malin, 1990; Hatton, Munns and Dent 1996; Allard and Cooper 2001) indicate that addressing the needs of Indigenous students, students from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) and from lower socio-economic backgrounds is dependent on teachers developing understandings of how these students learn ‘differently’ and how they make sense of new knowledge in ways that may be unfamiliar to the ‘mainstream’. This focus is not just on enhancing the outcomes of all, but on bringing about a more socially just and equitable educational agenda, and enabling teachers and their students to take a more critically aware and activist approach to knowledge as a social construction (Robinson, 1999).

Secondly, the increased emphasis on ‘globalisation’ and the need to prepare students to take their place in a world that will be vastly different from that which we know today,
requires educationalists to take seriously the need to recognise different ways of knowing and of being—ways that stand in contrast to the twentieth century colonialist/eurocentric understandings of knowledge and of pedagogies (Elliot, 1999; Ball, 2000).Ball (2000, p. 491) argues for example that

Social, economic and political situations have changed drastically…and the enormous complexities of today’s world require a new vision for schooling that responds to the needs of the global society in which we live. That vision must articulate a mission for the delivery of instruction that is intellectually challenging while meeting the diverse needs of students who bring varying experiences, resources and beliefs to the classroom.

The idea of ‘globalisation’ is a contested and problematic concept (Klein, 2004). In a ‘globalised world’, knowledge is regarded as a highly significant new form of capital and “the only meaningful resource today” (Drucker 1993 p. 38 in Waterhouse et al. 1999, p 12). Within this discourse, Australia’s future economic stability, like that of most modern economies, is closely linked to the development of effective education programs. The development of human resources is regarded as integral to Australia’s capacity to compete with more productive nations. Speaking about vocational education, Hornery, claims that if we don’t adequately resource and update education, “we will be left to scavenge the crumbs from the tables on which far more affluent nations dine” (Hornery 1997, p.2 in Waterhouse et al. 1999, p.24). Thus, an economic imperative demands that education results in productive workers/knowledge producers. Within this discourse, those students deemed to be at risk and marginalised – often those who, due to class and cultural differences do not ‘fit’ the dominant culture, are viewed as a potential drain on the public purse (Business Council of Australia 2003).

Along with the expectation that education will produce skilled citizens for the knowledge economy, there is recognition that education is an asset to be marketed to developing nations. However, the industrialised nations can no longer assume that westernised educational initiatives will be taken up unproblematically (Elliot, 1999). Thus, there is an
increased emphasis on the need to ‘internationalise the curriculum’. In order to prepare the next generation of teachers to teach ‘globally’, teacher educators need to develop a deeper, richer understanding of how cultural differences work to inform curricula and pedagogical approaches. This discourse presumes that teacher-educators and student-teachers are familiar with different ways of knowing and can adapt/address such differences to benefit the diverse student populations with whom they will work.

Thirdly, Australian and international literature suggests that while the teaching population continues to be drawn from ‘mainstream’ culture, the population of students with whom they work will grow increasingly more diverse. Additionally, significant numbers of students are represented in families whose standard of living is below that of the average Australian family (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Australian students are far more linguistically and culturally diverse, with 25% of all students having a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). However, the teaching profession in Australia is overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian (Rizvi 1992; Santoro et al, 2001) of middle-class background. Since engagement with teachers who ‘know’ their students (Delpit, 1995) is a major predictor of successful educational outcomes, the growing disparity between teachers’ and students’ cultural experiences is of concern. Some international research (eg., Lindblad and Prieto, 1992) suggest that those who choose teaching as a profession are those who ‘fit well’ into the dominant paradigm. Lindblad and Prieto (1992, p. 466) in their study of Swedish teachers found that ‘pupils who later became teachers are of a specific kind…As adults they have specific perspectives on schooling—close to those predominant in middle-class positions and distant from those prevailing in working-class positions…’ They go on to ask ‘Have [teachers] internalized the dominating paradigm of schooling in a way that perhaps leads to a misrecognition of other cultural responses to schooling and teaching?’ (p. 466) This discourse presents such disparity in cultural and class experiences as problematic, and places the need for bridging differences as a requisite for the teaching profession.
The Problem: ‘Freely Choosing Individuals’ versus Discourses of Difference

