Belonging in a contested national space:

Men from refugee backgrounds and their experiences in Australia

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

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2016
“Borders mean very different things, depending which side of them you stand and how easily you can cross them.”

(Morley 2001: 431)
Acknowledgements

My first thanks cannot go to anyone but my fantastic supervisors, Professor Natalie Bolzan and Dr Fran Gale. You have truly been awesome and there is no way I would have completed this work without your positive and supportive energies. When I faced the daunting task of editing, your dedication and encouraging comments saved me. Thank you.

My second thanks goes to all the men who participated and supported me in this research, directly or indirectly, some of whom I might not get a chance to thank in person. I hope I can continue my work, that this research will have value beyond the submission date, so that the effort was not in vain. Thank you.

My third thanks goes to all the academics and staff at Western Sydney University, too many to name, who have crossed my paths, at the different campuses and at the research conferences I have attended since 2011.

My fourth thanks goes to all my colleagues, and the students I have taught, at the University of Technology, Sydney. It financially enabled me to do the research, but it also inspired me in many other ways. Thank you!

My fifth thanks goes to my family, both in Australia and in Sweden. My parents, you are the best, always encouraging and supportive! My sister and her family, far away but close, my friends who have provided space for wine induced conversations, you know who you are, and of course, my beautiful Tara and our son Phoenix, whose birth in 2010 spring boarded me into applying for a PhD. Thank you!

My sixth thanks goes to Tim Baker, who carefully proofread the final version (however, any remaining mistakes are all mine). Thank you!

The last thanks goes to those who accepted and signed all the papers that enabled me to get the generous scholarship at Western Sydney University. Without it this research would definitely not have happened. Thank you!
Statement of authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution. The views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Western Sydney University.

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Tobias Martin Andreasson
Abstract

The purpose of this sociological research is to understand and explore what factors shape and influence experiences of belonging for a group of Australian men, from refugee backgrounds, who live in Sydney, Australia. Moreover, the research also aims to use the ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 1959/2000) and (re-)conceptualise how belonging can be approached for this group and other immigrants.

The focus on belonging in this research is based on a value position; that all Australians should *ideally* be able to experience belonging in Australia. Belonging has been explained as ‘an emotional attachment’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a), being ‘at home’ (Hage 1997), ‘at ease’ (May 2011), ‘safe’ and to be ‘recognised’ (Ignatieff 1995) but also the goal for ‘integration’ (Ager and Strang 2008). However, that which might shape belonging is not clear in the literature. Previous research about Australian identity and belonging identifies how dominant narratives perpetuate social and cultural hierarchies that can potentially lead to different politics of belonging. It is within these postcolonial, socio-political and socio-historical contestations that this research situates the men’s voices in order to understand experiences that can shape belonging.

Epistemologically the men’s voices are the main evidence in this research. Using an abductive research strategy (Blaikie 2010), methods were explored that could be used to collect the men’s narrative accounts. Findings from 12 unstructured interviews are used as the main data corpus and these are arranged into thematic sections based on what the data revealed. This approach allowed the findings to be discussed in relation to theories around belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006a) and ‘integration’ (Ager and Strang 2008) and within a ‘social justice’ framework (Fraser 2000).

The discussion concurs with previous research about the importance of employment for men from refugee backgrounds, but it raises questions about the value of focusing *a priori* on ‘identity’, ‘gender’, ‘social cohesion’ or ‘integration’ for this cohort of men. Instead the findings suggest that the challenges experienced should be understood in relation to the men’s limited agency and social location. I argue that the findings indicate that the men experience ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012), preventing the men from experiencing that they have equal opportunities. Because of this, it is proposed that belonging
should be understood as a social justice issue. Drawing directly from Nancy Fraser’s (2000) work on ‘parity of participation’ and her theory of social justice, a re-conceptualisation of belonging is possible, which positions both misrecognition and maldistribution as determinants for belonging. This research contributes to the knowledge of the factors that influence belonging for a group of men from refugee backgrounds living in Sydney, Australia, but also contributes with knowledge concerning how to approach settlement experiences and challenges for any migrants who are not part of the dominant group.

*Keywords:* Belonging; Identity; Integration; Social Cohesion; Refugee; Settlement; Men; Social Justice
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Value position and questions

The social justice position taken in this research is that ideally all citizens of the Australian nation should be able to develop a sense of belonging to the nation. This validates and guides this exploration of how men from refugee backgrounds experience belonging, or barriers to belonging, in Australia.

Scholars such as Anthias (2006), Hage (2002), Hamaz and Vasta (2009), Ignatieff (1995), Taylor (2009) and Yuval-Davis (2011a) link ‘belonging’ to emotional attachments, feeling ‘at home’, being safe and to be able to participate and to feel included. This indicates that relational factors, multifaceted life experiences and socio-historical and socio-political aspects shape the development of a sense of belonging. All contributing to what Yuval-Davis (2006a) calls “the politics of belonging”. It is within this complexity that this project sets out to explore, and attempts to understand, belonging for particular individuals. The methodological focus is on the men’s stories and to share their experiences, without asking whether they belong or not. It is this approach that I argue is best suited to critically tease out what it is that does influence a person’s sense of belonging in a particular national space.

It is with this understanding and positioning in mind that my thesis question was developed:

What influences belonging in Australia for men from refugee backgrounds?

From this the following secondary questions emerged:

What facets of belonging can be extrapolated from the men’s narratives about their experiences in Australia?

When talking about different (dis-)connections and (non-)attachments to Australia, what do men from refugee backgrounds discuss?

How is it possible to (re-)conceptualise and understand belonging for men from refugee backgrounds living in Australia?
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is a PhD research project, but also a story about my own development as a researcher and as a new Australian, originally from Sweden. Having previously conducted a research masters that focused on media coverage of a specific human rights issue relating to asylum seekers, I decided that if I was going to embark upon a PhD I wanted to work, and collaborate, with people from a refugee background. I wanted it to be qualitative but also in some ways participatory, visual and creative. Even though my initial intentions – inspired by and involving Paulo Freire (1970) – did not eventuate, the process has been a heuristic journey for me. As such it has challenged my own beliefs, views and ideologies. The focus of the research changed over the course of the investigation and upon reflection, it has morphed into something that I think contains findings of value and hopefully my ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 1959/2000) can contribute to the knowledge of belonging for immigrants to a ‘developed’ settler country.

The thesis contains a large amount of text and I feel I ought to justify this early on, since I believe that as a qualitative work, it requires the included text. The main reason lies in the decision to include a significant portion of the men’s voices in Appendix 2 (‘Raw data’). I argue it is the men’s voices that inform the thesis and it is these voices that ultimately are the evidence for the claims made in the discussion; they are an intrinsic part of the whole. It is an important aspect of the abductive approach taken. However, Chapters 6 and 7 are written in such a way that they will make sense to the reader whether or not they have read the data presented in Appendix 2. I have also placed a brief historical overview in Appendix 1. The reason is that this material is most likely not new to an Australian born person, however, as a migrant to Australia, I felt it is important to make this available.
Rationale

As travel becomes within the reach of most people and communication technologies enable people to be immersed in cultures located elsewhere, and to cultivate multiple identities, the question of belonging becomes more complex and more central to the debate on how we live together. (Buonfino and Thomson 2007: 5)

This research started with an interest and focus on masculinities in relation to men from refugee backgrounds. However, after the pilot interviews with three men from refugee backgrounds, it became apparent that the issues the men raised seemed to be more about trying to ‘fit in’ and to being able to get on with their lives. The men did not frame this as something relating to gender. I was interested in those aspects that the men brought up, and as a result I wanted to refrain from making any hypotheses about the men’s experiences. The aim was not to search for men who had ‘problems’ or significant challenges (such as illiterate men, men who had just arrived, or men with obvious psychological or physical trauma or even men with specific religious backgrounds). Instead I was curious to learn from ‘average’ men, from diverse refugee backgrounds, who have ‘settled in’ Australia and ask how they experience Australia and what that could tell me about belonging.¹

The study hopes to contribute to knowledge about national belonging in Australia and how the ongoing processes of refugee re-settlement in a ‘Western’ country, and a ‘postcolonial’ country, are experienced by men from refugee backgrounds. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to knowledge about how to approach and understand ‘belonging’ in a ‘developed’ settler country.

My interest in asylum seeker and refugee issues, and how they are covered, in the media, in politics, and everyday discourses, led me to want to hear from people with this background. I wanted to understand how men from refugee backgrounds experience their own lives and what shapes their belonging, in what can be understood as a contested national space. Hence the focus is not on their refugee journey (why and how), initial settlement support or legislative merits of any policies per se, but on their ‘Australian experience’ so far, as

¹ This does not mean that the men I ended up interviewing did not suffer from any psychological trauma or had other mental health problems, it just meant I did not set out to search for those men and it was not part of the selection process.
Australian men who might be shaped by their ‘settlement journey’.

Vasta writes, “[t]oday Australia appears fearful and restrictive” (Vasta 2007: 18) and to develop a sense of belonging in such a climate can potentially be fraught with challenges. Belonging is a concept that goes beyond identity, culture, rights, ethnicity and citizenship (Buonfino and Thomson 2007) and it is interconnected with the discursive practices that exclude or include, which are described as different ‘politics of belonging’ (Antonsich 2010). Belonging can also be understood as dependent on different intersecting categories (for example race, culture, gender and age) shaping individuals’ everyday lives and their health and wellbeing (Caxaj and Berman 2010). It is never either/or (Yuval-Davis 2011a). This makes any a priori assumptions about a persons’ ability to develop a sense of belonging potentially reductionist.

The psychological importance of belonging for an individual’s mental health and wellbeing is well known (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 200) because the opposite of belonging, alienation or social isolation (Antonsich 2010), is seen as detrimental to a person’s wellbeing and health. However, as social isolation and alienation can be understood as relational, shaped by both structure and agency, they are important concepts for sociologists to examine and understand (Giddens 1986). In this thesis, I am not focusing on psychological wellbeing, but social wellbeing, with a clear sociological focus, even though I understand these two are mutually dependent on each other.

Men who are socially isolated are identified in the 2010 National Male Health Policy (NMHP 2010: 12) as a group at risk of poor health outcomes. NMHP also identify other groups as high priorities with high risks of poor health outcomes. Men from refugee backgrounds may fit into some of these groups, such as ‘from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds’ and ‘socio-economically disadvantaged’. Hence failure to experience social inclusion, or some sense of belonging, can be linked to poor health outcomes. One important point is that poor health does not just affect the men; it also affects their families and potentially society at large (Farah 2007). It also became apparent when I started the research that migrant men in general are an under-researched group (Hibbins and Pease 2009) and ‘refugee men’ in particular (Byrne 2006; Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011). I argue that this makes the task of understanding this group of men and their experiences a high priority.
In terms of national belonging in Australia and how Australia and Australians have been defined, there are three books that initially inspired, and continue to inspire this research; *Being Australian: narratives of national identity* (Elder 2007), *White nation* (Hage 1998) and *Borderwork in multicultural Australia* (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). These books explore how, and argue that, the assumptions made about national characteristics are often very stereotypical, and that those assumptions can shape mythical narratives about national characteristics or historical ties to a place. Elder writes about an example of a soldier who fought in Afghanistan was asked how he was able to do what he did. The soldier did not refer to his training but instead to the fact of him “being Australian” (Elder 2007: 2). The Australian spirit is here a stereotypical ideal that can be evoked to describe heroic behaviour, even though the heroic action might have been, as Elder suggests, rather unprecedented or at least rare. Hage (1998) critically examines how multiculturalism, and what it entails, is still guarded and protected by the ‘White’ majority in Australia. Hage proposes that the ‘White’ majority allows others to participate, but on ‘White’ terms. Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) take a more pedagogical approach, which is more inclusive. They write about a ‘white’ boy they taught who stated, with disappointment, that he is ‘just Australian’. They point out that rather than being just Australian, he has a specific cultural background, just like all others in a multicultural space. They argue that by recognising this, a way to allow for a more equal sense of belonging (in the sense we are all cultural hybrids) can emerge. All three books indicate how national belonging can be narrowly protected but also that it can change and evolve, if it is understood as a dynamic process.

Another important note to make in this introduction is that belonging, if understood as an emotional attachment – whether to the nation or the community – cannot be provided from ‘above’. The circumstances, however, that enable such attachment to develop naturally can be supported and developed from above, while acknowledging that such support can always be rejected. This means any sociological research that tries to explore belonging also explores the ‘politics of belonging’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a) that shape (or attempt to shape) people’s emotional attachment to a place. Once these are examined, it might be possible to re-think such politics of belonging, question how they are maintained, and to continue the ongoing task of exploring how society ought to be in order to enable people from different backgrounds to develop belonging.

I will at the end of this thesis go back to my value position and argue that, to be able to
develop a sense of belonging to the nation of which one is a citizen, can be understood as a question about social justice and by doing this, any barriers experienced that hinder or limit belonging should be understood as potential barriers a just society can, and should, be eliminating. Such an undertaking is not easy, as Joseph Carens explains: “What justice requires must be humanly possible, under ideal circumstances. It need not be immediately feasible” (Carens 1999: 1084). Hence, arguments explored later in this thesis suggest that the national narrative in a postcolonial country like Australia could feasibly change if it is found to be excluding certain groups of people, even though the practical aspects require much further work and are beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Personal background**

Even though I am a migrant (I became an Australian citizen in 2014) and a male myself, I have never thought about myself as a migrant. I came to Australia to study in 1996 when I was 21 years old. I met a girl, travelled, lived in different countries, and then ended up living in Australia in my late 20s, with the thought that maybe we would live somewhere else one day (the notion of ‘settling’ requires a more long term plan, I think). So when I read Ghassan Hage's explanation of his own experiences and how he did not feel like a migrant in Australia because he just ‘lived here’, I noticed many similarities.

I never uttered the word: I have ‘migrated’ to Australia. I always thought ‘I am living in Australia’. Later in my research I became very aware that this was a common experience for middle-class people rich in economic and educational capital. The richer you are in those capitals, the more cosmopolitan you are, and the more you experience the world as your turf. You meet other people like you and you never ask where have you ‘migrated to’. You only ask, where are you living now? ‘I’m living in New York, I’m living in Sydney’. And that’s what I used to think: ‘I’m living in Sydney’. (Hage in Zournazi 2002: 170)

Hage’s insight seems to agree with Carens claim that; “Citizenship in Western liberal democracies is the modern equivalent of feudal privilege” (Carens 1987: 252 in Bloom 2009: 232) since it allows ‘us’ (the privileged) to adopt a ‘cultural cosmopolitan’ perspective (the world is ‘our oyster’). However, as pointed out by Kymlicka and Walker (2013) such perspectives do not necessarily admit that many ‘others’ lack such privileges.
Even though I have worked in many low skilled labouring jobs and without much economic capital (and initially limited educational capital), I still had the mindset that I could go anywhere in the world, and of course we did save up and travel – my passport (Swedish/EU) had very few restrictions. I never felt a need to feel, or to claim to be Australian; I have always known I am Swedish, but I have never defined myself in that way. However, I have also always felt a similarity, or connection, to people in Australia, in particular my friends but also the ‘mainstream culture’. I could easily identify with and negotiate what Bourdieu might have called the ‘Australian habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977). Whether or not all people in Australia would have accepted this ‘habitus’ is a different question, and only demonstrates how my own ‘cultural background’ (Western, European, White) was tied up with what I experienced as the ‘mainstream’. My background in fact most likely enabled it; I was at home, always safe, and never doubting I generally ‘fitted in’. My experience and relationship to Australia is therefore in line with what Ignatieff (1995) calls ‘civic nationalism’, since I value both the secular and civic aspects of Australian society. However, I realise this is also aligned with my ‘cultural background’ as a person growing up in Sweden. So with this in mind, it became clear that a person who arrives in Australia as a forced migrant might have a very different experience, different challenges or different understandings of their own place, or their own belonging, in Australia.

**Thesis structure**

Chapter 2 provides a brief insight into contestations around national narratives and multiculturalism in Australia. The aim is to provide an outline of the socio-historical and socio-political contexts shaping discussions around the current meaning of multiculturalism, but also the contested discourses around asylum seekers and refugees in Australia. The purpose is to contextualise this research, something Mills (1959/2000) argued is essential for meaningful sociological research, and not to provide an exhaustive account. See also Appendix 1.

Chapter 3 examines the literature that covers mainly, but is not limited to, sociological research focusing on refugee re-settlement, migrants, migrant men and refugee men in particular. This chapter exposes significant gaps in the knowledge about how men from a refugee background experience the country they have resettled in. The chapter also highlights some of the main areas that are understood as affecting the settlement process for men from a
refugee background. First ‘integration’ as a notion is examined since it is still used in the context of settlement and belonging. Then the focus is on how previous research identifies potential specific health and wellbeing issues for men from refugee backgrounds. Following this ‘identity and masculinities’ and ‘discrimination, racism and employment’ are explored, as these concepts are often mentioned in discussions about men from refugee backgrounds’ settlement experiences. It is recognised that these can potentially shape how a person experiences their new country and how they are able to develop a sense of belonging.

Chapter 4 examines the theoretical and conceptual understandings that underpin this research. It starts with an examination of postcolonial and whiteness theories, in relation to contestations around national identity in a postcolonial space. Both are theoretical frameworks that challenge homogenising narratives as essentialist and failing to include those outside dominant and hegemonic norms. The chapter then looks at ‘belonging’ and the ‘politics of belonging’. It contains an examination of Yuval-Davis’ (2006a) analytical framework because it is seen as a recognised framework that may assist in understanding how belonging can be approached. I link the contested national narratives to the politics of belonging; that is, how some groups create boundaries around who is included and who is excluded. I argue that this can have certain social justice implications, which allows me to bring in Nancy Fraser’s (2000) work in relation to belonging.

Chapter 5 starts with the methodology, or the research design. It clarifies the ontological and epistemological assumptions made, and explains the abductive research strategy taken. The next section tells the ‘method journey’; about the intentions, the ‘failures’ and the eventual final method used to collect the main corpus of data for this study. It described the two stages of data collection: stage one, the photographic workshops and the ethnographic element and stage two, the unstructured qualitative interviews.

Chapter 6 discusses the men’s narratives (see Appendix 2) in light of the theories and research. The chapter is divided into three parts. Each part can be understood to include aspects, or experiences, that potentially shape the men’s sense of belonging, or the ability to develop belonging, in Australia.

Chapter 7 argues that the data suggests there is a clear hierarchy of belonging in Australia. The chapter then discuss how belonging can be reconceptualised for this group of men. Using
Nancy Fraser’s status model of recognition, I argue that we should position belonging within a social justice framework. This provides me with the theoretical tools to re-conceptualise belonging for this group of men and to position belonging at the forefront of ongoing discussions, not just about settlement issues for refugees, but also about ‘integration’ into Australia, for people from diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 8 provides the concluding statements of this research. It outlines the contribution to knowledge this research makes, and some final reflections.

Appendix 1: Brief Historical Overview provides a brief overview of Australia’s colonial history, including the White Australia Policy and contestations around the national identity.

Appendix 2: Raw data presents the men’s narratives, thematically arranged into 6 sections, which emerged from the data. This is the first step in the abductive research strategy, with the second being the discussion of the findings in the context of current theory and existing research.

**Terminology**

Throughout this thesis I use certain terms that require clarification.

In relation to the men participating in this research I use the term men ‘from refugee backgrounds’. I do this to indicate that these adult males are now Australians and should not be reduced to a label such as a ‘refugee’. Sometimes ‘refugee men’ is used, relating to research that uses that term, but generally I make an effort to avoid any reductionist labels when referring to the participating men.

‘Migrants’, ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are sometimes discussed as the same. However, it is important to be clear about these terms. ‘Migrants’ includes everyone who migrates to Australia, a ‘refugee’ is a person who has been recognised as a refugee by the UNHCR or the ‘host’ country, and an ‘asylum seeker’ is a person who has applied, or is in the process of applying, for refugee protection but has not yet been granted such protection. All participating men in this research are recognised refugees and they are now legally Australians.
People from refugee backgrounds differ from ‘migrants’ since refugees seek protection in Australia, and that is why they are allowed to remain in the country. A migrant needs to provide other evidence that will enable them to stay in Australia. What they do have in common is that as a group, they are ‘new Australians’ originally from a different country. Migrants include anyone who moves to Australia from overseas, including people arriving from English speaking countries but also non-English speaking countries. Some of these groups might be explained as being part of Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities or from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB), even though the term NESB can include people who are differentially disadvantaged. Sawrikar and Katz suggest, ‘Australians Ethnically Diverse and Different from the Majority’ (AEDDM) (Sawrikar and Katz 2009) would lessen any negative connotations. However I do not subscribe to a term that situates a person as ‘different’, since that might not be how the person views themselves, but the intention behind the term is worth considering. Sawrika and Katz explain the purpose of the term is that we need to move away from giving some people a title, such as ‘African Australian’. Instead they argue that mainstream institutions, politicians or media ought to use the term ‘Australian’ unless it is significant to point out the persons background: “By bestowing minority groups with the title of ‘Australian’, relational exclusion may decrease” (2009: 10). Another position is to give every Australian a ‘title’ indicating their family backgrounds. For example Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) argue that all Australians could have hyphenated identities, such as ‘Anglo-Celtic Australian’ and so on. Their point is that, apart from Indigenous Australians, no other group can claim to be just ‘Australian’.

There is no stable hegemonic position on how to refer to Australia’s Indigenous population. In the National Male Health Policy supporting document, Indigenous males in Australia are referred to as ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males’ (NMHP Supporting Document 2010). In this research, however, the terms ‘Indigenous Australians’ or ‘Indigenous peoples’ or ‘Indigenous communities’ are used to indicate all those people who are indigenous to the land. ‘Indigenous’ is capitalised, which Moreton-Robinson (2006) does, however, Noel Pearson (2014) does not, indicating different approaches. Furthermore, if a specific research uses a different term, that term is used in that specific context. As the author of this work, I understand the terms used can have meanings beyond the intentions of the user, and I wish to state that my only intention is to use terms that are respectful and neutral, in terms of political and ideological affiliations.
The name ‘Burma’ is used when writing about the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, even though the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is nowadays the official name of the country; often referred to as ‘Myanmar’. The reason is that the men I spoke to still referred to their country of origin as Burma, which is what it was called before the 1988 uprising.
Chapter 2: Social and political framework

… in each of us, in varying proportions, there is a part of yesterday’s man; it is yesterday’s man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result.

(Emile Durkheim in Bourdieu 1977: 79)

Introduction

Australia’s history is far from settled.

(Clark and Ashton 2013: 14)

History is never resolved, and we should not make a shared future contingent on a shared past.

(Pearson 2014: 17)

It is important to ask and attempt to understand how people from non-dominant groups experience Australia and, ultimately, belonging in Australia. This is because if they do not fit into the hegemonic, but fluid, definitions of what constitutes an ‘Australian’, they can be denied the same opportunities, privileges and rights as those who are part of the hegemonic dominant group. Sibley calls this ‘ordering’ a “subtle but powerful symbolic gatekeeping mechanism” (Sibley 2013: 222). The intention with this chapter is to provide insights into how such ‘gatekeeping’ has been shaped, suggested or enforced in colonial and postcolonial Australia.

The first part of this chapter highlights the contested national narratives and how any attempts at essentialist thinking, when it comes to ‘Australian culture’, history or national identity, fail to take into account the complexities and nuances of Australia’s history and makeup.²

² For a brief overview of Australia’s ‘modern’ history since the First Fleet arrived see Appendix 1: Brief Historical Overview.
In the second section of this chapter, I briefly examine how multiculturalism has been challenged recently and in particular, the contested and divisive asylum seeker debate in Australia since early 2000, contributing to multiculturalism being questioned and seen as being “out of favour” (Colic-Peisker and Farquharson 2011: 579). Even though Colic-Peisker and Farquharson explain that both sides of politics in 2011 state that they are committed to a multicultural Australia (ibid: 580), it is still too early to predict what lies ahead, considering the change of Government in 2013 and new perceived (and potentially real) threats to ‘Australian society’. It is into this contested and often dichotomising political and social context that the men in this research have arrived and have had to (and continue to) negotiate their new lives.

In terms of situating my research in a socio-historical and socio-political space, I am drawing inspiration from two influential (for me) thinkers, Paulo Freire and Charles Wright Mills. Freire provided hope for the oppressed, by demonstrating that change is possible and all people are capable of developing a ‘critical consciousness’, i.e. an ability to see how their own situation as interrelated to society and other members of that society. Mills questioned sociological research that held no value for society at large and argued that it is important to not just engage in some ‘abstract empiricism’ or ‘grand theory’. Instead he argued that academics who are engaged in the ‘social sciences’ or ‘social studies’ – the term he preferred (Mills 1959/2000: 18) – ought to develop and expand their ‘sociological imagination’. He argued, “no social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey” (Ibid: 6). Humans living in a society cannot be seen as rats in a laboratory. They need a context and a history. Mills even outlines three questions that should be, or are asked in an imaginative social analysis: What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? Where does this society stand in human history? What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? (Mills 1959/2000: 6-7).

As a relatively ‘new’ country, Skrbis writes “Australians are prone to continuously re-examine their national identity” (Skrbis 2006: 180) and he adds that suggestions or descriptions abound in the literature on this topic (ibid). This chapter is not an attempt to comprehensively explain these discussions. Rather, it provides a brief socio-historical and socio-political picture of Australia. It is within this space, linked both to the past and the present, that the men I have interviewed and spoken to live.
A contested national narrative

Bain Attwood explains the importance of narratives; as they “provide a nation’s people with a sense of nationality – a sense that they belong together to the community called the nation” (2005: 13). But, as Attwood indicates, national narratives are not straightforward. Australia, as a sovereign nation, has undergone many changes since the First Fleet arrived in 1788 with 11 convict ships and with the ‘multicultural drift’ (Stuart Hall in Hall and Back 2009: 680); the drift to a multicultural space. This drift, altering the narratives, is happening more than ever before because Australia’s population is continuously changing and it is becoming more diverse (Ho and Jakubowicz 2013, see also Markus and Dharmalingam 2013). However, whether this means there is active and ongoing nation-reforming is less clear.

There has been, and continues to be, ‘history wars’ about how the Australian nation was shaped, sometimes centred around what responsibility ‘the dominant group’ – whether it is the Anglo-Celtic or White Australians or the British colonisers – should take for the past and whether or not this dominant group in fact did anything unusually bad (for the times) in that past (Attwood 2005; Lawson 2014; Reynolds 2013). Clark and Ashton explain in their recently edited book Australian History Now that; “The centrality of a sustaining national narrative... was thrown into question by... new histories” (Clark and Ashton 2013: 17) but they also recognise that this has not been a smooth or always inevitable process. Instead it has required, and continues to require, constant work and re-thinking by scholars and historians from a range of different disciplines, who do not always agree (ibid: 23). Noel Pearson (2014) makes the point that history should not be draped in activism, and it is important to understand that two (or more) positions can be accurate when describing historical experiences.

An important difference between Indigenous narratives and the dominant postcolonial view of Australia is identified by Moreton-Robinson. She argues “that Indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because our relation to land... is omnipresent” (Moreton-Robinson 2003: abstract). For Moreton-Robinson this makes the term ‘postcolonial’ contentious, since in the Australian context the coloniser did not leave, and there was no handing over to the colonised people. Instead the colonisers kept power and privilege, arguing an evolution in which there is freedom and equality for all. If we, however, understand postcolonial to mean “new modes and forms of the old colonialist practices, not
on a “beyond” (Shohat 1992: 106) it would seem to fit better with the ongoing colonisation in Australia as Moreton-Robinson describes it.

National narratives can shape who is allowed or accepted to belong to a specific nation, or to be part of the ‘imagined community’, which is how Benedict Anderson describes nations (Anderson 2006). William E. Connolly writes in his book *The Ethos of Pluralization* that hegemonic actions and policies about who should belong to a nation or community creates exclusive groups within a pluralistic society and this is leading to, or can lead to, ‘culture wars’ which are driving the “fragmentation, violence, and anarchy” (Connolly 1995: xxi) that we are witnessing today in some places around the world.

In other words, according to Connolly it is not the pluralisation or differences per se that cause divisions, but attempts to protect and homogenise narratives around belonging. Hage has written about ‘paranoid nationalism’ and what he calls a ‘white fantasy’ about who can, and who should belong to Australia (Hage 1998, 2003), which can partly explain the 2005 Cronulla Riots in Sydney (Noble 2009). In Europe, anti-immigrant parties are growing, each attempting to ‘protect’ the nation from outside influences. Slavoj Zizek links the creation of insiders and outsiders with the violence sometimes perpetrated by those positioned on the outside, such as during the 2005 riots in Paris suburbs (Zizek 2009).

Considering that a multicultural drift is happening and despite Australia generally being considered as a ‘socially cohesive’ nation (Markus and Dharmalingam 2013) Connolly’s, Hage’s and Zizek’s arguments signal the constant need to re-articulate national boundaries and narratives, not to tighten them or retreat to an imagined past that places boundaries around who can or should belong (whether an ethnic or cultural past). For them the ideal must be to open the narratives up and expose how essentialising, dichotomising or fragmentising boundaries are articulated and enacted, whether this is coming from the so called ‘left’ or the ‘right’.

Multiculturalism or continue assimilation?

The Whitlam Government introduced Multiculturalism as a national policy in 1973, which advocated integration, but not assimilation. In this context, integration acknowledged that migrants can retain their original cultures and languages, and that demanding they completely change past habits and cultural practices was not only unattainable, but also undesirable. The
idea behind multiculturalism was the claim that all cultures would have a place in Australia and that they should all be embraced as part of Australia. This policy, however, was at the time criticised and continues to be criticised, both from the left and the right.

Multiculturalism is not a neutral term; different forces and different ideologies shape it. Australia has had a version of a multicultural policy ever since the Whitlam years. Ho (2013) frames multiculturalism as a positive development and explains that multiculturalism in Australia has had three phases; a ‘social justice’ phase (1972 to 1980s), a ‘productive diversity’ phase (1980s to 1990s) and a ‘social cohesion’ phase (2000s to the present) (Ho 2013: 31). Each has had its own focus and priorities. Stuart Hall has provided a different list of ‘multiculturalism’ that operates with a range of different intentions (Hall 2000: 210), and he has identified either a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ aspect to them. Fleras and Elliot (2002) provide a summary list of the most common potential negative features of multiculturalism, such as it is potential to secure the ‘mainstream’s’ control while promoting social divisions, enhancing the possibility of ethnic conflicts and racism.

During the Conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition government (from 1996 - 2007) multiculturalism was “out of favour in Australia” (Colic-Peisker and Farquharson 2011: 579). For conservatives this was a good thing and they advocated a more assimilationist policy positioning the Anglo-Celtic or ‘Western’ culture as the ‘core culture’, which immigrants are invited to join (Albrechtsen 2006; Dixon 1999). Even the meaning of a ‘multicultural Australia’ remains unclear. In 2011 the Labour Government of the time launched a Multicultural Policy in Australia (still in place in 2015). The then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Chris Bowen MP and the Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Kate Lundy, reaffirmed in the foreword to the policy document, the importance of a “culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation” (DSS 2011: foreword). What that exactly means is not entirely clear.

As already pointed out, Australia is a very culturally diverse nation and is becoming more culturally diverse every year. In this regard, the ‘multicultural drift’ is something that is happening regardless of whatever official policies Australia has in place. Ho and Jakubowicz write that with “over 180 different national origins, over 200 languages, and a strong Indigenous presence, Australian society faces rather different challenges” from those faced by Europe and North America (2013: 3). These numbers make it clear that in Australia many
cultures exist, hence we can say it is *multicultural* in many respects (Hodge and O’Carroll 2007), while it is still possible to claim it remains very much, as a nation, linked to its British and ‘Western’ history (Jupp 2002). It is within this context we can ask the ‘multicultural question’ (Hall 2000); how can people with different cultural traditions, backgrounds, understandings, world-views and habits live together?

Considering Australia’s past assimilation policy, shaping the nation according to an Anglo-Celtic core culture, the move to a multicultural space has some challenges concerning ‘belonging to the nation’. For example Sandercock argues that,

> A sense of belonging in a multicultural society cannot be based on race, religion, or ethnicity but needs to be based on a shared commitment to political community. Such commitment requires an empowered citizenry (Sandercock 2003: 103)

To identify a shared commitment is not straightforward. Philip and Smith (2000) provide some detail about what elements are perceived as essentially Australian, and find they have not changed markedly compared to those elements perceived as essentially Australian prior to the advent of multiculturalism. Smith and Philips (2001) look at who is seen as un-Australian, and find that specific traits (always negative) are linked to those seen as un-Australian. For example, ‘intolerance’ is un-Australian, but Smith and Philips (2001) argue that such a claim seems to be based more on a subjective reading of the Australian character, based on ideals, myths and selective narratives. One has to ask ‘what nation would claim one of its characteristics to be ‘intolerance’?’

The contested history of Australia's ‘multiculturalism’ has been well documented elsewhere (Castle 1992, Colic-Peisker and Farquharson 2011, Jupp 2002, Lopez 2000). The question of what multiculturalism (as a national and social policy) should look like, or if it even should exist, in a multicultural society (which most societies are and particularly Australia’s) is not easy to answer. Modood (2007) argued for ‘multicultural citizenship’, in which different individuals and groups (a part of his argument) experience equal membership of the nation. Some have argued that despite all the theories about multiculturalism, there is a developed ‘everyday multiculturalism’ in the ‘West’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009). However, everyday multiculturalism does not mean there are no explicit and implicit cultural hierarchies in ‘Western’ societies that privilege some and not others, while ignoring the evidence of some
areas remaining monocultural in their make up while other areas are very culturally diverse.

If ‘cultural diversity and social cohesion’ is the aim of multiculturalism, it is worthwhile to examine certain different dichotomising notions, such as between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ or ‘Australian’ and ‘un-Australian’. This has been a task for different writers who attempt to challenge essentialist or dichotomising thinking about the nation and national cultures. I will explore this from a more theoretical level in Chapter 4, but the next sections provide socio-political insight into some of the contestation that has occurred in more recent times.

**Multiculturalism challenged and present contestations**

In 2006 Albrechtsen, an opinion writer for The Australian newspaper, wrote; “Move over, multiculturalism, your time is past” (2006). However, In 2011 Colic-Peisker and Farquharson (2011) argued that multiculturalism, as an ideology, re-emerged in Australia with both sides of politics supporting a ‘multicultural Australia’. Critics have pointed out that a support for multiculturalism does not automatically mean all cultures and all groups are perceived as equal. Yuval-Davis et al. refer to Parekh (2000) and write; “Multiculturalist policies still allow the naturalization of the western hegemonic culture to continue, while minority cultures become reified and differentiated from normative human behaviour” (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 523). Such national narratives can paint metaphorical ‘lines in the sand’ (Noble 2009) about who belongs to the nation since they are able to perpetuate social hierarchies. Such ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012) can be maintained and normalised by dominant groups.

In Australia, multiculturalism has been perceived as being challenged by a number of connected and interlinked events and incidents that have sometimes been used to feed ‘moral panic’ (Cohen 1972; Marr 2011), for example around asylum seekers and refugees. It has been used to create ‘wedge politics’ (Ward 2002) in Australia (for example, see Marr and Wilkinson 2003, Manning 2004, Mares 2002, Noble 2009), while asylum seekers and refugees continue to settle into communities, permanently or temporarily, and live within or around this contested space. The ‘wedges’ are not just coming from one side of politics, but from all sides of politics, potentially creating divisions among Australians and a fear of the ‘Other’.
Fear of the ‘Other’ can lead to ‘governmental belonging’ or a sense that you are entitled to ‘own’ the nation and decide, or tolerate, who should belong or not (Hage 1998). Jupp argues that the ‘ethnic threat’, the ‘social divisions’ and the ‘political correctness’, which conservatives saw as growing during the Australian Labour Government from 1983 to 1996, eventually led to (whether or not this was the reason) the election of a Liberal Prime Minister, John Howard. He was openly against multiculturalism as a policy and ‘political correct’ discourses among the ‘elites’ (Jupp 2002). Even though the Anglo-Celtic core was never threatened, the changed sentiment was one of defence. Not just regarding the imagined past at the centre of ‘The History Wars,’ but an imagined coherent core culture; entitled to control the national space. Hage calls this entitlement the ‘white fantasy’ (Hage 1998). It contributed to growing and more open hostility towards multiculturalism, among politicians and some social commentators in the media.

But even among people who argue that they are ‘citizens of the world’, aligning with a ‘cosmopolitan’ worldview (Kymlicka and Walker 2012), naturalised cultural hierarchies can be accepted and nurtured (even though it might be done subconsciously). Cosmopolitanism, as an ideology (or ethos) is a complex area and requires more space to explore than is available here (Brown and Held 2010) but in this section I will look at incidents that can be seen as an antithesis of what cosmopolitanism is supposed to be about and its ethical approach to human relations.

Australia, over the last 15-20 years, has witnessed a number of incidents which have caused Australians to reflect on the questions, who is Australian and what does that mean? It is a story that cannot be separated from the colonial story and the development of modern Australia. The emergence of the One Nation Party in the late 1990s, the ‘Tampa’ incident in 2001 (described in a section below), the attack on the World Trade Centre the same year, the Bali bombing in 2002, the ‘ethnic crimes’ in Sydney and the ‘race riots’ in the suburb of Cronulla, south of Sydney; also the angry and violent protests in Sydney by a group of Australian Muslims in reaction to an American made movie that mocked Islam: these are some of the incidents that have sparked debates about Australian national narratives and how they should be imagined. Sometimes the un-Australian has been identified as Muslim Australians or people from the Middle East, in what Manning likens to an Australian Orientalism (Manning 2004). Many of these incidents have been cited as examples of what Hodge and O’Carroll called ‘borderworks’ creating schismogenesis (divisions) in society.
Noble (2005) argues these incidents make it challenging for some groups to feel ‘comfortable’ in certain public places, at certain times. Here comfort is linked to feeling ‘at home’, which might not be because of some significant episode, but a general sense of unease or ‘discomfort’; the sense that one does not really belong in this space. The person experiences what Noble calls ‘ontological insecurity’ (ibid). It is here that the fragmentation Connolly (1995) wrote about might be experienced.

The ‘ontological insecurity’ (Noble 2005) that non-Anglo-Celtic Australians may experience is similar to the discomfort some Anglo-Celtic Australian expressed during and after the Cronulla Riots in 2005. Their discomfort was directed towards some men who were labelled by the dominant group as ‘Lebanese Australians’.

Hage (2002) argues the ‘uncanny’ feelings, or unease, among Anglo-Celtic Australians (towards non-Anglo-Celtic Australians) are rooted in a sense that they have a particular position and role to play in Australia. The ‘Lebanese men’ and their actions on the beach in 2005 were seen as a threat to the normalised ‘white’ dominance. Whether this schismogenesis should be racialised can be debated, but Hage provides an interesting explanation for the reaction to the men from multicultural Western Sydney by the more monocultural (or Anglo-Celtic dominated) residents of the beach suburb in the South. These men, Hage explains, are perceived to be belonging too much, they are too comfortable in their ‘ethnic identities’ for the comfort of the Anglo-Celtic group; they are not quiet and passive. According to Hage, these men create their own capital and their own habitus, and that is seen as a threat to the Anglo-Celtic Australian majority who feel they are losing their grip. To see the threat one has to buy into the stereotype that there is something (a core culture) that can be threatened by an outside force (the Other). Such sentiment can then lead to reactionary nationalism, which is discussed in the next section.

Reactionary nationalism

Mary Crock wrote in 1998; “What is clear in the present climate of economic uncertainty and lessening of social cohesion is that sympathy for refugee claimants in Australia is low” (1998: 76). This climate provides a platform for those who view asylum seekers and refugees

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3 It is worth pointing out that even among supporters of Multiculturalism, similar labels have been used. For example, Bob Carr, a former New South Wales Premier used the term ‘Lebanese youth gangs’ in 2002 to describe Australian men with a Lebanese ancestry (Jupp 2002: 120).
with suspicion or as a threat to ‘Our way of life’ or being. It is part of what Yuval-Davis explains as the ‘autochthonic politics of belonging’, which functions as a more cultural version of ‘new racism’, something Yuval-Davis explains is growing in Europe within the radical right, but is also evident within minority groups and claims for spatial/territorial belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011c). ‘Autochthony’ is a concept Yuval-Davis borrows from Peter Geschiere (2009) who uses it to explain claims for belonging based on the spatial and territorial markers, often grounded in a specific linkage to the land, i.e. being the ‘original’ owner or occupant of that land. It is a notion that indicates how certain groups develop reactionary nationalism leading to a fear of the other as someone potentially disruptive to the social cohesion or hegemonic structures and hierarchies that they believe are natural and rightful in their space.

The 1990s was characterised by such an anxious time that, in the late 1990s, Pauline Hanson emerged on the political platform in Australia, tapping into underlying tensions and anxieties, both within minority groups and parts of the mainstream. She evoked a reactionary nationalism that continued to be stirred and challenged in the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

Hanson expressed discomfort, but from a white Anglo-Celtic Australian perspective. She perceived the ideologies of the left, but also ideologies from elites on both sides, as a threat to her ‘common sense’ of belonging in Australia. Hanson openly advocated the protection of the Anglo-Celtic ‘ordinary’ Australians and viewed migrants with suspicion, ‘Aboriginal welfare’ with contempt, and ‘elites’ with disdain (Sawer and Hindess 2004). An ‘ordinary Australian’ in Hanson’s narrative is a person assimilated into the Anglo-Celtic core culture. Here the ‘neutral group’ is, according to Hanson, under a threat of being sidelined. Suvendrini Perera, focusing on ‘whiteness’, explained that Hanson and her adherents perceived that their ‘white interests’ were threatened (Perera 1999). Perera writes that there was a “mobilisation of white Australian identity...Hansonism invokes the success story of assimilation, in which 'we' all become the same, or at least potentially the same” (Perera 1999: 187). Perera refers to Stuart Hall to explain that even people not agreeing publicly with Hanson, could still take on, or at least struggle to argue against, the ‘respectable nationalism’, such as a love for the country that Hanson promoted and embraced, a belonging that outsiders or special interest groups challenged. Any criticism, or ridicule, of Hanson in the media, triggered more support since it was a sign that elites or intellectuals were against her (Jupp 2002; Sawer and Hindess 2004). Jupp (2002) argues that Hanson’s reactionary nationalism changed the political discourse and paved the way for what he views became the punitive
asylum seeker policies in the 2000s.