These key discourses of difference and identity serve to focus on the need to develop deeper, more meaningful ways of engaging with diversity in educational settings. As such, they inform our interests in researching teaching identities (Allard, 1999; 2001; Santoro, 2002; 2003). Following feminist poststructural theorists, we understand identities as fluid, dynamic, changing and changeable, in different contexts and times (Weedon 1999, Davies 2000; Reay, 1998; 2001). We seek means to ‘trouble’ (Lather, 1991) taken-for-granted certainties concerning identity formation, and to disrupt the concept of ‘self’ in ways that can be productive.

From our own experiences as former teachers in secondary schools with predominantly non-Anglo Australian students whose families were living in poverty, we were aware of how difference can be constructed as disadvantage through pedagogical and curriculum processes. We frequently saw how ‘mainstream’ ways of knowing were privileged and how this often positioned our LBOTE students as marginal and lacking ‘in what it takes’ to achieve academic success.

As teacher educators, currently working mainly with Anglo-Australian middle class students at a Melbourne eastern suburb campus, we are frequently reminded of the often taken-for-granted beliefs that our university students hold about themselves and ‘others’. For example, many claim that they have achieved their academic success through ‘individual effort’ and find it difficult to see their ‘whiteness’ or economic well-being as factors that make ‘individual effort’ and academic success a lot easier. Such an emphasis on the individual is central to late modernity/neo-conservative philosophy. Shaping one’s self, building one’s identity, becoming a subject, becoming whoever and whatever one wants—all of these, albeit in different ways, foreground an all encompassing passion within Western culture in the 21st century, that is, how to be and become an individual. The notion of ‘freedom to choose’ is central to this particular view of the subject and as Rose (1996) argues, we as
…subjects are not merely ‘free to choose,’ but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact … lives in terms of choice under conditions that systematically limit the capacities of so many to shape their own destiny (p. 17).

The unremitting emphasis on ‘freely choosing individualism’ denies the collective experiences that inform subjectivities around gender, class and ethnicity.

Because many of our students are located in dominant cultures, (the ‘norm’), it is at times difficult for them to see how such collective experiences operate. This difficulty reflects the students’ often-privileged family status and Anglo-Australian identities that locate them securely in mainstream discourses. Because they ‘fit’, they understand themselves and their schooling experiences as constituting that which is ‘normal’. What is left unsaid is that those not located in the governing discourses of middle class, Anglo-Australianness are deemed to be ‘ab-normal’. (We acknowledge that the categories of ‘white’, middle-class, Anglo-Australian do not represent unified groups or seamless entities, either—but want to suggest that those who lay claim to membership in such categories can more easily locate themselves in discourses of power than those who do not).

Another difficulty in engaging with issues of difference is the fear of stereotyping the ‘other’ and /or being accused of racism. Defaulting to the position that we are all ‘unique individuals’ avoids this danger –but again serves to block critical examination of how difference is discursively produced between groups on the basis of ethnicity, gender and class. If such differences are not recognised, then we run the risk of homogenising or silencing critical factors that *can* matter. We can miss the ways in which some groups are treated unjustly. That such differences do exist, as a result of cultural, ‘race’ and classed experiences is denied in the desire to ‘treat everyone the same’.

Gay (2002), in speaking about different communication styles for example, argues that:
As is the case with any cultural component, characteristics of ethnic communication styles are core traits of group trends, *not descriptions of the behaviours of individual members of the group*. Whether and how particular individuals manifest these characteristics vary along continua … However, expressive variability of cultural characteristics among ethnic group members does not nullify their existence (Gay 2002, p111).