Hanson’s One Nation Party used ‘common sense’ reactionary nationalism and populism to argue against immigration. However, the refusal in August 2001 to allow the container ship MV Tampa to enter Australian waters after its captain had rescued 438 asylum seekers, and the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001 changed the political discourse even further. These events paved the way for what some writers argue became widespread stigmatisation of asylum seekers and refugees (MacCallum 2002; Mares 2002; Marr 2011; Marr and Wilkinson 2003).

The attack on the twin towers in New York in September 2001 was a major international event. It was described as an attack on the ‘West’ and all that the ‘West’ stands for. George Bush said famously you are ‘either with us or against us’, dichotomising the world into two. The PM of Australia at the time, John Howard, was in New York when the attacked occurred and Osuri and Banerjee argue that his comments at the time; “universalises the event as an attack on humanity” (Osuri and Banerjee 2004: 166). It was an attack on ‘Us’ by the ‘Other’. Osuri and Banerjee explore how this event became a signifier for how Australia is “a white, Western country” (ibid: 160). The discourses, by politicians and in the media, contributed to dichotomising notions that there was one ‘civilized, free and democratic’ world and one ‘uncivilised or barbaric’ world. There was a hierarchy, both in Hanson’s populism and in comments about ‘West’ and ‘East’ that was normalised and taken for granted. ‘White’ or ‘Western’ people naturally embody the traits given to the ‘West’ while the ‘Others’, the ‘third world-looking’ (a term used by Hage 1998) do not. Instead this group have to demonstrate, or convince the West (i.e. ‘Us’) that they do indeed have the same traits, while never really becoming a ‘Westerner’ or white, or continue to remain the opposite; the Other. When Bush said ‘you are either with us or against us’ it was a clear indication that some wanted to see the world in ‘black and white’, divided into ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. This theme was re-occurring and was articulated in the mass media (Manning 2004, 2006). Noam Chomsky (2001) attempted to contextualise the incident at the time, but most counter hegemonic narratives were ignored in the mass media, both in the US and in Australia.

The asylum seeker fear and populism

John Howard famously said in 2001, in the middle of a tense national discussion about asylum seekers and refugees, that “we will decide who comes to this country and the
circumstances in which they come” (Liberal Party election launch, October the 28th, 2001). Mungo MacCallum wrote shortly after Howard’s comment that it “echo[s]… Pauline Hanson’s: ‘If I can invite who I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country”’ (MacCallum 2002: 65).

John Howard’s call to protect the borders was not new (Vrachnas et al; 2005: 1-2) invoking ‘the fear of aliens invading Australia’s shore” (Skrbis 2006: 179). However, after the terrorist attack on September 11, asylum seekers, or ‘boat people from the Middle East’, were seen as a potential threat, as ‘folk devils’ (Poyntin et al. 2004), because they represented that which ‘We’, in the ‘West’ fear, that is our enemies (Darcy and Bolzan 2006). Terms such as ‘boat people’, ‘Middle Eastern’ or ‘Muslim’ were used as a ‘dog whistle’ to evoke a response and rejection of this group of people (Manning 2004).

Howard introduced Temporary Protection Visas in 1999, which gave recognised refugees only temporary protection while living in the community but with limited rights (and limited family reunion rights). Then in 2001, he introduced the so called ‘Pacific Solution’, which placed asylum seekers in camps, away from Australia’s mainland. Both policies focused on reducing the number of asylum seekers coming to Australia by boat. It was an extension of the mandatory detention policy, initiated by the Keating (Labor) Government in 1992 to respond to Indochinese boat arrivals that mandatorily placed asylum seekers in detention. It is a policy that has been criticised by UN human rights treaty committees (Zifcak 2003). But, as Jupp (2002) writes, in terms of refugee policies, the pacific solution was “more draconian than that in most liberal democracies” (2002: 198). However, Howard and the coalition won the federal election in 2001, and the electorate have indicated a continued support for tough border measures since.

Over a decade later the Coalition went to the 2013 election saying they will ‘Stop the Boats’ while the sitting Labor Government placed full page ads in newspapers (in Australia and abroad) and released statements warning that those who arrive on a boat as an asylum seeker, would never be settled in Australia. Instead, asylum seekers would be transferred to another country, possibly Papua New Guinea (Toohey 2014). The term ‘illegal’ is still used in reference to asylum seekers arriving by boats, which again can be understood as a ‘dog whistle’, to suggest they are criminals and should be detained.
However, despite the contestations around people arriving on boats to Australia, in comparison with countries in Europe also accessed by unannounced arrivals, such as Greece, Italy and Turkey, the number of people arriving by boat seeking refuge is relatively low. Considering Australia’s past efforts to control and dictate immigration, some people view the fear of the boats as a sign that xenophobia and racism is still present in the core of Australian society (Jupp 2002; McMaster 2002). For example, MacCallum argued that the actions by John Howard in 2001 “has given free rein to racism in Australia... [because he has]... positively encouraged it” (2002: 65).

McMaster in fact sees the attitudes and the policies towards asylum seekers as the expected progression of the White Australia policy (McMaster 2002). Moreover, Neumann (2004) outlines many historical similarities in Australia’s treatment of humanitarian entrants and refugees during the White Australia policy, with the present time.

## Conclusion

The contested Australian national narrative about who is able to be Australian continues both to be rejected and reaffirmed. I have shown how Australia’s national narrative cannot be dislocated from its socio-historical past. The current attitudes and arguments about Australian identity are shaped by this history, and it is within this space that new migrants arrive.

It is possible to argue that a ‘white’ cultural hierarchy is still maintained, despite multiculturalism having entered the national discourse (for example in the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council report of 1977) (Jupp 2002: 85; Hage 1998), suggesting a cultural hierarchy and multiculturalism can exist at the same time.

In this chapter I have attempted to paint a picture linking contested national narratives to Indigenous belonging, debates about multiculturalism, the divided border protection measures, terrorism and reactionary nationalism of the 2000s. The contested discourses stemming from this period have remained, and continue to create social divisions regarding belonging in Australian society, often based on stereotypes about the ‘Other’ and/or a reactionary nationalism that is shaped by a desire to control the national narrative about who can and should belong. It is these divisions that Hodge and O’Carroll call ‘schismogenesis’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2007), potentially shaping new migrants’ sense of belonging in
What is seen by some as misguided arguments and punitive measures towards asylum seekers have been recently explored and contemplated by well-known Australian authors who attempt to re-articulate thinking around asylum seekers and refugees (see Scott and Keneally 2013). However, the election of the Liberal Coalition Government in 2013 demonstrated that what was outlined as a tough approach towards asylum seekers arriving on boats (‘Stop the boats’) was, at least implicitly, accepted by the majority of the electorate.

As stated, this thesis is not about policy per se, or different asylum seeker approaches, but about how a group of men with refugee backgrounds talk about their experiences within this contested national space and the contested political milieu, and what that can tell us about their sense of belonging in Australia and to Australia.
Chapter 3: Situating the research in the literature

Exiles, émigrés, refugees, and expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings, and the creativity as well as the sadness that can be seen in what they do is one of the experiences that has still to find its chroniclers (Edward W. Said 2000)

Introduction

This chapter will explore what the research literature tells us about belonging in Australia (and other settler countries). It focuses on men from refugee backgrounds in terms of experiences around connections, feeling ‘at home’ and being part of society, concepts which emerge from the literature as intrinsic to belonging. The chapter will also identify major gaps in knowledge of the experiences of adult males (I use ‘men’ from here on) from refugee backgrounds when they settle and are naturalised as Australians. This knowledge is required to understand what different factors might shape belonging for this group of men in Australia.

It is recognised in Australia that “refugees are a particularly marginalised group in society, who face...barriers to...social inclusion” (Mestan 2008: v). However, O’Neill and Hubbard explain that most research about asylum seekers focuses on basic needs while “[q]uestions of ontological security, emotional well-being, and senses of belonging and emplacement have been less seldom explored” (O’Neill and Hubbard 2010: 46, see also Rishbeth and Finney 2006). Hibbins and Pease focus on the experiences of migrant males and they argue that there “is a need for a much greater explicit recognition of men’s migration experiences” (Hibbins and Pease 2009: 7).

According to Byrne (2006) we know even less about men from refugee backgrounds. This is concerning considering that men from refugee backgrounds’ “levels of wellbeing decrease” over time in Australia (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011: 39). Because of this, Correa-Velez and Gifford argue that continued research and data about men from refugee backgrounds “is highly important, particularly in the context of the recently developed Australian National Men’s Health Policy which has called for the need to build a strong evidence base on males at risk of poor health” (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011: 4). The National Male Health Policy
(NMHP 2010) makes it clear that males who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers in Australia are at high risk of ill health because they are a group who potentially are socially excluded, might experience isolation, are usually not from English speaking backgrounds and they are likely to have low skilled or high risk work.

As new groups of refugees arriving in Australia, they face new challenges for themselves and various service providers (Pittaway and Muli 2009). Numerous Australian research reports, including those by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC 2009, 2010), the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA 2014, 2013, 2012, 2010), La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC 2009) and The Centre for Refugee Research at University of New South Wales (Pittaway and Muli 2009), investigate the different cohorts of refugee populations in Australia, and identify the need for continued re-thinking about how we approach people from refugee backgrounds. The studies also emphasise a need to continue researching as a result of the diversity of the populations arriving (Fozdar and Hartley 2013).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also identifies the need for a specific focus on males. They state on their website; “Adult men and boys are often neglected in discussions of forced displacement, and yet they have particular needs and are confronted with specific threats to their life and liberty” (UNHCR 2014b: online). This is complicated when considering that it is often male asylum seekers who suffer from negative stigma, such as being perceived as ‘bogus’ refugees⁴ as opposed to women, who might be perceived as “‘victim[s] of patriarchal domination” (Mascini and van Bochove 2009: 128) and have humanitarian grounds for asylum.

This chapter starts with a clarification of what we understand belonging to be, followed by a clarification of the question, ‘who are refugees’? It then explains the approach I have taken in terms of exploring this particular group and the relevant research. This is followed by an in depth look at the Australian situation. I then focus on issues relevant to the current exploration of belonging in Australia, for men from refugee backgrounds, which emerge from the literature: ‘the Settlement process in Australia’, ‘Integration’, ‘Health and Wellbeing’; ‘Identity and Masculinities’, ‘Discrimination, Racism and Employment’. I

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⁴ It is this Othering that the previous chapter mentions in relation to ‘dog whistle’ politics (Manning 2004).
identify some of the limitations with the research revealed and argue that this research project will fill an obvious gap in the literature.

The literature review began with searches in academic databases with a strong sociological and social science focus, using key words, including: refugee, forced migration, identity, belonging, integration but also male, masculinity and men, in different combinations. The aim was to identify research that focused more on post-settlement processes, rather than pre-settlement processes and research that took a sociological perspective, rather than a trauma or biomedical focus. The review then expanded to include Australian and United Nation’s reports on forced immigration and settlement, with particular attention given to Australian reports about settlement experiences.

What is belonging?

This thesis focuses on belonging. Belonging is explored in more detail in the next chapter, using theories to unpack the concept. However, it is important to briefly clarify how belonging is understood in this research. Yuval-Davis (2011a) argues that belonging is about an emotional connection or attachment (to something or someone). Therefore ‘to belong’ is described as experiencing being connected, included, safe, at home and to be ‘at ease’ somewhere, and this is the ‘emotional attachment’ (Anthias 2006; Hage 2002; Hamaz and Vasta 2009; Ignatieff 1995; May 2011; Taylor 2009; Yuval-Davis 2011a). In this context, however, Yuval-Davis (2011a) explains that belonging cannot be separated from sociopolitical, socio-historical and discursive aspects (referred to as the ‘politics of belonging’). It is these aspects that society or social groups can change or adjust, while the ‘emotional attachment’ is a phenomenological experience that cannot be provided from the outside. Drawing from Yuval-Davis’ (2006a, 2011a) work, I am therefore less interested in belonging from a social psychological position and more on belonging as a sociological experience, i.e. shaped by relational and social factors within specific ‘structures’.

Who are refugees?

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) there are around 51.2 million forcibly displaced people around the world. Most of these people live in ‘developing’ countries, often in camps and with limited resources. Some are classified as refugees (around 16.7 million), some are asylum seekers (over 1.2 million) but the largest
group is internally displaced people (over 33.3 million). Global events and changing international relations make these numbers difficult to determine and they are at best estimates of the number of displaced people at any point in time (numbers from UNHCR 2014a: 2).

According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (sometimes referred to as the Geneva Convention\(^5\)), a refugee is someone who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UN 1951)

The convention is not without its critics. For example, Professor Mirko Bagaric argues that the refugee convention is outdated because it does not take into account the precarious situation in many developing countries where most refugees linger with little hope. As a result, it encourages people to take dangerous journeys; it gives protection to people who can afford to (are able to) leave their countries, while it leaves the most poor and vulnerable in camps far from protection (Bagaric 2013). However, the convention is still the international framework for how refugees are defined and it states their rights to seek asylum to signatory countries, such as Australia.

Once a person has been recognised as a refugee and they have re-settled in a new country (such as Australia), they cease to be ‘a refugee’. To call a person ‘a refugee’ who is now a permanent resident or citizen of their ‘host’ country can be misleading, and I would argue, therefore to be avoided.

In Australia a person can either arrive as a recognised refugee via the UNHCR program, in the offshore resettlement program, or they can arrive unannounced and apply for refugee protection once on Australian territory. This is according to the onshore protection program and these individuals in the latter group are asylum seekers until their cases are determined. These two programs make up the total amount of humanitarian visas Australia offers. The

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\(^5\) The Refugee Conventions were signed in Geneva but the ‘Geneva Conventions’ refers to the four treaties that deal with international law and conduct relating to parties at war.
intake is adjusted each year and it is the subject of ongoing debate. For 2012-2013 it was 20 019, which was an increase from just under 14 000 in previous years (IMMI 2013). The cohort changes every year, with recent cohorts coming from the former Yugoslavia, certain parts of Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Sri Lanka and Myanmar6 (RCOA 2014).

It is important to clarify that the current research is not actually focusing on issues around refugees or asylum seekers, even though I explore research that focuses on ‘refugees’ and ‘settlement’. Instead this research is about belonging in a social space for a specific group of new Australian men, who have a unique background as refugees. It is of interest because as a group they can be understood as not being part of the dominant or hegemonic group in Australia, even though such an assumption needs to be made carefully. Because of this, I do not seek to take a position in relation to refugee or asylum seeker policies in Australia, even though the recommendations might be used to re-conceptualise how settlement policies and public discourses could be shaped.

In the following section, I explore some of the ways men from refugee or migrant backgrounds have been researched and constructed. I will argue that sometimes the claims and the generalised findings contribute more to ‘presupposed oppositions’ than to insight into the men’s lives.

Diverse not homogenous

A substantial body of research exists which appears to reduce refugees to passive victims or a “homogenous collective” (Halilovich 2005: 60), which fails to take into account the diverse backgrounds and experiences that refugees have around the world. Other research is ‘problem-oriented’ (Rishbeth and Finney 2006), reinforcing stereotypes, (ibid) creating divisions where ‘They’ are asked about ‘Their’ contribution, while ‘We’ (other migrants and ‘host nation citizens’) do not need to prove ‘Our’ contribution. To assume there is a homogenous collective that needs to be integrated is evident in the perspective of seeing integration as ‘one-way’. This can be linked to assimilation (Castle et al. 2002) where the refugees are seen as ‘one collective’ that needs to ‘fit’ in with the rest, compared with a ‘two-

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6 As pointed out earlier, I will refer to Myanmar as Burma since that is how the men who originated from Myanmar spoke about their country of origin. However, different authors use ‘Myanmar’.
7 ‘Host’ is a term that can be contested, since it implies a ‘host’ and a ‘guest’ and it is possible to ask; when does this relationship end?
way’ process focusing on both the refugee and the settler country, both with their own agency and responsibilities. The two-way approach has been the focus in integration literature (Ager and Strang 2008; Castle et al. 2002; Strang and Ager 2010) but even this approach does not guarantee the relationship is even and equal, or that ‘refugees’ are not stereotyped or homogenised. Because of this, it is important to make the point that ‘refugees’ are a diverse group of people, with different abilities and wishes (Agier 2010). They often, however, share some challenges when trying to settle into a new country, such as Australia (RCOA 2014).

Sociological, not biomedical

Westoby (2008, 2009) argues that post-conflict and post-trauma recovery should be understood as a ‘social process’ and not described in a trauma discourse that requires psychological or physiological intervention, at least not a priori. Carlsson et al. (2006) explain that in their research with refugee men, “[p]ost-migratory factors are… significantly associated with emotional distress and health-related quality of life, and potentially modifiable factors, such as social relations and occupation, are of special interest” (Carlson et al. 2006: 51). Such research has identified the ability to ‘heal’ and deal with pre-migration trauma, or violence exposure, as connected to the post-migration process (Pittaway 2005; Kaplan and Webster 2003; Silove 2003; Westoby and Ingamells 2010). It also highlights the importance of recognising the ongoing connections between ‘individual experiences’ and one’s ‘socio-political context’ (Brough et al. 2012).

The above approach moves away from regarding the refugees as victims needing ‘treatment’, but as survivors who have their own set of tools to cope. This is a perspective that Eastmond illuminated by explaining how a person “outside of the family – the school, the health clinic – often formulates the problem when a family is referred to us, but we often find that [families] have other ways of coping” (Eastmond 2011: 285). The Bosnian refugees she worked with “did not readily acknowledge the identity of being traumatised refugees with its connotations of disability and need for treatment” (ibid: 285). This is evoked by what Westoby refers to as a ‘dominant trauma discourse’, which is not always helpful in terms of refugees’ resettlement (Westoby 2009; Westoby and Ingamells 2010).

The refugee process starts when a person flees their country of origin. Most research consulted is concerned with refugees and forced migrants who have arrived at a specific ‘host nation’ (whether through the official channels or the unofficial channels). This current
research focuses on possible issues and challenges around the ‘settlement process’, which start from when they arrive, but remain ongoing. It is a process that includes ‘healing’ (from Westoby 2009) past and current social ‘wounds’ and negotiating new challenges and ways of being, and may, in more or less explicit ways, be linked to processes of ‘belonging’.

**Intersectional complexities**

The research consulted indicated that many intersectional challenges are facing forced migrants on arrival in Australia and beyond. Challenges, such as employment, housing, language, education, social support, discrimination and racism. Research among refugee men or migrant men acknowledges the complexity of this experience and the multiple dimensions in which men from refugee background’s need to be cognisant and skilled in order to negotiate their new home (Byrne 2006; Chafic 2008; CIRCA 2010; Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; Farah 2007; MIC 2006).

The IntegraRef report identifies both an auto-biographical level and a more socio-structural level to the refugee experience:

> [T]he structural variables (such as medical assistance, economic self-sufficiency, independent housing, actual use of services, and so on) intersect individual variables explaining why - given identical conditions - some migration journeys are successful while others fail or determine involutions. (IntegraRef 2008: 29)

A number of research reports point out the gap in, and ongoing need for, specific services for women (Mestan 2008) because they lack capital, have child and family responsibilities and experience other specific challenges. Some researchers argue that a “male-centered paradigm” has led to a lack of focus on refugee women’s experiences (Deacon and Sullivan 2009: 272). While it is clear that refugee women have specific gender related challenges that are ongoing and must be addressed (Easteal 1996; Ferguson and Pittaway 1999; Reed 2003; Rees and Pease 2007; Kaplan and Webster 2003; Lenette 2013); programs focusing on men are less common. The current ‘male focused’ research has been developed as a result of claims that in Australia, refugee men are under-researched and data about refugee men’s wellbeing and health are limited (Byrne 2006; Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; NMHP 2010).
The settlement process in Australia

Whatever pathway a person has taken in leaving their home country, a forced migrant faces the task of re-settling in Australia or, if we use the term in its most basic form, to ‘integrate’ into Australian society. Fozdar and Hartley write that in “Australia, successful settlement and integration are the key objectives of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program” (2013: 24), but it is not without its challenges. Pittaway and Muli, who initially state that Australia’s settlement services are world-class, argue “there are obvious gaps and shortcomings in both the models and the services provided” (2009: 69) and assert that continued research is required to explore and identify these shortcomings (ibid).