This is in part what impels us to rethink our teacher-education curriculum so that we might more actively engage with our students in examining taken-for-granted discourses around difference and identity. As a starting point to gain deeper understanding of how sameness and difference plays out in classrooms, in 2004 we designed a pilot study where we sought to gain insight into experienced secondary teachers’ beliefs about and practices in working with cultural and class diversity. In this paper, we draw upon interview and focus group data from the study, ‘Quality Teaching for Difference: Investigating teachers’ beliefs and practices in culturally diverse classrooms’. Here we begin to explore how four teachers locate themselves within and take up discourses of gender and ethnicity and class when they speak of their interactions with students. We consider some implications for teacher education and focus specifically on the question: in the texts of these teachers, what differences matter when?

The study was located in two secondary schools in Melbourne’s south eastern suburbs, Redbrick Secondary College and Grey Hill Secondary College. Most of the students in both schools are recent immigrants or refugees. They and/or their families have come from Europe (Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia), the middle east (Afghanistan, Iraq), Asia (Vietnamese and Chinese) or the Pacific Islands (Tonga, Samoa).

Data was collected through individual interviews, two extended focus groups and classroom observations. Seven teachers in two separate schools who identified themselves as ‘experienced in working in diverse contexts’, volunteered. In this paper
we draw on interviews with four teachers who work at Red Brick Secondary College: Con, Jane, Caterina and Daniel. They each have a range of teaching experiences and have taught for periods of time ranging between 7 and 16 years. Con and Daniel were both born overseas and immigrated to Australia with their families when they were children.

**Making Sense of Difference**

*Differences between cultures*

Redbrick SC actively supports teachers to develop better understandings not only of students’ home cultures but also of the traumatic experiences that many, as refugees, have been through. For example, teachers spoke of full-day professional development sessions which focussed on the experiences and culture of newly arrived groups, eg., those students from the Horn of Africa.

The teachers in their comments during interviews and focus groups were acutely aware of the differences that exist between the many ethnic groups at the school. One teacher said, ‘each particular group has it’s own idiosyncrasies and the way they see each other - we talk about migrants generally - but each group is different’. While it is easy to lump all migrants and refugees together, these teachers distinguish between ethnic groups on the basis of their different experiences. This is illustrated in the following exchange between Caterina and Jane:

**Caterina:** With the students from Eastern Europe, as opposed to other students from the Horn of Africa for example, the Eastern European students catch on a lot faster.

**Jane:** But that’s because they have had an educated background to begin with.

**Caterina:** And also a lot of them have gone to Germany and spent a year or two there in the educational system over there.
This emphasis on recognising difference is taken up by Daniel when he says:

[Some] Afghani kids … have been raised in a [refugee] camp and have learnt to just speak their language. They can’t read it or write it and then they’re thrust into Australia and the whole way of life in our society. And they’re told to sit in the classroom, go for 50 minute periods and learn. You can almost hear them, ‘How can I learn? What are you talking about? I don’t know what to do with this pen and a ruler--draw a margin? Why would I want to rule a margin?’ … education is not up there in their hierarchy or list of priorities. It’s about surviving.

These teachers recognise how students’ prior experiences, including lack of schooling and refugee experiences impact on classroom interactions. Here, Daniel understands the futility of expecting a particular group of students to take up educational discourses in standard ways. He recognises that the expectations that he might have of other LBOTE students are inappropriate for these students, mainly because they do not share the same prior knowledge/experiences. He does not resort here to seeing them as ‘unique individuals’ since it is their collective experiences of being refugees that impact in this initial stage of schooling. He is able to critique what has become normalised within standardised schooling eg, periods last for 50 minutes, students sit and ‘margins matter’—and most importantly, he tries to do so from these students’ perspectives. Because he knows enough about them and their experiences, he accepts that they have a different starting point than others. He doesn’t appear to be daunted by the challenge that faces him as a teacher, but rather sees this as necessary knowledge.

*Differences within culture*

There were occasions when the teachers foregrounded differences within ethnic groups. For example, one of the teachers commented:
While I might have an Afghani kid who’s had just the most terrible experiences, torture and trauma and seen shocking things and had a highly disrupted education-- it might be true for one Afghani kid. But there are others-- they might have been educated at home by this fantastic uncle who was really clever and educated himself and the kids really haven’t missed a beat, you know. So it always has to come down to knowing those individuals in your classroom and what their life story is.

The emphasis on recognising differences among a group as well as between informs the teachers’ discussions. Not all Afghani students are refugees nor are they all illiterate with uneducated parents/relatives.

The challenge for these teachers as shown in their comments, appears to be in knowing what differences there are, and when they matter. In the focus group they continually reminded each other, not only of cultural and gendered patterns but also of the exceptions to those patterns. It seemed to us that there was a tension in their dialogues between the need to recognise and teach for students’ difference and the need to recognise and teach for students’ sameness.

The teachers were also aware that within an ethnic group there existed class differences that shaped the students as learners. Jane for example, summed this up when she said: ‘I’ve had Bosnian kids turn around and say about another Bosnian kid, “Don’t worry about him. He’s from a village. He was raising goats.”’

Another teacher added:

I had two Sudanese girls and one day they were arguing amongst themselves and I said ‘What’s going on?’ I said, ‘You two should be friends.’ And one of them said, ‘No she’s from’-- exactly the same thing-- ‘she’s from the lower class. I’m from a different class’. And I’m thinking, wow okay. Anyway eventually we worked it out and they became friends.
but they saw this difference in class amongst themselves as well. ‘She’s from the village…I’m not. I’m from the city’ sort of thing.

These teachers have recognised the ways that class differences can impact upon how students within the one ethnic group identify and identify each other. In the excerpt above, the teacher’s naïve assumption that that the two girls share the same ethnicity and presumably “should be friends” is in question. The girls themselves, point out to him that they are from different social classes and share vastly different experiences. Within poststructuralist theorisings, identities are a complex matrix of positionings - social class for example, is inextricably linked with ethnicity. Understanding difference as complex and multi-faceted informs how teachers at Redbrick High see their students and their relationships with students.

**Gender and Culture**

While the teachers were able to highlight class differences within groups they were also able to speak about how gender and culture intersect in complex ways to shape the students as learners. For example, Con says:

… the girls from the former Yugoslavia are not as reserved, they’re a lot more open. What I mean by open is that they’re willing to put their hand up, to raise their hand and ask questions. Whereas girls from strict Muslim backgrounds, Horn of Africa, are less likely, more reserved, a lot more respectful. I don’t mean that in a good or bad way, that the girls from the former Yugoslavia are less respectful, no, but the girls from the Horn of Africa are more reserved and it takes a lot more time to build that courage and rapport with them.

Here the two groups of girls, that is, those from the Horn of Africa and those from the former Yugoslavia are initially constructed by Con as binary opposites. The Horn of Africa students are more respectful, reserved, strictly Islamic and needy of his assistance. In contrast, the students from the former Yugoslavia are open, outgoing, less ‘Islamic’
and less in need of his attention. They are, by implication, further along the path of taking up the educational discourses available to them within Australian schooling. Clearly, he is not afraid to talk about the differences between groups of girls. However, his comments suggest that he is also aware of not constructing a hierarchy of difference and he is quick to suggest that because the Sudanese girls are respectful, this does not necessarily mean the girls from the former Yugoslavia are not. Such a hierarchy could position some girls as ‘good’ because they fit more readily into the traditional stereotype of quiet, polite and subservient female. Con appears to work within the interconnectedness of gender and culture without privileging a particular notion of ‘good student’.

While Con has been able to distinguish between girls and knows he has to work differently with different groups, he explains ‘quietness’ and ‘openness’ in terms of gender, ethnicity and religion. However, it is possible to argue that quietness or openness might well be related to level of language competence. For example, the Horn of Africa girls have not had exposure to English for as long as the girls from the former Yugoslavia. Additionally, they might have had more extensive periods of interrupted schooling, or no schooling at all. While Con’s comments above are in response to a specific question about gender, it is also clear from his response that the girls’ identities are discursively produced in complex and multi-faceted ways.