Once refugees arrive they are provided with a range of support and services, some from the Government and others from various non-government organisations. Most services are for the initial settlement period of the first year. Set hours of free language training are available as are cultural orientation programs. After the initial period, support may be available but often it is targeted to specific groups (RCOA 2014).

In an overview of Australia’s refugee intake and services, Fozdar and Hartley write that “research suggests that refugees do not settle as easily as other migrants in Australia” (2013: 27) but they caution that these results may not be reliable as research often conflates refugees, migrants or specific religious groups (ibid). What is clear however is that “most refugees arriving in Australia are poor in terms of income and assets” (ibid: 28). They do not just have specific and practical challenges such as learning the language, negotiating a new culture and finding suitable employment (Mestan 2008; see also ECCV 2008); they also face many of the challenges other economically disadvantaged groups and individuals face. They can therefore be positioned as potentially vulnerable to the health and wellbeing challenges associated with low socio-economic groups in general (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003).

In comparison with other migrants, one finding in an extensive report covering the first five years of settlement, by the Australian Survey Research Group for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, states that for humanitarian entrants, “personal well being (levels of happiness, confidence and comfort) is considerably lower than other migrants, and these levels do not change significantly over time” (ASRG 2011: 2). Their findings support the claims made by Correa-Velez and Gifford (2011); the wellbeing of men from refugee
backgrounds decreases over time.

One attempt to explore the issues experienced by refugee men is outlined in the report ‘Collaborative Responsibility: A Capacity Building Approach based on research with Recently Arrived Muslim Men’ (Chafic 2008). It reports on a project based in Sydney, Australia, that engaged with Muslim men (mainly refugees) to allow their voices to be heard concerning their settlement experience. One key finding is that the Muslim men expressed a wish to learn, so “they could help themselves, their families and/or their community’s” (Chafic 2008: 16) and that all parties (the men, the media, the Government and the Muslim Community) could take some responsibility to create an inclusive society (Ibid: 16), indicating a two-way approach to integration. The wish to ‘help themselves’ echoes the claim made by Westoby (2008, 2009), that it is important to find ways to support people to help themselves and their community, rather than view them as passive victims. An example of a practical attempt to support settlement and associated challenges is described by Bunde-Birouste et al. (2010) who argue that sport can be used to overcome social exclusion for refugees living in Australia. They do not, however, explore the reasons for exclusions.

In terms of settlement services and settlement orientation in Australia, some shortcomings are identified by Chafic (2008):

During the consultation process Muslim men mentioned several times that they had not received any real “orientation” to Australia upon arrival. While many had received support from Centrelink or from their Sponsor, they were generally unaware of available services especially in regards to family problems, finding employment and affordable accommodation as soon as they arrived. Some spoke of a period of adjustment to a “western” way of life and the personal freedoms associated with it. Others mentioned that more information sessions tended to be organized for women and that they were too shy to ask for information. (Chafic 2008: 30)

The suggestion here is that being unaware of what one’s possibilities are, or how to deal with practical challenges, can make it more difficult to ‘integrate’ into Australian society. Similarly, Pittaway and Muli found in their qualitative research that the participants wanted further information about the Australian culture to be given upon arrival (2009: 18). These claims are consistent with findings that suggest humanitarian entrants want to succeed and be
successful in settling in Australia but need the tools (including structural support) to do so (Hugo 2010).

One attempt to provide specific and creative support for men is explored in a report titled Round Fire Discussion Group. A Therapeutic Group Program for Southern Sudanese Men (MIC 2006). The report describes therapeutic sessions with South Sudanese men, who are Christian and from the same tribe in South Sudan. The focus was on introducing the men to Australian culture, gender roles and new ways of thinking “outside the box” (MLC 2006: 6), in relation to these concepts. It was an acknowledgement that settlement is not only about the ‘nuts and bolts’ of living in a new place but also involves knowledge of culture, attitudes, norms and behaviours. However, even though the psychotherapeutic approach can be useful, it seems important to ask whether the assumptions are not pathologising the men as ‘deviant’ (in need of change in order to ‘fit in’ or ‘function’), while missing external determinants that shape their experiences?

To avoid pathologising men, or people from refugee backgrounds in general, significant research has focused on seeking out their voices, to hear about their settlement experiences, or to engage in a ‘dialogue’ with people from refugee backgrounds (Westoby 2009). For example, the report by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC 2010) is called ‘In our own words’, while Pittaway and Muli’s (2009) report is called “We have a voice, hear us”. A similar aim was reflected in the rationale for the large SettleMEN project at La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011). They followed “233 recently arrived men from refugee backgrounds” (ibid: 1) in South East Queensland to hear about their experiences and to identify the external determinants that influence the men’s experiences.

Such research indicates “that effective settlement services (should) be provided to all new arrivals, both for their wellbeing, and also to promote community harmony. The government has an obligation to create a social context for successful integration” (Pittaway and Muli 2009: 68). What the social context is, or what should shape the approaches to how new Australians are supported and understood is not, however, entirely clear from the research.
The settlement process and mandatory detention

This research does not attempt to provide a full account of this policy, but considering that some of the men who participated in this research spent time in detention centres, and that research has identified the long-term effects of such detention on the people detained (Fleay and Briskman 2013) it is important to highlight concerns related to this practice.

Australia has had a policy of mandatory detention of asylum seekers since the Keating Government in 1992 and, despite international and national criticism of this policy (Marr and Wilkinson 2003; Sidoti 2006; Zifcak 2003) it is a policy that has continued under both Labor and Liberal (Coalition) run Governments in Australia.

In Australia, since the Tampa incident in 2001 (mentioned in Chapter 2) and the ‘Pacific Solution’ (which was dismantled and then reinstated, to a degree, by the former Labor Government and continued by the current Coalition Government) many asylum seekers have been sent to detention centres. Some of these centres are located on the Australian mainland, while others are in places far from Australia’s mainland; such as Nauru, an island in the Pacific Ocean, and Manus Island, north of mainland Papua New Guinea. The asylum seekers, including children and families, have been detained indefinitely and some for many years. Most who were detained in early 2000 have been released into the Australian community, however, those currently detained have an unsure future due to the changed policy approach in late 2013 of the new Coalition Government, promising that no new arrivals will ever settle in Australia.

Long-term detention, however, can have a detrimental health and wellbeing effect on individuals, and children are particularly vulnerable (Gale and Dudley 2006). This was the focus of an inquiry in 2004, by the then Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), and the recent inquiry (tabled on February 11, 2015) by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC 2014). The HRECO, which covers a period when some of the men in this research were in detention, collected evidence from many different groups, including medical professionals, about the detention practices. They eventually published the over 900-page report ‘A Last Resort’ (HREOC 2004). The report was largely ignored in the media (Andreasson 2009) but it provides significant arguments for how mandatory detention of children (under 18) was not just a breach of the children's international human rights, but also a significant cause of mental health issues for this group.
and a significant stress for families (HREOC 2004), affecting all the people involved. However, this was not all new information. In 2002, Dormaar, who was at the time working as head psychiatrist at the Australian run detention centres on Nauru, had been very critical of the conditions on the island and the detention of mostly young men, for extended periods of time, because they caused, according to his assessments, serious mental health problems (Dormaar in Manne 2004: 54).

Similar findings to the above were identified in participant-observer research conducted inside a detention centre (Sultan and O’Sullivan 2001; see also Gale and Dudley 2006) despite the Immigration minister Philip Ruddock’s (2002) argument that the policies at that time were not punitive. A claim, however, that was rejected by the medical profession (Mares et al. 2002; Newman 2002; Silove et al. 2001; Silove 2002; Silove and Steel 2002; Steel and Silove 2001). In Mares et al. they state: “[E]very independent inquiry into immigration detention undertaken since 1998 has commented on the poor mental health of detainees” (2003: 477). Some years later, Fazel and Silove (2006) continued to argue that the detention of asylum seekers is a policy that contributes to mental health issues and other approaches are better suited. Moreover, more recent qualitative research finds that there is a heavy human cost of mandatory detention in Australia (Fleay and Briskman 2013).

Whatever the arguments for the detention of asylum seekers, it is a process that research indicates can be detrimental to those affected and their ongoing settlement process, and potentially also to other people with refugee backgrounds. However, the links between these experiences and belonging in Australia are not clear in the research reviewed, nor can it be assumed a priori.

In the following sections I examine areas that are linked to belonging where it may have been subsumed in the literature.

Belonging and settlement

Whilst research is concerned with the settlement process, the support and services available to refugees, and the specific challenges facing people settling in Australia, little to date has carefully and conceptually focused on belonging, apart from understanding it as a self-evident term; i.e. do you belong or not? For example, ‘belonging’ is not mentioned in the ASRG (2011) report, which addresses issues around wellbeing, and only once in the entire
SettleMEN report (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011: 34). It is not mentioned at all in Jakubowicz’s *The Risk of Diversity* (2009), which examines integration in Australian political culture and is only mentioned once in the 2014 report from the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA 2014), which explores challenges and future directions for Australia’s refugee and humanitarian program. Belonging is mentioned in the 2013 ‘Mapping Social Cohesion’ report (Markus and Dharmalingam 2013) but only as one category of social cohesion, and in Ager and Strang (2010) belonging is mentioned as the desired end result of integration, but it is not elaborated upon per se.

There is some evidence from quantitative research projects such as the ASRG (2011) and qualitative reports such as those by Pittaway and Muli (2009) that many humanitarian entrants have experienced discrimination and feel they do not identify as an Australian, or they do not experience ‘a sense of belonging’, even though they live here and are citizens of Australia. If belonging is feeling ‘at home’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a) this experience indicates a disconnection of refugees from Australia and ‘Australians’. However, in these and other studies, belonging remains undefined and is used without further explanation (for example: AHRC 2010, 2009; Hugo 2011; RCOA 2014, 2013; Pittaway and Muli 2009; LaRRC 2009; Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011).

Despite the limited exploration around the meaning of belonging, it has been understood as “a valuable social resource for well-being” (Caxaj and Berman 2010) and it has been linked to having good social relationships (see Buonfino and Thomson 2007; and Chapter 4).

In the LaRRC submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission on African Australians, which was entitled “Between belonging and discrimination”, belonging is understood to mean; the “person is part of Australian society” (LaRRC 2009: 6). This belonging is seen as essential for successful settlement and for “their potential to participate in Australian society” (ibid: 6) but it is not explored further. Despite ‘belonging’ only being used once, the Refugee Council of Australia still acknowledges there are concerns when any situation “hamper(s) engagement with and participation in the community” (RCOA 2014: 50) since it can lead to isolation and “increased crime” (ibid: 51). However, despite many issues raised by the RCOA, there is no specific focus on that which might impede a sense of belonging.
Integration

‘Integration’ in Australia has a troubled association with ‘assimilation’ and it “continues to be controversial and hotly debated” (Castle et al. 2002: 13). For example, Jakubowicz (2009) argues that the renewed interest in integration in Australia is a recent move based on an ideological position, in opposition to multiculturalism.

Despite this, integration is still used as a technical term in most literature that focuses on refugees and migrants, both in Australia and internationally. Fozdar and Hartley identify integration as one of the “key objectives of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program” (2013: 24) in Australia, and as such, not an ideological positioning (ibid). How to use the term is therefore not clear-cut and any policies or research using the term needs to define it. It is therefore important to clarify this notion in relation to the current research and the literature reviewed for the purpose of understanding approaches to settlement and integration issues. In this way it is possible to demonstrate how the consulted literature uses ‘integration’ as a term intrinsically linked to aspects that might shape belonging, or as a process that should lead to belonging (Ager and Strang 2008), something I will conceptually explore further in Chapter 4.

Most empirical research reviewed for this current research uses ‘integration’ to argue it is crucial for successful settlement, whether it be ‘economic integration’ or ‘social integration’ (Hugo 2011; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007). For example, in an Australian report comparing integration strategies between Australia and a number of other refugee settling countries, Gebre-Selassie states; “better integration of refugees and migrants is critical to the long-term interests of both the host community and migrant communities” (2008: 4). In reports by the Refugee Council of Australia, ‘integration’ is used as a technical and positive term (RCA 2014, 2013). However, an earlier report by the same council acknowledges that “integration potential” (RCA 2010: 10) can be a problematic policy goal, and alludes to a culturally selective approach linked to assimilation potential, something not mentioned in the latter reports. Furthermore, Gebre-Selassie identifies a “lack of integration” as a reason for certain incidents, such as the “recent confrontations between migrant and host communities in various parts of the world, including in Australia” (ibid: 4). Whether or not the lack of integration is the result of the migrants, the policies in the host communities, any dominant group or general socio-economic forces is not clarified. What Gebre-Selassie is suggesting
though is that ‘integration’ – as a verb – should be understood as an important part of the ongoing settlement process for people trying to settle into a country and establish a new home.

Integration as an ideological term can allude to cultural priorities or hierarchies, which some critics have positioned as a reaction to multiculturalism and cultural relativism. McPheron explains how “integrationism”, as a guiding ideology, positions the migrant, or refugee, as a problem that settlement education should “fix” (2010: 565), while Pittaway and Muli argue it “has in recent times been overtaken by a more sinister concept” (Pittaway and Muli 2009: 28). Jakubowicz explains how this ideology stems from the 1950s and 1960s, and that it has returned to present day settlement approaches;

    Australia’s integration future seems now to be firmly set on a course in which cultural recognition of difference is subordinated to priorities of social cohesion, as these are perceived by the current political and social elites. (Jakubowicz 2009: 33)

It is within this ideology that the re-emergence of multiculturalism has taken place (Colic-Peisker and Farquharson 2011). This ‘multiculturalism’ can be understood as being shaped by a ‘returned’ integration ideology (or discourse) as the result of a ‘multicultural reality’ in many ‘Western’ cities where ‘We’ (the locals) accept and enjoy differences. However, is it an ideology that is subordinated to the priorities of social cohesion as suggested by Jakubowicz (2009) and writers such as Hage (1998)?

Davis and Nencel (from a Dutch perspective) support Jakubowicz’s conclusions;

    Unlike the discourse of multiculturalism, the discourse of integration focuses not on the celebration, but rather on the erasure of all differences between an ethnic white Dutch majority and a wide spectrum of newcomers who are expected to do all of the assimilating. (Davis and Nencel 2011: 469)

As pointed out, the word ‘integration’ can be a technical term indicating a process, not an ideology. Correa-Velez and Gifford state that: “Economic participation in particular

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8 It was in relation to this that Hage (1998) argued that ‘we’ (i.e. Whites) enjoy multiculturalism as long as it does not threaten our way of living, i.e. the cohesion that we enjoy and benefit from.
underpins the wellbeing and successful integration of men from refugee backgrounds” (2011: 39). In this sense the word ‘integration’ describes the social process of becoming part of a society, an insider, as opposed to an outsider – excluded – but it leaves out the discussion about what society should look like, or whether there is a core culture that shapes the discourses around integration and ‘the assimilating’ that is required.

In Reiner (2010: 11) it is recognised that integration often connotes assimilation, but Reiner uses integration to mean;

...the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities, without having to relinquish one’s own distinct ethno cultural identity and culture. It is at the same time a process by which settling persons become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society. (Reiner 2010: 11)

How this works in practice might not be clear, and further research is required to examine and understand if, how, and to what extent a person is actually participating and how they see themselves in relation to the society at large.

In terms of understanding integration conceptually, Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework for integration remains one of the most accepted frameworks used in empirical research covering settlement issues (see for example: Fozdar and Hartley 2013; IntegraRef 2008; McPherson 2010; Pittaway and Muli 2009). They write “[I]ntegration remains a central concept in approaches to refugee settlement, though its basis, form and character vary widely across settings.” (2010: 604).

Pittaway and Muli, using Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework, define integration as a “positive humanitarian endeavour by the host community which directly benefits new arrivals and encourages social harmony” (Pittaway and Muli 2009: 10).

Despite concerns about the ideology underpinning the recent use of ‘integration’, it is not clear how and when it might be used or its relationship to social cohesion, settlement and belonging. For example, ‘successful settlement’ has been “defined as integration” (Fozdar and Hartley 2013: 24) and Fozdar and Hartley quote Goodwin-Gill to explain this further:
A durable solution entails a process of integration into a society; it will be successful and lasting only if it allows the refugee to attain a degree of self-sufficiency, to participate in the social and economic life of the community and to retain what might be described [...] as a degree of personal identity and integrity. (Goodwin-Gill 1990: 38 in Fozdar and Hartley 2013: 24)

This comment does not insinuate a conflict between social cohesion and integration in terms of settlement. Another way to express this is that “social integration is based on individuals’ and groups’ feelings towards and convictions of the fairness of the social order in which they live” (Kamali 1999: 86, see also Kuhlman 1991). As a positive human endeavour it can be seen as the ability to participate equally in the social, cultural, economic and political fields. In this regard, Kamali argues that integration should be understood to contain two requirements; first, participation in the production and reproduction of social life and secondly, exercising and having a sense of belonging and satisfaction (1999: 89). Both should be understood as being interconnected but irreducible.

Charles Taylor explains how he thinks multiculturalism has often been misunderstood (Taylor in Taylor and Sacks 2012). In his view, Canadian multiculturalism is not about ghettoisation, but about integration. With integration he means the development of equal belonging to the nation (the idea that the ‘country belongs to everybody’) and not one group attempting to integrate into another. It is the process – the development – that should lead to belonging, echoing Ager and Strang (2008). Here Taylor takes that one step further than Kamali’s two points, and inserts ‘equal’ with belonging. If integration should lead to equal belonging, social hierarchies could be perceived as barriers to belonging. It requires a national narrative that does not just include all on a level playing field, but also a narrative that does not perpetuate myths that exclude some or position some characteristics as more national than others. When you are integrated you are not a visitor or an outsider; you belong, you should feel ‘at home’ (Taylor and Sacks 2012).

In a report by Castles et al. into the integration field, the authors explain that “there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration” (2002: 12). Castle et al. observe that definitions around integration depend on country and situations, and that research “on immigrant and refugee integration is based on a set of assumptions, concepts and definitions that are often tacit rather than explicit” (ibid: 12).
Similarly, in the final IntegraRef report, funded by the European Refugee Fund Programme and partly coordinated by Alison Strang, integration is explained as a ‘culturally defined term’ and dependent upon the situation (IntegraRef 2008, referring to Kuhlman 1991).

According to Castle et al. (2002) we should ask, what are we expecting the refugees should integrate into? Integrate into a local community; a specific group (even into a low-socio economic group) or the larger ‘imaginary community’ – to use Benedict Anderson’s (2006) term – the nation? Because of the controversy surrounding the term, some argue it is better to use terms such as ‘inclusion’ or ‘participation’ (Castle et al. 2002) which could shape certain policy development towards enabling belonging to develop, as opposed to barriers that socially exclude or even alienate.

Echoing the finding by Correa-Velez and Gifford (2011) that refugee men’s wellbeing often decreases over time, the IntegraRef report points out that after the initial euphoria of being in a safe country and having succeeded in being accepted “comes the second, of de-compensation, when disappointment, frustration, withdrawal and depression take over, following the clash with the new world” (2008: 29). Here there is a concern that the person might experience social isolation or alienation, and this can develop slowly. On the basis of the IntegraRef report, it seems inappropriate to argue that a person from a refugee background, who has been in the country for a number of years and is experiencing isolation or alienation, has a problem around ‘their integration’. Instead the issue seems to lie with challenges around social isolation – a lack of belonging – or barriers to belonging, something that many different groups in society can encounter but to which a person from a refugee background might be particularly vulnerable. In the IntegraRef report, the path forward then is a “modification of society as a whole and the creation of new forms of intercultural living” (IntegraRef 2008: 52). This should be seen “as a multidimensional, interactive and long-term process” (ibid: 55). This has not been taken up in other research consulted and it is a step, I would argue, that requires ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 2000/1959).

The integration framework and belonging

McMillan and Gray write that Ager and Strang’s framework “has been widely used by researchers and policy makers” (2009: 22). Strang and Ager understand integration to be a required precursor to belonging but also, the desired outcome for the refugee is to belong to the nation (2010: 595). As such belonging is the “ultimate mark of living in an integrated
community” (Ager and Strang 2008: 178). Ager and Strang (2008) understand integration as a two-way process shaped by “mutual accommodation” (ibid: 177) and emphasise that integration is often perceived as the ability to participate with different people in different scenarios, i.e. it is something people do, within a social structure often shaped by the ‘host community’ but not necessarily limited to it.

Ager and Strang’s conceptual work around integration has produced one of the more effective frameworks for how integration can be approached and understood, which moves away from the ideology mentioned earlier and outlines a more practical approach, suitable for policy development and understanding the settlement process. They define ‘core domains of integration’ (Ager and Strang 2008: 170; see also Strang and Ager 2010), as interdependent domains under four main categories: ‘Foundation’ (legal rights and citizenship); ‘facilitators’ (‘language and cultural knowledge’ and ‘safety and stability’); ‘social connections’ (social bridges, social bonds, social links) and finally ‘markers and means’ (employment, housing, education, health) (2008: 170). Considering this framework, while being informed by scholars who have attempted to conceptually make sense of ‘belonging’ (for example Antonsich 2010; Hamaz and Vasta 2009; Yuval-Davis 2006a) it is possible to argue that all these domains are intrinsic in the development of belonging in a new space. Belonging, and the relevance of Ager and Strang’s frameworks for belonging, are explored conceptually in Chapter 4.

**Health and wellbeing**

The literature has identified how a person’s health and wellbeing can be shaped by their settlement process and vice versa. This can affect, and be affected by, their social inclusion or exclusion, i.e. their experiences around belonging. ‘Health’ is one of the ten domains for integration identified by Ager and Strang (2008), which they limit to “biological functioning and malfunctioning” (MacDonald 2006: 456). If health is understood more holistically to also be about wellbeing (more sociological than biomedical), it can be seen as a broader issue influencing and shaping many other domains of life (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). Health understood as wellbeing can be a fundamental component for successful participation and is interconnected with the development of long-term social inclusion (i.e. integration as explained by Ager and Strang), which, it can be argued, is required for belonging (Antonsich 2010). However, as stated by Correa-Velez et al., “The relationship between wellbeing and
resettlement is not straightforward” because “wellbeing is defined in different ways” (2010: 1400) shaped by both ‘micro’ (the individual) and ‘macro’ (the socio-political) contexts (Brough et al. 2012).

In the National Male Health Policy’s ‘National Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Male Health’ the meaning of ‘health’ is expanded to include a definition that is also suitable for other men, in particular those who do not belong to the dominant group in Australia:

Aboriginal health means not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community. It is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life. (NMHP 2010: 11)

The NMHP here takes a holistic view of health and takes into account the social and structural determinants that can adversely affect men’s health and wellbeing. In 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) to “promote health equity” (Irwin et al. 2008: 64) on a global scale. From this perspective, health and wellbeing are shaped by both structural and intermediary determinants linked to social justice agendas (ibid) and the argument is that a purely biomedical approach will not change these determinants. MacDonald, arguing for such an approach in relation to men’s health, writes, “rather than just treating illness, health professionals must consider how a person’s life “road map” influences the current and future state of their health” (2011: 1).

Men’s health in general is a relatively new research focus, as Ornelas et al. explain; “[T]he health of men is a growing but understudied public health concern” (2009: 552). Oliffe and Bottorff state that “few researchers have focused exclusively on men’s health and/or illness experiences” (2007: 850). Hence further research that focuses on issues affecting men is important (Macdonald 2006; MHIRC 2014). One major milestone in terms of male health in Australia was the release of the first Australian National Male Health Policy in 2010 (NMHP 2010). However, the NMHP points out that more research is warranted to gather more health information about high-risk groups in Australia.
Social determinants of health and wellbeing

According to the WHO the top 10 social determinants of health are ‘social gradient, stress, early life, social exclusion, work, unemployment, social support, addiction, food, and transport’ (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003) but there are many others and they are all in some ways “interconnected” (MacDonald 2006: 457). These determinants can also be considered for how they influence a refugee re-settling in the new country and how well they might be able to deal with any pre-migration trauma and post-migration challenges (see: Carlsson et al. 2006; Darvishpour 2002; James 2010; Jamil et al. 2007; Nghe et al. 2003; Pittaway 2005; Rees and Pease 2007; Simbandumwe et al 2008).

It has been recognised that the social determinants of health are “the root causes of poor health outcomes among racial and ethnic minorities” (Ornelas et al. 2009: 561). In all of the research canvassed, refugee men (or men with a refugee background) clearly fit into a number of the groups identified in the NMHP (2010) as ‘high risk’ groups. Men from refugee backgrounds can be financially and socially disadvantaged (ECCV 2008); may have, or be at risk of, mental health problems (Jamil et al. 2007; Silove 2003); their English language skills are often very limited (RCOA 2014); they can be socially isolated; many come from countries that are at war (similarly to other “veterans”, which is one category in the NMHP) (Carlsson et al. 2006) and some live in rural Australia because of re-settlement plans (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011).

There are clearly some unique challenges for health professionals when it comes to refugee populations (Philips et al. 2011) but apart from these biomedical challenges, it is widely accepted that two major factors influence a refugee’s health and wellbeing; past-trauma and post-migration experiences (Silove and Ekblad 2001). Post-migration experiences can then be shaped by a number of different social determinants of health and wellbeing, such as unemployment or social exclusion.

For Westoby (2008, 2009) the best practice for ‘refugee healing’ is to approach the post-migration experiences as a social process, part of the ongoing refugee process, or ‘integration’, as defined by Ager and Strang (2008). The aim is to avoid unnecessary biomedical or therapeutic approaches that pathologise the individual when in fact they need to receive the tools and support to be able to negotiate their own social process in a new
space. For some, different approaches might be needed to deal with specific past-trauma, but too much focus on the past can lead to a ‘passive resettlement’ where the refugee becomes less empowered to deal with their current challenges (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2003). Westoby (2009) advocates that service providers ought to take a focus on what he calls the ‘sociality of refugee healing’ instead of a therapeutic or victim approach. This move, away from a therapeutic approach, is similarly argued by Fozdar (2009) and Ingleby (2005), without denying that pre-migration experiences influence the settlement process. Byrne (2006), focusing on refugee men’s health, approaches the topic in a ‘Salutogenic’ way (originally from Antonovsky 1996); i.e. he avoids focusing on pathologies and problems with men. Byrne does not claim they do not exist, or that previous trauma and torture does not require specialist support, but a salutogenic approach focuses on strengths and, concurring with Westoby (2009) and Wilkinson and Marmot (2003), on ecological and dialogical aspects that might influence men’s health and wellbeing.

Correa-Velez and Gifford conclude that most men arrive to Australia with high expectations and desire to work and participate, but “[o]ver time…their levels of wellbeing decrease as they experience a range of barriers to their social participation and inclusion within their host community” (ibid: 39). They identify how a lack of employment, limited recognition of previous experiences or qualifications, financial and housing difficulties, discrimination and racism contribute to this pattern. This can lead to the men’s role within the family becoming undermined, their role in society diminished, and their sense of self-worth reduced. Similarly, Fozdar’s research identified that when refugees “feel excluded from full participation in employment and from community acceptance… [it] affects their well-being” (ibid: 1348). Considering the links between belonging, participation and wellbeing, these findings are important for this research and the questions explored.

Byrne discusses the different health needs that men from refugee backgrounds may have, including issues around identity and gender relations. Consistent with the NSW Refugee Health Service’s Refugee Men’s Health ‘Fact Sheet 9’ (NSW Health 2009) he identifies that the most detrimental factor affecting refugee men’s mental health is a ‘loss of identity’ in resettlement (Byrne 2006: 48). The NSW Refugee Health Service explains how,

Resettlement often involves a loss of traditional male roles and exposure to a society that offers women and children improved rights compared with their home country.
Loss of identity may be associated with low self-esteem and threatens psychological well-being. (NSW Health 2009: 2)

According to Byrne (2006) a ‘loss of identity’ is closely associated with a lack of status linked to un/under employment, feeling out of place because of feelings of guilt, and changed gender roles. Byrne writes: “[T]his loss of identity may be associated with chronic depression, long-term unemployment, substance abuse, domestic violence and family breakdown” (2006: 6). Similarly, on the topic of dealing with asylum seekers who have settled into the community permanently, Douglas states that; “Life as an asylum seeker poses immense challenges to a person’s sense of identity” (2010: 243). Douglas describes a “ravaged sense of identity” (2010: 241) and explores ‘ways’ health professionals can approach this in clinical settings. What is not clear from this research is whether refugees or people from a refugee background actually indicate any ravaged or lost identity when speaking about their experiences settling in Australia.

Identity and masculinities

Identity for migrants and refugees

Research exploring the refugee process describes how identities inevitably change or are challenged in the host country (Byrne 2006; Griffiths 2001; Morley 2001). Morley explains that “insufficient attention is paid to… the extent to which many people are still forced to live through the identities ascribed to them by others, rather than through the identities they might choose for themselves” (2001: 427). Identity has also been understood as a condition that one does not really lose. Instead Krzyzanowski and Wodak argue it is ‘identification’ that is the challenge for migrants (2007). Others have described identities as narratives (Somers 1994) that we tell others, hence they change and are adjusted accordingly. Kuhlman explains that integration requires, among other things, that the “socio-cultural change they [a refugee] undergo permits them to maintain an identity of their own” (Kuhlman 1991: 7). In other words it is important to not reduce a person to a label, such as ‘a refugee’, but to enable people to identify themselves. However, a label is not always negative; it can be used for empowerment. For example, Sandberg (2008), using Bourdieu’s work, explores how young ‘male refugees’ in Norway use their foreignness to give them ‘street capital’. Sandberg explain that to be seen as a foreigner or ‘a refugee’ is to be viewed as more ‘dangerous’; it gives the young men
strategic power on the streets. Most research, however, seems to indicate that the label is in fact unwanted and most people who are given a refugee visa would like to be seen as ‘normal people’ (Pittaway and Muli 2009).

Coker (2004) focuses on periods before re-settlement, and supports the need to focus on how the refugees understand their own identity and any challenges they encounter because of their identity. Her research clarifies how the refugee experience is unique and should be understood in a phenomenological way. Coker explains that assumptions about how refugees view themselves, or even by those who try to provide them with support, should not be made without understanding the refugee’s point of view. Coker argues that some refugees actually want to keep their ‘refugee’ label, not to gain capital as described by Sanderberg (2008), but for safety. Without the label, they were left to their own devices in a hostile environment (Coker 2004). One cannot conclude that similar identifications are not desirable even in Australia for certain groups or individuals, making claims about labels or identities potentially misleading and presumptuous.

Yuval-Davis explains; “Identities are individual and collective narratives that answer the question ‘who am/are I/we?’” (Yuval-Davis 2006b: 197). She observes how these narratives exist within a socio-historical moment in a dynamic process where different categories (gender, race, ethnicity, class and so on) are intersecting at different locations that challenge “reified forms of identity politics” (ibid: 201). To approach identity as something that is influenced by different categories is to take an ‘intersectional approach’ (coined by Crenshaw 1991). To understand identity in an intersectional way further complicates the idea of not just identity, but also ‘labels’ and identification. Ellis et al. writes; “when viewed through a lens of intersectionality, social identity is understood to consist of several aspects of identity” (2010: 565). Ellis et al. use an intersectional approach to argue that different intersecting categories create a unique identity (ibid). An important finding in their participatory research was that for boys from a refugee background, ‘acculturation’ into the American culture meant fewer mental health issues. While for the girls in the same group, a stronger social identity as both a Muslim and a Somali led to fewer mental health issues. One reason given was the fact that the boys could more easily dress like those in the ‘mainstream culture’. It was also demonstrated that both groups experienced discrimination differently, and Ellis et al. (2010) attributed this to the fact that the girls are more visually Muslim when using the headscarf and
encounter religious and cultural discrimination while the boys faced more racial discrimination. They point out, however, that once the boys got older and started to apply for work, any name that connoted a specific religious or cultural background might again expose them to religious and cultural discrimination. The challenge here seems to be more about identification, or misrecognition (Fraser 2000) by the dominant group, whether or not that corresponds with one’s own self-identification. The argument is that if one is identified as an outsider, or different, it can lead to a sense of alienation and isolation within the mainstream, something I discuss in the next chapter as ‘barriers to belonging’.

In terms of migrant men and identity in Australia, Chafic (2008) explains that empowering men to feel they can actively participate in society and help themselves and their families, helps them to avoid developing a negative identity and feelings of exclusion, helplessness and alienation. Kabir and Rickards explain that “a sense of bicultural identity would enhance their sense of belonging and confidence in both milieus” (2006: 23 in CIRCA 2010: 26) but it is not clear what this actually means; to have a ‘bicultural identity’? Is the onus placed on the men to work this out or not, and is it assuming that an ‘Australian culture’ exists next to the men’s past ‘culture’?

Another take on the importance of identity constructs in relation to the ‘host culture’ is explained by Nghe et al. (2003), who claim it is important for migrant men to successfully negotiate and position their own identities in their new ‘host’ environment and that this will help them to engage with the community and the workforce. One reading of this is as a call for selective acculturation, something that could be further argued with the claim that it is the migrants’ ‘identities’ that cause violence towards them. For example, Douglas explains that asylum seekers “have often been attacked…because of central features of their identity” (2010: 238). However, it is less clear how this is actually understood and negotiated by men from refugee backgrounds; how do they understand and negotiate their own selves in relation to others?

Research raises questions about what to do with ‘displaced identities’, or what is explained as ‘lost identities’ and how to understand these. Farah (2007) provides, among other things, insight into the challenges ‘displaced identities’ might have for a male refugee from the Horn of Africa (HOA) who lives in the Melbourne area. The report sets
out to explore what the men’s needs are and what services have helped them the most. One key concern that underlines the research and the difficulties men from the HOA (and men from other places that are ‘culturally different’ to Australia) might encounter comes from a community elder who explains:

It is true that we have peace, most of us can work regardless of its quality, we can send our kids to school, we became Australian citizens, which has many privileges. But it is also true that we abandon our cultures, to some extent, in favour of the Australian culture, we are about to lose our clan-based identity, we implicitly accept to be called minority and others, and sometimes we are scapegoats and easy targets, both by the public and the politicians. (Farah 2007: 17)

The report explains that the male participants have generally positive feelings about Australia but it identifies one major obstacle that causes stress; the men’s displaced identity and the re-positioned identity they are ‘given’ in their new community. The men feel they have ‘lost’ their cultural identity, echoing Byrne’s (2006) point about ‘identity loss’ and how they are now mainly identified as “black refugees from Africa” (Farah 2007: 5). One reason for the challenges surrounding identification and identity has been the fact that refugees “are forced to leave their homes, often with little notice” (Sherrell and Hyndman 2006: 18). The suggestion seems to be that refugees are therefore less prepared to develop a ‘transnational identity’ than other migrant groups (Muller 2008), who might be more able to create a bridge between themselves and what they perceive as the ‘mainstream’.

This raises questions about whether or not identities can be helpfully understood as ‘transnational’ or ‘trans-cultural’ for refugees (who might not have a ‘home’ nation). Halilovich (2006) provides insightful approaches to this question with a focus on ‘cross-cultural hybrid identity’ as opposed to ‘trans-national’ because trans-national implies the identities are connected to nations, when in fact they are often hybrid and/or culturally aligned. Grabska’s (2010) research with men from Sudan living in the U.S. provides another explanation of this. Grabska describes how Sudanese-American men retain a ‘transnational identity’. Returning to the Sudan to marry a Sudanese woman is an important task for them as men and sits alongside their claim that they do not feel ‘at home’ in the US. Here, the transnational connections are not without issues. Grabska
argues that these transnational marriages “result in (economic) hierarchies of masculinities” (2010: 491).

For some young men like Deng settled in the West, being thought of as successful ‘back home’ helps mitigate the pain of marginalisation in settlement societies. As newly arrived migrants, they were often doing menial jobs and living on social security benefits, their social status was relatively low (Shandy 2007). (Grabska 2010: 490)

Farah, consistent with Grabska, explains that “for many of the [HOA] men their status in their respective countries was relatively high” (Farah 2007: 22) but in Australia they have relatively low status, with limited capital and agency when choosing employment and dealing with the broader Australian community. This raises the question, what is at the core here, the identity or the status the men have in the community? What is it that really affects their sense of connection and belonging to the country in which they settle?

Research with minority groups indicates that to be identified as the ‘Other’, and to be excluded, can lead to reinforcement of specific aspects of one’s identity. For example Chafic (2008) argues that the ‘Muslim’ identity can become stronger or dominant by default because the wider society, and the media in particular, continue to link (or connect) the men with their religion. Similar findings are explored in research by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2010: 293), who point out that in the UK, a Muslim identity is sometimes imposed on asylum seekers and refugees and this influences how they interact with the host community. It can create a disjunction between the person and the wider community. It does not always mean, however, the person senses they have to choose, or are able to choose. For example Valentine and Sporton (2009) examine how young Somali people in the UK suffered from ‘disidentification’ not only in mainstream UK society, but also when returning to Somalia. The young Somali’s responses (or reactions) were to connect with a Muslim identity, to create a sense of continuity (across space and time) as opposed to developing multiple identities (ibid) assigned by others. This relates to ‘narrative theories of identity’ since it connects identity with the past and the present, but it also questions how accurately ‘multiple identities’ can be used to describe an immigrant’s identity. If this is questioned, one can ask if there is one identity that can be lost, or if it is the narratives, i.e. the ‘continuity’ that is disrupted and further, what does
such subtle difference mean in terms of understanding men’s settlement experiences and factors that can influence belonging?

There are arguments that claim it can be a positive experience for a refugee to successfully negotiate and position their own identities in their new ‘host’ environment and that this will help them to engage with the community and the workforce (see Nghe et al. 2003). It is suggested that it might help men in preventing feelings of “social alienation and exclusion” (Chafic 2008: 42). Chafic (2008) reports that young men suggested that youth camps could be a place to receive and explore identities, cultural differences and challenges. It would both “affirm a cultural identity” and create links to the “broader Australian environment” (ibid: 41).

What Chafic points out, is that there is a genuine desire to actively explore and tackle issues around young men’s cultural identity or identification for the sake of understanding and experiencing being part of a community (both cultural community but also the broader national community), linking notions around identity and belonging, even though the extent of this desire is not clear.

The next section will examine what has been written about migrant men and masculinities. In the same way as I am cautious about assuming identities and using labels with the participants in this research, I am equally cautious about assigning a specific type of masculinity to the men who participate or to assume they experience specific gender challenges. Despite this, research exploring issues for migrant or refugee men has focused on masculinities and this work may shed some light on men’s experiences of belonging.

**Migrant men and masculinities**

Hibbins and Pease write that “very little is known about the lived experiences of migrant males in Australia. There is a need for a much greater explicit recognition of men’s migration experiences” including “the social construction of masculinities...” (2009: 7-8). Hibbins and Pease interview Latin American-Australian men and position the ‘Australian man’ as a uniform category, as a taken for granted Anglo-Celtic masculinity. It is here possible to argue that the notion that there is an ‘Australian man’, in the sense that it is a category that can be identified without relying on stereotypes, does not fit Hibbins’ and Pease’s general argument
about masculinities and men in Australia, and this raises questions about attempts to
differentiate between groups and make generalised arguments. For this reason, and because I
take an intersectional approach, I am cautious about assigning a specific type of masculinity
to the men who participate in the research. For example, I question “whether it is in fact
possible [or indeed helpful] to talk in terms of Muslim masculinities, given the abject nature
of the signifier Muslim in social and political discourse” (Kalra 2009: 123).

Donaldson and Howson set out to challenge some of the assumptions about masculinities and
migrants, and subsequently explore how migrant men’s hegemonic masculinities are affected
or potentially renegotiated when they settle into a new place. They argue from their research
findings that for a man, manhood is closely attached to work and to being a provider, and this
in turn is the “material bases of the maintenance of patriarchy” (Donaldson and Howson
2009: 212). They argue, with Howson (2009), Nilan et al (2009) and Crossly and Pease
(2009), that some migrants do not want to become like the ‘Australian Anglo-man’ who they
view in varying negative ways, such as; lacking control, ‘under the thumb’, as drunks or
more or less macho when talking to women and so on. Furthermore, a study by Pringle and
Whitinui (2009) with Maori men identifies how the participants view the ‘Australian man’ as
a man lacking the emotional complexities that Maori men have. Methods of resolving the
tension between migrant and host masculinities are sometimes offered. For example Mungai
and Pease (2009) argue that men from Africa could develop ‘progressive black masculinities’
in order to be better prepared to deal with any gender role challenges they face in Australia.
This is not dissimilar to the arguments about the option to ‘re-think’ identities for men from
South Sudan in Australia (MIC 2006) or that ‘refugee men’ should have “more opportunities
to express the positive aspects of traditional masculinity” (MacDonald in Byrne 2006: 10).
But again, if this positions men from Africa as possessing different masculinities (or
identities) that potentially have a deviant side (because there is a perceived need to change
them or emphasise aspects of them) it is a problematic approach, particularly from a
postcolonial perspective.

Hibbins and Pease claim there is a need to “challenge the presumption of whiteness and the
centrality of the west in the men and masculinity literature” (2009: 12) and they set out to
“rethink… the concept of masculinity itself” (Ibid: 12). Their research indicates that many
migrant men discuss masculinities using stereotypes and assumptions about the ‘Other’.
What is at stake are the cultural and social differences that need to be negotiated. Similarly
caution needs to be exercised to ensure that that society does not, as Hibbins and Pease criticise, position a particular type of White Anglo-Celtic Male’s behaviour as the norm for what it means to be Australian.

Pease (2009) argues that for many migrant men, masculinities and manhood, how they see themselves as men and what their roles are, are major issues. Moreover, despite assumptions about ‘Australian men’, Donaldson and Howson (2009) reach the conclusion that most migrant men are comfortable in their male-self and do not see many contradictions between themselves and ‘Australian men’. One reason given is that patriarchal understanding, about gender relations, remains relatively unchanged, as argued by Connell (1995). Hence they write that the challenge is not so much the men’s masculinities; in fact men seem to be able to move around the globe with “relative ease…” (Donaldson and Howson 2009: 215), but the patriarchal dividend in general, which is more difficult to change (ibid). The point being that this is not an issue that can be unproblematically linked to migrant men, since it is a bigger issue around gender equality, patriarchy and social norms and customs.