In discussing classroom practices, several of the teachers’ comments illustrate how they recognise the interconnectedness of gender and ethnicity. For example, one teacher said:

If I spent time hearing from boys, then I’ll make a really determined effort to make sure that I want to hear from the girls as well, and sometimes that means calling on them. But for some girls, it’s important to give them warning that you’re going to do that and I think culturally for some girls it’s really important as well that they know and they are prepared. Chinese girls hate being pounced upon and asked to perform, so I might say something like “right, well we’ve heard a lot from the boys this lesson, so
I’m going to ask three questions now and I only want girls to answer and I’m going to ask the questions about these things”. So you do have to, I think you have to be very careful, and not too heavy handed about the way you manage it…

Here, the teacher seems to suggest practices that engage all students but which work to recognise the ways in which students are positioned differently around gender and cultural identities.

**Discussion/dilemmas**

We began by outlining three key discourses within education that we see as operating in different ways to ‘ privilege’ the importance of attending to difference. These can be briefly summarised as:

1) the discourse of social justice (bringing about a more socially just and equitable educational agenda, and enabling teachers and their students to take a more critically aware and activist approach to knowledge as a social construction);

2) the discourse of ‘globalised knowledge production’ with an emphasis on educators working to ensure that students ‘at risk’ and ‘marginalised’ become contributors to the knowledge economy and that the curriculum changes to engage with ‘international’ perspectives—different ways of making meaning;

3) the discourse of disparity/disjunction in cultural and class identities between teachers and their students, viewed as problematic and one that locates the need for bridging differences as a requisite for the teaching profession.

In contrast to these discourses which attend to the importance of teaching for and with differences, we have briefly discussed the discourse of ‘freely choosing individuals’, a discourse that many of our teacher education students position themselves within. We argue that such an emphasis on *individual* differences loses sight of how ‘collective’ differences, those based on oppressive relations/experiences of ethnicity, ‘race’, class, and gender as examples, produce group experiences/patterns that too often are silenced or
ignored by those in mainstream power positions. Such a myopic focus on individuality serves to make the call for social justice for disadvantaged groups less persuasive. As Patricia Hill Collins argues:

The seeming fascination with identities of difference emerges in this practice of comparing stories of difference *uprooted from ethical or political contexts*. Such approaches minimize the significance of differences that are imposed from without—those resulting from oppression—and tacitly preserve the Enlightenment assumption of a freely choosing, rational human who is now free to be different…Whereas views of individual identity that valorize difference can benefit those already positioned to enjoy them, such approaches remain less promising for oppressed groups with readily identifiable biological markers such as race, sex and age. (Collins, 2000, p. 63) [emphasis added]

If we accept that identities are constantly in the act of becoming, then how student teachers see themselves, locate themselves within discourses of ‘difference’ eg—of social justice, of economic imperatives, of teacher professionalism - depends in part on the experiences, contexts and discourses they are offered. As teacher educators, part of our role is to offer experiences to our students that enable them to understand and examine their own positionings within and through current discourses. While some researchers (eg., Britzman, 1991; Causey et al., 2000) argue that a way of helping pre-service teacher-education students is to begin from their personal constructs, we recognise that this is an extraordinarily difficult task to undertake, not just for our students, but for anyone. However, while this may serve as a starting point for developing understanding and insights into taken-for-granted beliefs about culture and class, it does not necessarily address the fundamental question: how does one work with difference in classrooms in ways that acknowledge cultural and class values and beliefs without essentialising identities or stereotyping groups?
Within teacher education units, the emphasis on deconstructing difference works to locate difference as central—we privilege engaging with different ethnic, classed, gender, ‘race’ groups among other identity categories as an important dimension of learning to teach. However, when we talk about difference, we insist that teacher education students work to avoid stereotypes and essentialism, that they rethink assumptions and question their own beliefs. This becomes dangerous territory for all concerned. While we understand the desire to speak about ‘individual’ differences or the impetus to argue ‘we are all alike under the skin’ (Collins, 2000, p. 65), there remain patterns of difference, eg., the culture, ‘race’, religion and experiences of Horn of Africa students are different to those of students from the former Yugoslavia, for example.