To summarise, research highlights both examples of the re-articulation of ethnic masculinities and the rejection of Anglo-Australian masculinity, but also of flexible masculinities (see for example Donaldson et al. 2009; Poynting et al. 2009; Hibbing 2000). However, the literature further suggests that men’s masculinities, or what Connell explains as ‘gender relations’ (Connell 1995) are relatively stable, even across cultures and around the world (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Though most research about masculinities does not mention belonging, Pease explores how certain masculinities can be understood as a result of a lack of belonging within the mainstream or dominant groups and society. Pease argues that some migrant men, who experience limited power or influence, can develop, as a response, an "exaggerated masculinity" (Pease 2009). It can be understood as a more aggressive and assertive masculinity, and an attempt, Pease explains, to gain some power in a society that positions the migrant male as the ‘other’, or outside the dominant norm. The solution does not therefore, in a salutogenic sense, lie in attempting to change the men’s behaviour, but to make sure this group of men are not excluded and that they have opportunities to influence and take part in the social life of the community, i.e. to develop a sense of belonging. If this is achieved, the ‘exaggerated masculinity’ might become less exaggerated, but how this would
look is not entirely clear (Pease 2009). Evidence therefore suggests that the challenges occur when men view changes in a negative way and when they feel they have lost power, control or agency. I will raise this issue again in the next section about social status.

Pease (2009) claims that it is essential for men, from all different continents, to be a provider. This patriarchal position can be linked to a masculine self-perception, that to provide is to be a man, hence an inability to provide is to be a ‘failed man’. This is a claim supported by research into ‘refugee men’ in Australia (for example Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007).

Despite my misgivings about a focus a priori on masculinities, there are some specific gender challenges that regularly come up in the literature. One is, as mentioned, that the man’s role in the family is to be a provider or ‘breadwinner’. When one takes into account that many migrants have extended families overseas, such a role can contribute to challenges. For example, Farah (2007), Johnson and Stoll (2008) and Stoll and Johnson (2007) explain how the ‘global breadwinner’ role (obligation to send money back to their home country) for Sudanese refugees in Canada places both emotional and financial strains on many refugees. They point out that for those who are capable of fulfilling this role it is an important one they feel proud of, but for others it can be very stressful. Muller (2008) explains how unfulfilled expectations (due to financial difficulties for example) around remittances can be a source of ‘disconnection’ between the re-settled refugee and their family members who are ‘left behind’.

Another role men are sometimes expected to assume is that of protector. Pittaway and Muli argue that some men are “suffering from terrible guilt and disempowerment because they had not been able to protect their women from abuse” (2009: 66) and that could challenge their sense of worth as a man.

Others have linked the disempowerment to the challenges of raising children. Nghe et. al. (2003) explain that changing gender roles can be challenging for fathers since their position is often undermined and their sons might search for other role models. This is supported by Este and Tachble (2009) who conducted research with male refugees who had children in Canada, and discovered that “the respondents maintained that in comparison to their status in Sudan, the children possessed more rights thus making it difficult for the parents to
administer the discipline they needed” (2009: 463). This raises questions about whether men might also become more assertive in order to re-gain their sense of lost control.

This research suggests that an inability to provide, combined with a failure to protect, or ‘control’ their children, can presumably lead to men’s disenchantment in the new country and affect their sense of belonging. Rees and Pease explain this further:

…the issue of refugee men’s disempowerment and disaffection, linked to violence against women, is something that requires an urgent response from policy makers and settlement service providers. Coping and managing with cultural change and how much it impacts on the refugee’s sense of identity or changing identity in Australia is an area for further study. (Rees and Pease 2007: 14-15)

Donaldson and Howson write that even though men are often the main instigators of the decision to move and become a migrant; “[T]here is little currently documented about how migrant men react to, negotiate with, and counter the demands imposed and changes required of them by the people and cultures they encounter during their migration and settlement” (2009: 210). They explain that even though men often gain more than women when they move, they are also often more “exposed to greater intolerance, violence and discrimination, in the host country” (Ibid: 210). This is not just about the men; Farah explains that for men with families, “anything that interrupts or impedes men’s progress will eventually impact on children” (Farah 2007: 9).

Rees and Pease (2007) in interviews and focus groups with refugee men, who have been in Australia between three to five years, identify a lack of opportunities, discrimination, unsuitable (or lack of) employment, or alienation as being central in ‘disempowerment and disaffection’ in their new country or community. This is another way in which we might understand men’s positioning within their new country; as challenges around a lost, or limited, ‘social status’ for men from refugee backgrounds, something explored briefly in the next section.

Social Status

Muller argues that Afghan men who arrive in the Netherlands face challenges to their gender identities and there can be an “overt or covert identity crisis among men” (Muller 2008: 392)
associated with a loss of status. Muller (2008) echoes Byrne’s (2006) research in Australia and explains that this as an identity crises related to social positioning. Other research has identified that migrant men who hold on to patriarchal attitudes when trying to re-settle (for example, to be a strong man with power and control) are the least successful in retaining their family and marriage (Darvishpour 2002). This raises the question, is this unique to refugee and migrant men, or to most men when there is a sudden drop in social status and all, or most, social, economic and cultural capital is lost? Renner (2009) explains that men and women’s coping strategies can be different. For men, finding work and socialising are important strategies when adapting to a new environment and should be taken into account to identify areas where support is needed. When Griffiths’ (2001) asked Kurdish refugees in Europe ‘who had most difficulties as a refugee?’ the majority said women. However, when she asked the support organisations the same question, men were viewed as having the most difficulties. The reason given was the loss of status experienced by the men and “their more restricted emotional expression” (Griffiths 2001: 305). Women were seen as more inclined to help each other and so adjusted better (ibid: 305). Griffiths does point out that this is not something unique to refugee men, but that men in general are less capable of “recognizing and processing their own emotions” (ibid: 305-306).

Another challenge is raised by Jansen (2008) who writes that women’s participation in waged labour, in their settlement country, increases their authority and often lessens the men’s status (as the provider) and it can increase men’s frustration. These shifts in gender roles seem to be particularly challenging for refugee men if they are having difficulties in finding employment, or employment that suits their previous experiences. Jansen does not discuss exaggerated masculinities, but explains that the men might respond by finding like-minded men so they can remember and relive their former status and identity. Even though this claim is not supported by evidence, but is only being suggested, a similar claim by Grabska (2010) explains that this desire – to be with someone who recognises your social value – is a major reason for some men (originally from Sudan) to go back to Sudan to find a wife.

The result of trying to remain in a space where your status is low can contribute to a lack of will to engage with the host community and may further marginalise men, causing further rifts in their families (Jansen 2008). So even if it might be possible to claim that the refugee experience and the post-migration situation can produce a ‘crises of masculinity’ (Chant 2000) there is also evidence to suggest that a loss of status and a loss of control, or agency
may also impact negatively on the migrant experience. However, how to understand this in relation to belonging is not clear.

Disempowerment, associated with changed gender roles and a loss of status refugee men might experience when they settle in Australia, is linked to domestic violence and family conflicts (Rees and Pease 2007). Whether or not domestic violence is occurring more frequently in refugee families in Australia has not been comprehensively established in the consulted literature. However, the literature does suggest that families from refugee backgrounds are potentially vulnerable to domestic violence due to the ongoing challenges they face in the ‘host’ country (Darvishpour 2002; Easteal 1996; Errante 1997; HRC 2010; James 2010; Pittaway and Muli 2009; Pittaway 2005; Rees and Pease 2007; MIC 2006).

**Discrimination, racism and employment**

Kamali writes that an “‘integrated society’ cannot be separated from the fight against structural and institutional discrimination, both on a national level and an international level”9 (2006: 367). For Kamali integration is not possible when discrimination is a reality and a person has limited ability to negotiate such discrimination. Hence any evidence that a person is experiencing discrimination can shape not just their integration, but also their ability to experience inclusion – i.e. to develop a sense of belonging within the framework argued by this thesis.

Discrimination, racism and employment issues are identified in the literature as being significant and often interconnected for men from refugee backgrounds (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011). I will first look at issues around discrimination and racism; two interlinked concepts, and then review what has been said about employment and men from refugee backgrounds.

**Discrimination and Racism**

The body of empirical research that explores settlement experiences for humanitarian entrants and refugees in Australia identifies discrimination and racism as a challenge (see for

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9 Authors English translation from the original Swedish text: “Skapandet av ett integrerat samhälle är oskiljbart från kampen mot den strukturella/institutionella diskrimineringen både på nationell och på internationell nivå.” (Kamali 2006: 367)
example: Colic-Peisker 2009; Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; Farah 2007; HRC 2010; Hugo 2011; LaRRC 2009; Pittaway and Muli 2009; Tilbury 2007). Both discrimination and racism are experienced in different ways by different people, particularly if we understand this to encompass ‘new racism’ (Dunn et al. 2004; van Dijk 2000), which includes cultural and religious intolerance; general anti-foreign sentiment (Semyonov et al. 2006; Yuval-Davis 2011b); an uncritical elevation of ‘Western’ or “white enlightenment ideals” (Osuri and Banerjee 2004” 160) or what Noble has explained as just the ‘discomfort of strangers’ (Noble 2005).

The challenge, in terms of this research, is that discrimination and racism, when experienced, can upset a persons’ ‘ontological security’ (Giddens 1991), which can be argued is essential for a person to belong somewhere, in other words to feel ‘at home’, or safe (see Nelson et al. 2009). Moreover, Brondolo et al. (2009) and Williams and Mohammed (2009) argue that experiencing discrimination and racism can be detrimental to a person’s health and wellbeing (See also Karlsten and Nazroo 2002; Nelson et al. 2011; Pascoe and Richman 2009).

The health link is also made in Fozdar’s research, which is not male specific, but it contains comments from men who suggest that discrimination is taking place and Fozdar concludes by stating; “It is clear from the data…that refugees perceive that prejudice and discrimination negatively impact on their mental health” (Fozdar 2009: 1348). Health issues, and/or ‘emotional distress’, should not be treated necessarily as a biomedical issue, because as Fozdar claims “one risks treating the symptom, rather than the cause, and pathologising an entire population,” (ibid: 1349) echoing the concerns raised in the previous sections.

It is in the literature dealing with racism and discrimination that discussions of belonging emerge. For example, one participant in the Australian Human Rights Commission’s report reflects on experiencing racism and discrimination:

You start to feel that you have no place in this new land and you wonder what the experiences of your children will be as they grow up, and perhaps also find that the colour of their skin is the only reason that they will not be seen by some as belonging here. This is what I mostly fear. (HRC 2010: 8)
Furthermore, the report from La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC 2009) also links discrimination and racism to belonging, but links these challenges to both personal and structural experiences. The LaRRC report contains qualitative data from nine studies (mostly with young people, but it includes the SettleMen Project, which was ongoing at the time; see Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011). The report “suggests that African Australians face discrimination in every domain of social life: employment, education, health, justice and social participation” (LaRRC 2009: 6). It continues, arguing that the discrimination affects refugees in Australia both on an interpersonal level, such as their personal wellbeing explained above, and on a more structural level, in terms of finding work, housing, and educational opportunities. Both seem to affect their “feelings of belonging – that the person is part of Australian society” (ibid: 6) and this affects “their potential to participate in Australian society” (ibid: 26).

Structural discrimination is also mentioned in the literature (for example in HRC 2010; LaRRC 2009) but its source is not defined. Fozdar specifically mentions ‘cultural imperialism’ (2009: 1346) which is linked to ‘new racism’, but in most other research structural discrimination is not explored beyond identifying it as contributing negatively to the settlement experience and causing many challenges. The HRC (2010) participants thought the Government ought to do something about discrimination and racism and should enhance social inclusion, but the research failed to make recommendations for how this could be done. Fozdar comments that the ’solution’ lies with better access to employment and support and acceptance from the ‘wider community’ (Ibid: 1348). However, the ‘wider community’ remains undefined, so on what exact levels ‘acceptance’ is required is not clear.

Hugo argues that, “for individuals from African countries, living in an Anglo-Saxon country is difficult” (Hugo 2011: 245). Whether or not Australia should be explained as an Anglo-Saxon country or not can be questioned10, particularly considering the make-up of modern Australia (Ho and Jakubowicz 2013) but the point raised is still important. If Australia is assumed to be an Anglo-Saxon country, or if it is experienced by the refugee as such, it may

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10 Even in the 1800s there were, apart from Indigenous people, large groups of Irish people in Australia, who made up the Anglo-Celtic groups in Australia at that time. Hence ‘Anglo-Saxon’ as a descriptive term for ‘Australians is even more reductionist than Anglo-Celtic. I refer to Norman Davies (2006) that even the term ‘Western’ is reductionist and stereotypical, but criticism towards the use of ‘Western’ should not mean criticism of the legislative and parliamentarian systems in Australia, which have clear links to the British and European systems.
be difficult to ‘fit in’ or make Australia one’s ‘home’, if one is not Anglo-Saxon, whether or not people are being ‘racist’.

Most recommendations focus on personal racism and how to overcome that, i.e. how to make society less racist, for example. Some recommendations emerging from the research suggest that newcomers ought to be trained to confidently counter any racism and that to fail to be able to counter it might lead to the person “retreating back into their ethno-religious group or identity” (CIRCA 2010: 65) particularly for younger men. Such training is meant to prevent any ‘exaggerated masculinities’, social isolation or even anti-social behaviour among certain groups. Here racism is very personal and there is a potential to counter it, fight it, or reject it.

Colic-Peisker and Tilbury explain that their research indicates that “racism has more impact on one’s labour market marginalization than sexism and ageism” (2006: 223) but they argue that it is a combination of ‘everyday racism’, mentioned above, and ‘structural constraints’. Structural constraints, discrimination and marginalisation are different challenges that might be more difficult to ‘counter’ or ‘reject’ by the individual, particularly as it is not always intentionally perpetuated by the dominant group.

Valtonen raises the claim that there is a challenge when this leads to ‘systemic oppression’ (2004: 80), which she explains might not be just based on individual racism, but on structural (and ingrained) systems or practices. Such marginalisation can be debilitating and leave a person feeling powerless or without any ‘agency’ (LaRRC 2009). Because of this, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) and Valtonen (2004) explain how it is important to understand how both agency and structure is shaping the migrants’ experiences. This research will attempt to understand this in relation to belonging.

Struggle to secure employment, whether shaped by racism, discrimination or structural constraints, is a significantly important area for men from refugee backgrounds and it shapes their experiences in many ways, making it important to be aware of the links and to examine what research has previously said about issues related to employment, and how these potentially affect men from refugee backgrounds.
Employment

The 1996 South Australian report ‘Health Issues for Men from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds [NESB]’ identifies a number of challenges facing men from NESB: employment (lack of or unsuitable employment), proper housing, education, language challenges and access to services (Fitzharris and Pascoe 1996). More recent reports have confirmed that employment continues to be one of the most important aspect of men’s ‘successful settlement’, particularly in light of the often held self-perception that men should be the providers for the family (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; CIRCA 2010; ECCV 2008; HRC 2009; Hugo 2011; LaRRC 2009; McDonald et al. 2008; Pittaway and Muli 2009; STATT 2012).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees states;

Economic self-sufficiency is one of the most important factors in successful integration, with earning capacity influencing the ability to ‘purchase’ many of the other resources required to rebuild life in a new country, among them, housing, health care and education. (UNHCR 2002: 21)

Most Australian reports identify ‘human capital’ to be an “important determinant of the employability of refugees” (Mestan 2008: 6). ‘Human capital’ focuses on what refugees might lack, such as language skills, qualifications, networks, experiences and so on. Such an approach and focus can pathologise refugees and essentially blame them for their problems. Apart from limitations associated with human capital, there are also “lingering discrimination and institutional barriers to participation in the labour market... certainly... for refugee-humanitarian settlers” (Hugo 2011: 171; see also Mestan 2008).

Gebre-Selassie, who researched refugee integration in several countries, concurs with the UNHCR that; “integration without equal economic participation is almost impossible” (2008: 34). But, as Reiner highlights in one of his studies, “[r]esearch suggests that discrimination in hiring and discrimination in the workplace is pervasive” (2010: 24). It is a claim supported by many other Australian researchers (see Mestan 2008 for an overview of the literature). Another challenge is that humanitarian entrants are often forced to accept “low-status and low-paid jobs, because of labour market constraints” (Mestan 2008: 5 see also Hugo 2011).
Moreover, the “underemployment of refugees is in line with LSIA [the DIMIA Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia] data which shows that refugees consistently have the lowest levels of job satisfaction and the lowest average weekly income (Richardson et al. 2004)” (in Mestan 2008: 5).

Employment is not just about being able to make a living. It is also important for a person’s wellbeing. Fozdar explains; “Research indicates a complex relationship between employment and wellbeing or mental health” (Fozdar 2009: 1342 see also EACD 2011). For people on temporary protection visas (TPV’s) or other bridging visas that place limitations on work and study, the inability to work leads to an even higher risk of developing mental health issues (Fernandez 2002; Humpage and Marston 2006).

The Employment Action for Cultural Diversity report (EACD 2011) provides a list of structural barriers to employment, which include; “‘lack of recognition of previous work experience’, ‘lack of local work experience…’, ‘refugee and migrant backgrounds’, ‘prevalence of racism’, ‘discrimination and intolerance towards refugees’ [and] ‘vulnerability to exploitation’.” (EACD 2011: 4) Similar lists of barriers are identified in other Australia literature (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2006, 2007; Colic-Peisker 2009; Correa-Velez and Onsando 2009; ECCV 2008; HRC 2010; Hugo 2011; STATT 2012; Valtonen 2004). These challenges are not unique to Australia. Refugee populations across Europe face similar challenges (Archer et al. 2005). Discrimination, racism and employment, ‘refugee experiences’ and ‘settlement experiences’ are all interlinked and influence each other, arguably impacting on refugee men’s sense of belonging.

**Conclusion**

I have attempted to make clear what has been explored in relation to people from a refugee background and in particular, men’s ongoing settlement experiences in Australia and where relevant, other settler nations like Australia. All the areas mentioned could be conceptualised as factors that can shape the extent of belonging that a man from a refugee background is able to – or wishes to – develop in Australia. However, the links between those factors or the impacts on specific individuals cannot be assumed a priori, nor can it be stated that these experiences explicitly shape belonging. Because belonging can be understood as being ‘at ease’ with both oneself and with one’s surroundings (May 2013) it is often described as
emotional attachment to a place (Yuval-Davis 2006a) but also as feeling ‘safe’ and being “recognized and being understood” (Ignatieff 1995: 10). The challenges identified in the literature around settlement, integration, health, identity, masculinities, discrimination, racism and employment can all shape these experiences.

In this discussion I have argued that integration is a contested term but can be understood as a prerequisite for belonging to take place, and that belonging may indeed be the desired result of integration (Ager and Strang 2008). From a bottom-up perspective, belonging is about an individual’s connections (and in the next chapter I examine how belonging can be seen as an emotional process) while integration is the practical process. I have explored how health and wellbeing, if understood in a holistic way, are intrinsically linked to the capacity to be able to develop a sense of belonging in a space. The argument is that to experience the opposite of belonging – alienation or social isolation (Antonsich 2010) – can lead to many health and wellbeing issues. I have highlighted how the literature has often explored this alienation in relation to a ‘loss of identity’ (Byrne 2006). This leads to an exploration of identity and masculinity in refugee research and a questioning of assumptions about men who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers to a settler country. I then examined how discrimination and racism have been identified as obstacles for refugees and people who settle in Australia from refugee backgrounds, and how this may influence their ‘ontological security’ or sense that they are able to comfortably belong in Australia. This links to the challenges around employment, which remains, according to previous research, a major challenge for men from refugee backgrounds. Issues around employment are shaped by, and shape, how the men understand and experience their lives in Australia. However, the challenges are also much further reaching than that, as it is linked to health and wellbeing, masculinity, identity, and challenges arising from discrimination and racism.

Many of the challenges explored and identified can be linked to participation (or barriers to participation), which in turn can be linked to belonging. However, belonging and participation sometimes have a taken-for-granted meaning. For example Chafic (2008) highlights how there is a genuine desire to belong and participate in Australian society and that this is a sentiment that should be encouraged and built on.

The research literature indicates that, despite the diverse population, in terms of health, refugees’ “physical, mental and social health are all still significantly worse than the general
population” (Byrne 2006: 15). But Byrne writes that ‘hard data’ about the causes of health issues for refugees is very limited; “Good data on the health of refugee men are scarce: not only because the amount of research that has been undertaken is limited, but also because of the complexities of the population” (2006: 17). The current research seeks to understand men’s experience from the perspective of the men themselves. Whilst not directly concerned with men’s health, the relationship between different social determinants and ‘a feeling of belonging’ is explored. This research contributes to the knowledge of what it is that men from refugee backgrounds bring up in relation to their own long-term settlement process and that which shapes their sense of belonging.

The next chapter first explores postcolonial theory to examine the ways different ‘Othering’ processes have taken place in Australia, followed by theorising concerning the concept of belonging, and the politics of belonging, within the context of forced migration to identify how it might be possible to understand and approach belonging in postcolonial Australia.
Chapter 4: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

When faced with the crises of progress or the perils of democracy, our lessons of equality and justice are best learned from those marginalized, peripheralized peoples… rather than those imperial nations and sovereign states that claim to be the seed-beds of Democracy.
(Homi Bhabha 2003: 28)

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an outline of the theoretical and conceptual journey taken in order to make sense of how belonging can be understood in what can be identified as a postcolonial space, in this case Australia. Part one will use postcolonial theory, but also whiteness theory, to explore how different hierarchies can be maintained and normalised in a postcolonial nation. It will examine and discuss how such practices contribute to, or shape, social divisions or ‘splits’ in society, which Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) call ‘schismogenesis’ to avoid essentialising reasons for such divisions. Part two will examine how belonging and the politics of belonging can be conceptually understood using an analytical framework developed by Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2011b). Part two ends with a clarification about how I conceptually understand belonging as a social justice notion, drawing on Nancy Fraser’s work (1996, 2000; Fraser and Honneth 2003). I will argue that to not belong (to be alienated or socially isolated) because of some structural or social forces, can be viewed as a cultural, social and economic injustice, with adverse health and wellbeing outcomes for the individual, their families, the community and the nation at large (as outlined in NMHP 2010). This gives belonging not just a relational or emotional dimension, but also a clear socio-political dimension.

Part 1: Postcolonial theory and white imaginations

Miller writes that “a minimum conception of belonging might be understood as standing in correct relation to one’s community, one’s history and one’s locality” (Miller 2003: 218) but as Miller recognises, such definitions do not cover what belonging is, but rather indicates it is in ‘relation’ to something. For forced migrants settling in Australia, relations in, and to, their new country is a new and ongoing construct. Moreover, they have to negotiate already
established narratives about what, and who, is perceived as the norm, as ‘an Australian’ by the dominant group. New migrants have to learn the local habitus – the ‘predisposed dispositions’ (Bourdieu 1977) – which are dispositions tacitly performed and accepted by the dominant group. This might be harder for some than others.

In this chapter I explore some key terms in postcolonial writing that are relevant for this research; ideas such as ‘hybrid nation’, ’stereotypes’ and ‘the uncanny’. I will also explore ‘whiteness’, which has been described as a pervading cultural framework that can shape contestations and boundaries around national belonging. Postcolonial theory and whiteness theories can be tools to understand and critique how dichotomising and hierarchical narratives, not just about Australia but also about the world, are perpetuated or sometimes, implicitly applied. For example, the implied meanings behind claims about who is ‘developed’ or not, who is ‘modern’ or not, who is ‘democratic’ or ‘civilised’ or not, who are Australia’s closest friends and alliances? I will then link this to ‘new racism’ and how this can be understood to influence national belonging by creating ‘schismogenesis’ in society.

Postcolonial in context

Moreton-Robinson (2003) questions the use of the term ‘postcolonial’ to describe the Australian situation, since, she argues, the indigenous people never got back what was taken from them. However, I clarified in Chapter 2 that I understand the term to indicate not a ‘beyond’ colonial (referring to Shohat 1992) but a different mode from the British-colonial history. Nevertheless I am acknowledging Moreton-Robinson’s argument and the fact that the term might be understood in a different way by Indigenous Australians.

A postcolonial lens can be helpful to understand and clarify how the ‘old colonial ways’ are maintained in new disguises. In other words, such a lens can show how the colonial past still shapes and influences the present (Huddart 2005). Blatant racism is nowadays usually not socially accepted, but certain social stratifications or gradients can be maintained and justified by a dominant or hegemonic group in different ways. Many of these are social constructs that position one group as ‘insiders’ and another as ‘outsiders’. This can prevent some people, whether born in the country or not, from experiencing inclusion or exclusion and isolation, which can affect a person’s wellbeing (explored in Chapter 3). These boundaries are never fixed – which Chapter 2 has attempted to demonstrate – and there are constant struggles to maintain or disrupt them. Edward Said noted that the first thing to do is
to recognise that they are there and to try to understand how they are constructed (Said 1994). I argue that this is a prerequisite for an understanding of how, and why, new-Australians might experience their new environment in the way they do, but also to be able to understand what it is that might underpin certain experiences.

Said’s seminal book *Orientalism* (1994) shaped postcolonial studies. It focuses on how the Orient is a discursive construction that perpetuates a cultural hierarchy with the Occident on the top. An important aspect of Orientalism is that it is not necessarily something a person is doing out of spite or vengeance, but something that feels natural and normal. Because of the continued positioning of the Orient as something exotic, novel, and special, it is ultimately not as developed and sophisticated as the Occident, or the ‘West’. Orientalism, as a worldview, has then become normalised – a predisposed disposition – for many in the ‘West’. It has shaped social groups’ ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977), influenced and shaped by past practices and structures. Similarly to Bourdieu’s work in sociology, Said explains that his aim with ‘the Orientalism’ was not to create a division; it is not “an attack on Western civilization” (Ibid: 337). Instead, the aim is to expose how these dispositions, the entire Orient and Occident separation (‘East’ and ‘West’) is “both misleading and highly undesirable” (Said 1994: 335). Said’s work is part of a quest to re-think such dichotomising constructs, or other similar dichotomising constructs, such as essentialised cultures or identities, something Elder (2007) tries to achieve in her book *Being Australia*, which I draw from later in this section.

Probyn (1996) uses a different focus to explore dichotomies. Probyn examines surface belonging, the ‘everyday belonging’, and it is here she argues that the postcolonial experience is located. In some ways this is similar to what Homi Bhabha is focusing on in *The Location of Culture*, namely the everyday aspects of life (Bhabha 1994). Probyn writes, “we negotiate our desire for belonging as through a maze of club rules” (1996: 24). But if the club rules are written by the colonisers (or any dominant group in society), it might not be a club that will easily accept others, and, as Probyn comments, it might not be a ‘club’ all people wish to be a member of. Here the postcolonial situation is shaping and influencing belonging on the surface level (for example with food or fashion) and it constructs barriers for those who might challenge the homogeneity of it. Maybe more importantly however, it can also be a source for resistance and rejection by those who do not wish to be members of the ‘club’.

I assume that Bhabha, Said and Probyn, even though coming from different perspectives,
would concur with Huijser who writes; “In short, postcolonial studies should ask itself: what is the most effective form of resistance in the face of homogenizing forces that are gathering in strength?” (2007: 141) One way to find out is to ask those who have the least perceived agency, and the previous chapter supported the claim that ‘forced migrants’, such as refugees and asylum seekers, are potentially at high risk of being socially excluded. It is among these groups one might find “contestation of what it means to be Australian” (Ahluwalia 2005 in Huijser 2007: 135). The argument is that by exposing the contestations it might be possible to challenge notions of ‘white possession’ (Koerner 2010) of the land or the narratives. Any acts indicating a ‘possession’ or ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998) or an ‘autochthonic’ (Geschiere 2009) belonging over the land or the narratives, perpetuates social divisions or hierarchies, and might ultimately hinder belonging for migrants.

Coming from a postcolonial perspective then, the idea is to “‘circumvent imperial and colonial habits of mind’ (11-12)” (Brydon 1995: 11-12 in Huijser 2007: 141) because they are often normalised in structures and society. The challenge is that they might privilege specific dominant groups who might be less inclined to change those habits, and so these become self-perpetuating habits. Bhabha argues that in order to challenge hegemonic constructs we need to “provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience” (Bhabha 1994: 178). It was in relation to this that Freire argued that the colonised (the objectified other) should be given agency. However, Freire added that the aim should not be to punish the coloniser, but to encourage and enable the coloniser to change his or her habits, perspectives and understandings; this can then lead to lasting equality and break both the cycle of symbolic violence and the distributive injustices in society (Freire 1970).

In terms of understanding national narratives and personal narratives I am particularly influenced by Bhabha’s writing, since he argues for the need to re-articulate the narratives we use to think about ourselves and the Other, but to stay away from dialectics and essentialist arguments when one thinks about culture, the nation, identity and belonging, concepts that can be understood as fluid and evolving (Bhabha 1990, 1994). Bhabha explains: “The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres” (1994: 173). It is here that I am also influenced by Bourdieu’s (1977) sociological aim to understand underlying notions for behaviours and
practices’, which are shaped by, and shape, ‘objective structures’.

A key term Bhabha uses is ‘ambivalence’ which he uses to describe the relationship between the ‘Other’ and the hegemonic group. For a person arriving as a refugee this has relevance, since they can potentially experience a very positive feeling about their new country, but at the same time harbour negative feelings for how they were initially treated (detention for example) or how the media portrays asylum seekers. Similarly, there might be an ambivalence among the hegemonic group, who want to be good and ‘accept’ people, but also fear that the new group might change the existing dynamics, or social cohesion, and challenge the privileges the dominant group possess in society.

Bhabha uses Fanon’s writing to explore this ambivalence towards the ‘Other’, who “want to take our place” (Bhabha 1994: 44). This Otherness becomes part of both the Anglo-Celtic Australian identification as ‘Australia’sians’ and the (mis-)identification of asylum seekers and refugees as the ‘Other’, not like ‘Us’. For Bhabha a persons’ identity is always in relation to another person’s, both in its appearance and position (geographical, temporal but also social); what they are, we are not and what we have, they want (1994: 44). Drawing on Bhabha’s insights one can argue that anti-immigration discourses are based on a sense that ‘Our’ traits are the traits that need protecting. The national identity is that which the ‘Other’ is not, and because of this, the ‘Other’ and the traits the ‘Other’ possesses, can be identified and magnified. This increases ‘Our’ similarities (those who are part of the same dominant group or those who are assimilated) and it shapes the politics of belonging that can exclude some groups. Bhabha’s theoretical insights would suggest that all over the ‘Western world’, the ‘Other’ is often identified as felonious; as someone who possesses different morals and a different ‘culture’. It is this Other who wishes to swap and take our place if ‘we’ let them. It is the ‘Other’ (here Bhabha is drawing on Fanon’s idea again) who is the one who ‘dreams’ of the “inversion of roles” (1994: 44). To relate this to the current geo-political situation, there is a call to protect ‘Western’ borders and a ‘Western’ way of life that is potentially under threat. Since most men from refugee backgrounds are from ‘non-Western’ backgrounds, any such dichotomising argument might be a barrier for belonging. The argument is part of the different narratives the nation tells itself about itself and it shapes the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006) it has imagined.
Imagined and narrated

Taylor writes; “It is well recognized that national identity is framed by a sense of belonging to the imagined space of the nation or to the imagined national community” (Taylor 2009: 296). Bhabha suggests the imagination narrates the nation; the nation is therefore discursively enunciated (Bhabha 1990). Because of this, it is possible to ask; who, what and how are they imagining and narrating?

In a response to a comment made by Jack Straw, Leader of the House of Commons in the UK that he thought women should not wear a full veil, Professor Robert Putnam said, “What we shouldn’t do is to say that they [immigrants] should be more like us. We should construct a new us” (Putnam in Lloyd 2006: online article). The suggestion here requires not just a re-imaging of what constitutes a national character, but also a move away from essentialist imaginings. Essentialist thinking around national identity or national characteristics should be avoided since it is often a way that the “dominant culture [eliminates] the impurities and hybrids that make up all cultures” (Edward Said in Bhabha 2005: 376). Coming from a postcolonial perspective Bhabha is critical of the ‘multicultural nation’ idea for similar reasons. He argues it is a static version, albeit a larger version, than the original nation. It fits with some of the critique towards multiculturalism (explored in Chapter 2, for example see Parekh 2000). Bhabha, like Putnam, is arguing for a re-articulation of the entire narrative, not just to expand (or contract) the barriers around who can and should belong.

If we accept Benedict Anderson’s argument that the nation is an ‘imagined community’ it is possible to re-imagine it. The nation is an imaginary construct that contains mythical clichés such as the ‘Aussie battler’, but also tales of national exceptionalism. Anderson explains that the nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 2006: 6). It can be an ‘ideal’ image about the nation, which is a mythical image that does not actually exist. In this context, refugees and migrants can be viewed as groups who potentially might ‘take away’ the nation we are imagining (Anderson 2006) and this can lead to hostile reactions. Examples are the growing neo-populist parties in Europe and their anti-immigration rhetoric, but also the continued heated debates about asylum seekers in Australia. ‘Elites’, ‘academics’ and ‘political correctness’ have been identified by some conservative writers as failing to protect the ‘true
Aussie values’ and losing contact with the ‘average Australian’ (Sawer and Hindess 2004).

While I have touched upon notions around Australian identity and the contested nature of this identity (see Chapter 2) I wish to expand here on this story and take a theoretical approach to national narratives. Such theoretical insight can be useful in the analysis of the participating men’s narratives about their Australian experiences.

However, first it is worthwhile to note that the notion about an imagined space needs to be understood, while acknowledging that there also is a very real nation that is guarded with real borders. So for asylum seekers entering the national real space, these boundaries cannot be separated and the imagined (initially the wishful goal) can become real (detention), while the real becomes imagined (belonging or alienation), each space affecting the other.

I concur with Hodge and O’Carroll who write; “‘Australia’, an imagined community among others, can be re-thought, re-focused and re-dreamed. It is up to all Australians to reimagine who ‘we’ could be and should be after September 11” (2006: 139). Here they refer to September 11 2001, which sparked a specific anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia that made many Australian Muslims targeted as ‘the Other’ (Manning 2004) and experience more or less a sense of ‘discomfort’ and ‘ontological insecurity’ in Australian society (Noble 2005). This, as Noble identifies, influences their sense of belonging in the space.

Similar points are raised by Elder (2007) who explores many ways the dominant Australian national identity has marginalised certain groups. Elder explains the aim is not to just insert these marginalised characters into the dominant narrative (in the sense that the dominant narrative just ‘forgot’ some groups, such as working mothers, indigenous people or certain migrants). Elder concurs with comments above from Putnam, Hodge and O’Carroll but also Bhabha’s critique of essentialist thinking; that what is required is to disrupt “the existing narrative...[because of] the realisation that these stories are premised on the exclusion of particular histories” (Elder 2007: 38). Elder argues that even during ‘fun’ ceremonies such as the opening of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, “the inclusion, marginalisations and exclusions that occur have an impact on people’s sense of belonging” (Ibid: 38). These imaginary and narrated boundaries construct what ‘being Australian’ means. Elder asks, what lies behind the term ‘being Australian’? She argues if something is Australian, something else is un-Australian; a term that politicians and the media evoke when they disagree with the actions of
someone, whether or not the person is Australian (see also Huddart 2005: 119-120). Hence it is not just about citizenship (in the legal sense) but specific characteristics that can be potentially lost, acquired or demanded (ibid).

Important for this research is the position convincingly argued by Elder, that the dominant and hegemonic culture, discourses and national myths are very much aligned with the White, Anglo-Australian group (Elder 2007). This is problematic, according to Elder, since Australia contains many cultures and ethnicities that are therefore sidelined; outside of the stories told about the nation and its identity. Elder does not provide an answer for a future trajectory for the nation, but she raises the point that if we acknowledge the past and remain open to how borders are created and how these include and exclude, we are better equipped to understand how Australian identity is a construct in the making; it is possible to articulate counter narratives. The possibility of the ‘re-articulation’ of narratives is for Bhabha the interesting thing, not the ‘reality’ per se. (Bhabha 1994).

Bhabha questions rigid notions around national identities and he does not embrace a need to homogenise national cultures. Instead he is clear that the fact we live in a multicultural society means we have to face our differences and find ways to deal with these various cultures, but also to find ways to go beyond those and find common pursuits (Bhabha 1994).

In some ways this echoes what Zizek argues in an opinion piece called ‘Europe must move beyond mere tolerance’:

> The conflict about multiculturalism already is one about Leitkultur [the dominant or leading/core culture]: it is not a conflict between cultures, but between different visions of how different cultures can and should co-exist, about the rules and practices these cultures have to share if they are to co-exist. (Zizek 2011: online)

Even though Zizek is not a postcolonial writer and the term ‘Leitkultur’ can be too easily assumed to mean ‘core culture’ (which can have a colonial sound to it), he argues for the need to re-think national narratives in order to find connections and opportunities. Zizek differs from Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) in that he does not place the value on ‘tolerance’. Instead Zizek explains that the aim is not to focus on how much ‘we’ should tolerate ‘others’, which can easily turn into what Hage (1998) calls a ‘white fantasy’ that positions the ‘whites’

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(or the dominant group) as those who should naturally control levels of toleration (if ‘he’ acts more foreign, ‘we’ can reject him). This can place ‘us’ in a deadlock with the ‘other’, so instead Zizek argues that “the only way to break out of this deadlock is to propose and fight for a positive universal project shared by all participants” (Zizek 2011: online). Here he aligns with Hodge and O’Carroll’s search for a common ground to stand on, but differs from those who are advocating a retreat to the Anglo-Celtic core culture (for example Dixon 1999). Zizek argues that we all ought to develop a “positive emancipatory Leitkultur, which can sustain authentic co-existence. Don't just respect others, offer a common struggle, since our problems today are common” (Zizek 2011: Online). This has some relevance in a postcolonial situation and the re-enunciation of narratives.

Bhabha’s writings about hybridity offer some possible avenues to disrupt essentialist thinking regarding national imaginings and national narratives, but also points to a way that can explain, or articulate, multicultural amalgamation. It is through the concept of hybridity that a hegemonic and dominant ‘national habitus’ can be challenged or disrupted.

Hybridity

For Pieterse, hybridisation should be a “critique of essentialism” (1994: 180). For Bhabha a hybrid national culture is not an extension of the old, but a continuous amalgamation that can pave the way forward. Bhabha writes that to search for this is to search for the ‘Unbuilt’ “even when we vainly believe that we are, ourselves, standing at the top of the tower” (Bhabha 2003: 35). It is to shake up predisposed dispositions within ourselves, and all others in the space.

Hybridisation, when it comes to national belonging in Australia, has always taken place, even though not always articulated as something that is happening. The reasons seem to be that often the hybridisation is understood as a transnational identification, such as when people are called ‘Chinese-Australian’, or ‘Lebanese-Australian’ or even ‘Indigenous-Australian’. Even though transnational identities have an opportunity to challenge essentialist notions concerning national belonging, they can be perceived as two separate national identities (Grabska 2010), not as a hybrid amalgamation that Bhabha argues should be the aim. Such hybrid amalgamations are what Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) argue all ‘Australians’ are, even those who think they are ‘just Australians’.
Bhabha suggests that the path forward for individuals should be to understand and search for the hybrid identities, or hybrid belonging. A hybrid belonging or identity does not a priori assume a category. Rather, it implicitly acknowledges that these are always fluctuating processes that have no beginning, middle or end, even if some groups or individuals attempt to create such boundaries or specific distinctions or divisions (i.e. the politics of belonging). In terms of this research, the aim is to understand how belonging is experienced – phenomenologically or subjectively – but this might expose barriers or boundaries that can be used to divide or categorise people. Hybridity focuses more on what happens when people meet and mingle, and create something ‘new’ (whether consciously or not). It is this ‘new’ that sparks from the junction of the two (or more) that is of interest to Bhabha since that is both inevitably ‘now’ (could be understood as the ‘multicultural reality’ in Australia) and the trajectory to a (possible) future.

To think about the nation as hybrid can open up an opportunity to re-think belonging in a postcolonial nation. Paul Gilroy (2000) argues that we need to move away from ‘race’ as a defining feature for belonging and identification with the nation. Gilroy intends to provide an image that can challenge the often taken for granted assumptions about spatial and temporal belonging, and to re-think what it might be that national belonging is based on. I maintain that further evidence for how hybrid understandings of belonging are experienced and constructed can play a part in this re-thinking and re-imagining. This does not mean, however, that old stereotypes do not live on, or that postcolonial anxieties do not live among those who have benefited from a potentially repressive past.

Even though Gilroy argues for a move beyond the race line, ‘belonging to the nation’ does seem to potentially be shaped by a number of intersecting categories (one of Yuval-Davis’ 2010 arguments, explored later in this chapter), that include, but are not limited to, race; such as specific cultures, habits, ways of being, religion and dress codes and speech, but potentially also sporting interests and other ‘surface’ factors (from Probyn 1996). How these are experienced, and whether or not they shape a sense of belonging, is something that might be brought up by participants in this research. The point here, according to Bhabha, is that selective categories can prevent a hybrid (and inclusive) imaginary community, as people’s continued use of stereotypes to understand others allows only an essentialist perspective. It is when limiting categories for belonging (the politics of belonging) are challenged or exposed (whether by a newcomer or others) that some might experience, what Bhabha calls, ‘the
Stereotypes and the uncanny

A ‘stereotype’ is not a “false representation of a given reality” but “an arrested, fixated form of representation” (Bhabha 1994: 75). These are not just stereotypes that the dominant group hold, but can also be held by different migrants, preventing possible belongings. Stereotypes are at the core of any attempts to essentialise the national identity. The ‘typical’ Australian, French or Swedish, or Afghan person is based on stereotypes but so too are any hyphenated versions of the same. To disrupt these is an important part of Bhabha’s writing, since it can illuminate our constrained or limited thinking and understanding about the ‘Other’. ‘The uncanny’ is a term Bhabha has borrowed from psychoanalysis to describe the feeling when an undesired past is evoked in the present, such as colonial (both objective and subjective) violence that has given ‘you’ privileges by default, while others remain in a disadvantaged position because of the same violence.