The tension between recognising differences—experiential, cultural, gendered etc and essentialising identities seems always present. If we insist that our teacher education students must ‘know’ and understand differences in terms of what different groups of students bring to the classroom regarding language, cultural values and beliefs, or gender relations, we need to consider a number of key questions. Firstly, how do discourses of ethnicity, class and gender construct differences within and between groups of students? Secondly, how do such differences come into play in classroom relations and thirdly, what identity differences ‘matter’ when designing curricula and pedagogies that will cater for diverse knowledge?

In an attempt to further explore these complexities and tensions and to gain understanding of how difference is played out in contemporary Australian classrooms, we have considered how experienced teachers, working with student populations who do not represent the ‘mainstream’, speak about their beliefs and practices. In the selected examples we offer in this paper (and we note our own ‘investments’ in selecting these examples), we aim to demonstrate how the teachers made sense of differences among groups of migrants with regard to life experiences, how they interpreted differences within a particular group with regard to ethnicity, gender and class and how they attempted to work with these complex interconnections of identities in terms of pedagogies.
In our conversations with these teachers, it seemed the teachers were able to move easily among a range of interpretations in order to work productively with their students. First and foremost, they did not ignore differences. On the basis of their knowledge and experiences with different ethnic groups at their school, the teachers identify/name particular behaviour patterns or characteristics. They are able to speak informatively about specific cultural and gendered behaviours on the basis of their daily interactions with different groups. They invested a great deal of time ‘getting to know’ the different ethnic groups of students – and their collective ‘stories’. Secondly, they were able to ask questions about whether behaviours in class were due to students’ *cultural values and beliefs* and/or whether they might be due to their *lived experiences* (i.e., not ‘unique’ to their culture but shared nevertheless as in disrupted schooling due to being refugees or fleeing from wars). Thirdly, while they recognised how these students did not ‘fit’ into the standard expectations of ‘good student’ (e.g., Daniel’s discussion) and in doing so, called into existence the mythical ‘norm’, they didn’t compare these students to the mainstream and find them wanting. Rather, they were able to use their knowledge as starting point for working with the students. Occasionally, they emphasised the need to recognise the ‘individual’ story—but as a means to better understand and address difference within a particular group rather than ignore it.

Such ‘tap-dancing’ through notions of difference—gender, ethnicity, ‘race’, religion—highlighted the complex and sophisticated knowledge base developed by these teachers. We present their comments not as ‘the answer’ to what needs to be done, but rather as valuable insights into how they think and act when working with diverse groups. Their teaching identities seem invested in the discourse of social justice—the desire to engage with their students in order to bring about more fair educational outcomes. We also see their need to ‘know’ their students as an endorsement of the discourse that recognises that the disparity in cultural and class values between teachers and students must be addressed as a professional responsibility in order to engage with difference productively.
So how might this knowledge help to inform pre-service teacher education? To what extent can the practices discussed and values carried in the teachers’ comments help teacher-education students develop their own insights into diversity and difference? To what extent must students start from their own values and beliefs before engaging with ‘others’? Addressing these questions represents a further stage of the project. We are currently developing materials (case studies, scenarios, narratives) on the basis of the data from teacher interviews, focus groups and classroom observations that are designed to enable students to question/challenge/discuss/reflect the taken-for-granted ‘truths’ about cultural, class and gendered differences. The extent to which these might ‘work’ to explore identities and difference in new and productive ways remains a focus of our research.

References


Rizvi, F. (1992) Racism, multiculturalism and the cultural politics of teaching, in L. Logan and N. Dempster (Eds.), Teachers in Australian Schools: Issues for the 1990s, ACE, Canberra.


1 In 2004 this project was funded by a Deakin University Faculty of Education Quality Learning Research Priority Grant.
2 Pseudonyms have been used for both schools and for all teachers
3 We extend sincere thanks to the teachers for their willing involvement and thought-provoking contributions to this project.