One argument is that colonial authority (or any authority) recognises that its authority is linked to its perpetuation of stereotypes, to justify its colonial rule, and it is “informed by supposedly civilizing ideals” (Huddart 2006: 55). But it is not just about old school colonial powers, in fact Huddart points out that; “modern forms of Western political and economical institutions coexist with the ideologies of superiority” (ibid: 55). The anxiety comes from colonisers knowing that they are perpetuating stereotypes, while possessing a self-image that is superior and civilised (Bhabha 1994). The anxiety is present because the coloniser feels the need to produce stereotypes in order to retain power successfully. Stereotypes can easily be challenged, and when they are, they can expose the weak ground they are built on. This provides the colonised with agency to resist. To expose this contradiction is the task for a postcolonial critic, to challenge the colonisers’ (or dominant powers’ or groups’) version of events, people and history. In this current research, it remains to be seen how stereotypes feature in the men’s narratives and what that might mean for their experiences around connections and belonging.

Using Bhabha’s terminology, it is possible to ask whether it is the ‘uncanny feelings’ that are partly the source for claims that asylum seekers arriving on boats should be referred to as ‘illegals’ (AAP 2013). If they are seen as ‘illegal’, punitive, or harsh actions taken by the Government can be justified. However, if they are not seen as ‘illegal’, but as potential
refugees in need, the ‘hard-line’ policies might be questioned and the treatment of asylum seekers might then evoke previous policies towards non-White immigrants from Australia’s past, or towards the Indigenous Australians.

The ‘ideology of superiority’ is not always accepted as negative, provoking anxieties. Instead some argue that Australia’s alignment with ‘the West’ has been a positive phenomenon that ought to be promoted. According to Dixon, Australia was successfully very cohesive, with a strong identity thanks to the Anglo-Celtic core “until the 1970s” (Dixon 1999: 96). A similar position has been taken by other media commentators (for example Albrechtsen 2006). Considering the racially selective policies in place to maintain the British core culture and the requirements to assimilate, or remain on the outside, the assertion that Australia had a cohesive dominant group appears to be accurate. For Dixon a cohesive society must have a core culture and for historians such as Blainey (1984) and Windschuttle (2004) the core culture needed to be protected in the past, and continues to be in need of protection in the future. But unlike Zizek (2011) who does not argue for a hierarchical ‘leitkulture’; Dixon, Blainey and Windschuttle perceive that in Australia the core culture is an Anglo-Celtic core culture. The suggestion within these writers’ work is that without the Anglo-Celtic core, social cohesion would be potentially threatened. These ‘conservative’ authors reject notions that the multicultural drift should require changes to the core culture, and they openly advocate assimilation or acculturation to be at the core of integration, for the sake of social cohesion (Blainey 1984).

Supporters of multiculturalism have also been criticised by Hage for only wanting the stereotypical presence of ‘foreigners’ or ‘third-world looking’ people (Hage 1998). Hage is making a valid point but still uses a stereotypical image of the ‘white Australian’. This was recognised by Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) who pointed out that such positioning of the ‘white Australian’ does little to take this debate forward. It is also a claim made loud and clear by Gould (1999) in his critique of Hage on those grounds. The realisation that people can be racist or use stereotypes, while they are benign, is something that is important to recognise. However, an understanding of what such ‘benign racism’ does to the other is then needed; does it position them lower down the social gradient, i.e. with less status or less right to belonging, and is this something that is experienced by new Australians? The ‘white’ interviewee Hage is referring to when he is making his point does not demonstrate she was either racist or positioned the Other as less, she only said she liked the fact that her area has
more ethnic restaurants now (Hage 1998). For Hage however, the point is still that the norm is a White Anglo-Celtic Australia and they have the ability or capacity (or agency) to say they like, or they do not like, ‘ethnic restaurants’ while they remain as the neutral or natural occupant of the space.

Stereotypes can also function from the migrant’s viewpoint. The previous chapter outlined how some male migrants perceived ‘Anglo-Celtic’ men in a stereotypical way (Donaldson et al. 2009) and this can be equally problematic, both for the migrants and for the mainstream since it can erect barriers between different groups.

It is also possible to think about ‘the uncanny’ in terms of those men who have spent time in immigration detention centres in Australia. Again, the previous chapter explored how research has indicated that being detained can lead to serious health and wellbeing consequences. It is understood to be a traumatic experience (Fleay and Briskman 2013) so when a person is later released, their relationship to Australia might possibly be explained as ‘uncanny’. If so, it adds another layer to the challenges and arguments concerning detention practices.

As has been identified, a postcolonial critique points out that hierarchical and essentialist discursive constructs can create divisions between groups. As noted previously, such divisions are what Hodge and O’Carroll call ‘schismogenesis’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006), a term I use in this thesis to indicate divisions based on stereotypes, misunderstandings and misidentifications. I now examine how divisions have been maintained in Australia and then discuss how ‘whiteness theory’ reveals that ‘whiteness’ is more than just a neutral colour. It is a racialised and cultural position and outlook that shapes hegemonic privileges.

‘Schismogenesis’

The aim of the arguments presented in previous sections was to demonstrate how postcolonial writing focuses on how to re-think narratives concerning national belonging and national identity because, as Said argues, it is the postcolonial narratives that perpetuate cultural hierarchies which stem from a colonial past. The argument is that by exposing these, the possibilities might be offered up for a different narrative to develop that does not exclude or divide some groups, nor maintain privileges among others.
Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) argue that it is important to not apply any simplistic or dichotomising perspective on how multicultural Australia is developing, since that will only lead to ‘schismogenesis’; which they identify to mean the way a split, or division, between groups develops because of a ‘vicious circle’ of misunderstandings and/or misinterpretations.

Hodge and O’Carroll write that “Australian citizens and politicians alike need to learn lessons about borderwork, and the value of permeable boundaries and fuzzy categories” (2006: 37). They offer a way to think beyond the postcolonial situation by taking an ‘intersectional’ approach (originally developed by Crenshaw 1991, but also used by Yuval-Davis (2011a). This approach intentionally refuses to be restricted by essentialist arguments that focus on specific categories, such as ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘gender’ and others, and is described further in the next section in this chapter.

Hodge and O’Carroll refer to George Bateson who used the term ‘schismogenesis’ instead of ‘racism’ as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of group conflicts or social disagreements. Hodge and O’Carroll explain that Bateson differentiated between ‘complementary schismogenesis’ and ‘symmetrical schismogenesis’. The former is based on differences (both physical but also in power relations), such as ethnic racism. The latter is based on similarities, such as the fear of migrants who might steal one’s job (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006: 10-11).

To understand social ‘splits’ as a social construct or process also leads to the conclusion that there ought to be a process that could reverse such splits or avoid them, and this process or ‘capacity’ they call ‘cosmogenesis’ (from Greek cosmos, meaning harmony) (ibid: 11). The benefit of using this type of terminology and definition in this research is that it becomes easier to see how change is possible, because potential conflicts or divisions are just ‘a process’ and not a static situation that might be harder to change. The aim is not to avoid the word ‘racism’, or down play ‘new racism’ that perpetuates boundaries and hierarchies, whatever the reasons might be (Yuval-Davis 2011c), but to provide an opening for the opportunity to establish and create ‘cosmogenesis’ - social harmony. This is very difficult to achieve if, for example, it is claimed that only one side is racist: an attitude which can become a call for groups to acculturate, which goes against Hodge and O’Carroll’s argument. Rather, Hodge and O’Carroll make an attempt to look at multicultural Australia differently from the way Bhabha and other critics of the term ‘multiculturalism’. Instead of regarding
multiculturalism as an essentialist policy still attached to colonial hierarchies, Hodge and O’Carroll use the term ‘multiculture’ to look at Australia with open and hopeful eyes. They attempt to understand all categories as ‘fuzzy’, or not suitable for restricting definitions. This is why they write that some who are ‘critical of multiculturalism’ are in fact looking at the issue in black and white, applying ‘binary thinking’, without allowing for the positive to shine through and bring hope. They explain; “Multiculture is far broader and more diverse a value than anti-racism on its own, though it should indeed include values and ways of being that work against racism” (ibid: 13).

Despite the different approaches, I argue that ‘multiculture’ could be understood to contain hybrid (in Bhabha’s sense) cultures, not multi-cultures as in many cultures that can be neatly separated, since there are always similarities and linkages that could be maintained or developed. This has been part of cosmopolitanism; the search for more universal similarities and connections (Brown and Held 2010) which is a way to construct cosmogenesis. Cosmopolitanism can be seen as a potential goal but might be connected (at least on the surface) to a rather privileged position, i.e. a ‘citizen of the world’ (which is the Greek meaning of the word ‘cosmopolitan’), while cosmogenesis might be seen as another term for ‘social cohesion’. I acknowledge these are complex terms and it remains to be seen whether the men in this study experience schismogenesis, cosmogenesis or if they express a cosmopolitan belonging, a hybrid belonging or an essentialist cultural, religious or other identities and if so, what does that mean for their belonging to Australia or to other Australians?

Some writers argue that one main division that has links to the colonial past is the privileged position ‘white’ people have in a postcolonial society. The argument is that unless ‘whiteness’ is understood and articulated, it is not possible to move beyond a certain social schismogenesis that is based on the continued privilege for ‘whiteness’ or ‘white people’ or ‘white culture’.

**White and whiteness**

If ‘white’ is indeed seen and enacted as the neutral norm in Australia and is what it means to be Australian, it will potentially make it more difficult for a ‘non-white’ to claim belonging to Australia. However, it should be noted that it is not the only category that dictates or shapes belonging, but according to some Australian academics, it can be a prominent
category (Carey and McLisky 2009; Elder 2007; Farid 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2003, 2004, 2006; Perera 2007; Pugliese 2002, 2003; Koerner 2010). The question that relates to the current research is; ‘is whiteness identified as a barrier for belonging (and how it is articulated) among the cohort who participate in this research?’ This is needed since non-academic understandings of how whiteness is understood or experienced are less evident (Burgin 2013). Because whiteness can act as a barrier to belonging, it is relevant to explore the theoretical perspective further and then link it to the rather unique Australian situation, as described in Chapter 2.

Despite Paul Gilroy’s (2002) call to move ‘beyond the colour line’ there is an entire, often interdisciplinary, field called ‘Whiteness Studies’ or ‘Critical Whiteness Studies’ (Abbas et al. 2013) that has grown from postcolonial theory. This can be understood as a ‘critical race theory’ as it attempts to articulate how in fact ‘white’ is often the neutral norm, even though it is fluid, in postcolonial societies and it is interconnected with the term ‘Western societies’ and ‘Western culture’. Growing in size since the early 1990s whiteness studies aim to make ‘white’ visible as a category of identification. The argument is that white is the racial culture that is dominant and it is possible to expose privileges entrenched in this whiteness, and how it is socially constructed and normalised as the neutral norm but also to highlight cultural practices attached to whiteness (Frankenberg 1993). The objective is to bring white into the race dialogue, so that the dialogue is not just about ‘others’ or the ‘non-whites’. Frankenberg, coming from a feminist perspective, argues that race matters even for white women. She claimed they do not live outside race as non-racial people, instead, whiteness shape them. Whiteness is about privileges but also about the standpoint from which a white person views the rest of the society and the world and specific cultural practices that are connected to whiteness but appear neutral (Frankenberg 1993). It shapes their habitus, which then shapes the structures and individual experiences, affecting anyone entering that space.

According to whiteness theories it is possible to challenge the hegemonic dominance of whiteness, since it is inherently unstable, and to reduce its normalisation and the privileges attached to being the “human norm” by which all other races are evaluated and examined (see Dyer 1997: 1). Leonardo explains this aim as action “disrupting white discourses and unsettling their codes” (2002: 31). Leonardo clarifies an important distinction, claiming that “whiteness is a racial discourse, whereas the category ‘white people’ represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color” (ibid: 31). Leonardo continues and explains
that, “whiteness is also a racial perspective or a world-view” (ibid: 31), which then potentially diminishes non-white world-views.

Ignatiev explains in an interview with Postel that whiteness is a socially constructed category that enables white people to have privileges. He gives an explanation of what he means when he writes ‘white’:

To me, being "white" means being part of a club, with certain privileges and obligations. People are recruited into that club at birth, enrolled in that club without their consent or permission, and brought up according to its rules. Generally speaking, they go through life accepting the rules and accepting the benefits of membership, without ever considering the costs. (Ignatiev and Postel 1997: 5)

Ignatiev argues that we should change the structures that continue to develop colour lines, those structures that often operate as neutral and objective:

I'm talking about the ordinary mainstream institutions of this society–the labor market, the school system, the police and the court system, the social work industry, the housing authority. All of these various social mechanisms, which in many cases are operated and administered by well-meaning folk who would be horrified at the suggestion that they are, in fact, reproducing the structures of racism. (Ignatiev and Postel 1997: 6)

The links to Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of the habitus seem rather clear, the ‘club rules’ are predisposed dispositions, and the privileges are the associated capital that are linked to those dispositions. Chapter 2 described how Anglo-Celtic culture has been dominant in Australia and how Australian history contains examples of racist policies that privileged whiteness and white people. It seems logical to conclude that the pervading world-view that shaped (at least initially) Australia stems from such white or even Eurocentric or ‘Western’ perspectives, which, it can be argued, has continued to maintain and nurture white privilege and its normalisation. One arguable example is that for ‘white Australians’ there is in no need of any hyphen or explanation of their origin (Nelson and Dunn 2013) while non-whites are sometimes defined as ‘Asian-Australian’ or ‘Chinese-Australian’ and so on, even by themselves (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). Here White Australians are the autochthonic group,
belonging by default of their colonial ownership, while all others are ‘strangers’ that require a ‘label’. Clearly it is a position that disregards, or devalues, Indigenous Australians.

The argument of whiteness studies is that normalisation, both by the ‘whites’ and the ‘non-whites’, can produce racial and cultural hierarchies and social divisions. This next section will take a closer look at how some writers have explored the normalisation of whiteness in an Australian context and what that might mean for belonging for those who are ‘non-whites’ in Australia, such as people arriving as asylum seekers or refugees.

**Whiteness in Australia as schismogenesis**

As explained, Whiteness studies identify how power dynamics and hierarchies function and how the racialised boundaries of belonging are normalised by, and made invisible to, the dominant ‘white’ group. This has been explored by different Australian writers and academics, even some who might not position themselves as whiteness scholars (for example; Elder 2006; Due 2008; Hage 1998, 2003; Huijser 2007; Koerner 2010; McAllan 2011; Moreton-Robinson 2003; Osuri and Banerjee 2004; Perera 1999, 2002, 2007; Pugliese 2003, 2002; and Shaw 2007). Even though these writers focus on different areas, they all attempt to provide a critical perspective that challenges naturalised and hegemonic understandings about race, whiteness and boundary maintenance.

Osuri and Banerjee explain, informed by Perera, that “whiteness functions as an embodied, ethnicised structure of power placed in the historico-cultural context of the nation” (2004: 160). McAllan echoes earlier mentioned critics of multiculturalism and attempts to include Indigenous Australians’ perspectives: “what remains is the continuation of western cultural and epistemological dominance, supported through the pretence of post racial inclusion” (2011: 2) because there is a ‘hegemony of whiteness’ in Australia even today (ibid).

Carey and McLisky set out to “argue that ‘Whiteness’ has been central to the racial regimes which have so profoundly shaped the development of the Australian nation” (2009: xxi). Shaw (2006) takes a different focus and examines whiteness in the context of the city and gentrification (in Sydney). She suggests whiteness can be both permanent and very site specific but also fluctuating, and should not be reduced to an ethnic hegemonic category. Shaw further raises suggestions that whiteness studies have to be careful not to dislocate or omit ‘indigeneity’; instead whiteness can be helpfully understood in a postcolonial
framework (ibid). This is particularly relevant in an Australian context. Moreton-Robinson also notes the continuation of the racial ownership of the nation, when she writes: “Who calls Australia home is inextricably connected to who has possession, and possession is jealously guarded by white Australians” (2003: 27). According to this argument, white possession omits Indigenous ownership completely and continues the colonial project. The relevance for this research is that there is a current discourse that still positions ‘whiteness’ as a foundation for belonging in Australia despite the fact that Australia is now a very multicultural nation (Due 2008) (see for example; Ho and Jakubowicz 2013).

Moreover, Osuir and Banerjee use the term ‘white diaspora’ to indicate how the naturalised articulation of Australia as a ‘Western’ country with a social, cultural and military connection with the United States and the United Kingdom, demonstrates there is an “ownership of Australia as a white... country” (2004: 160). The attack in New York on September 11, 2001, they write, was positioned by both politicians and the media as an attack on ‘us’. They call this discursive connection a ‘white teleology’ that has been used to separate the world into ‘Us and Them’, while erasing colonial history and imperial violence. As Perera explains,

...the narratives of Australia’s history [go] through a range of moves: it erases the time prior to colonization, casting it as unproductive, empty and meaningless time, and so legitimizing its own claim to the land; second it consolidates this claim to ownership by casting the Asian as the alien and invader figure, thus (re)usurping the place of the indigene; and, finally, it constructs a script of assimilation in which selected groups of other successive migrants are progressively racialised as white. (Perera 2000: 17 in Osuri and Banerjee 2004: 160)

White teleologies devalue both the Indigenous Australians and anyone who does not fit into the ‘white’ mould. The aim therefore is to challenge orthodox discourses and ‘white’ epistemologies such as ‘white possession’ (see Koerner 2010 in relation to asylum seekers) and narratives about belonging and who can or should belong.

The pervasive ‘white possession’ of Australia, that both Koerner and Moreton-Robinson identify, is what Hage has called the ‘White Fantasy’ (1998). This ‘fantasy’ is about Australia belonging to the White Anglo-Celtic majority. This fantasy is not something only openly racist people have, but it can also, according to Hage, be found among those who are advocating multiculturalism in Australia. Hage argues that the ownership is evident in
comments indicating a ‘tolerance’ (as explained earlier) of the other and the ability (or wish at least) to control the national space and dictate the amount of ‘Others’ who are ‘allowed’ to be there. Despite the criticism from Hodge and O’Carroll (2006), Hage’s position here is aligned with others who are coming from a whiteness perspective, even though Hage himself is more indebted to Bourdieu and the notion of habitus, which shapes the individual agent’s beliefs that their practices (and understandings) are “sensible” and “reasonable” (Bourdieu 1977: 79) or in this case, their beliefs that they have a right to grant ‘tolerance’ of others.

Whiteness and critical race writers have clear agendas; if it is possible to challenge prevailing discourses about who can and should belong, it might be possible to explore other visions of what the “space of belonging” might look like (Morley 2001: 425). These other visions can be searched for in “counter hegemonic discourses” (Moreton-Robinson 2003: 28) since these can expose how “multiple or hybrid identities and cultures emerge” (ibid: 28). For Morley (2001) the importance is to avoid attempting to create any type of ‘imagined community’, which implicitly constructs imagined limitations, but to instead focus on how the complexities and differences in our societies are negotiated and experienced. Whether this means some kind of post-nation aim is not clear and beyond the scope of this research. However, the arguments about a ‘white imagined’ ownership clearly indicate a barrier to belonging based on racialised categories. The question remains, how are these barriers experienced by those who are not aligned with ‘whiteness’ or the ‘West’?

McIntosh was one of the first to elaborate on ‘whiteness’ as a concept that needed particular attention because, she explained, whites are taught not to recognise it. She wrote in her 1989 article, aptly named ‘White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack’;

Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable. As we in Women’s Studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about white privilege must ask, ‘Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?’ (McIntosh 1989: 10)

McIntosh goes on to provide a list of 26 points that state conditions or claims that she, as a white person, can count on as being true. The list is part of her invisible knapsack, available to her because she is white. From a white perspective, these are part of conditions in society that whites should be aware of, even though some might reject it. The question is, can this by
itself ‘undo privileges’? McIntosh argues this is not enough, because there are structural inequalities tied to whiteness that will take place even though individuals change their behaviour. Instead we need to “reconstruct power systems on a broader base” (1989: 12).

Bhabha questions calls to abolish whiteness, since he argues what will prevents a different focus taking its place, like ‘civility’ or ‘secularism’ or ‘national culture’ (Bhabha 1998: 2). The call, advocated by Bhabha, is to tear away any privileges, to find a ‘third dimension’ that moves away from a focus on colour, not just for whites, but also for non-whites. Whites need to “cease to exist as white” (Ignatiev in Bhabha 1998: 4) but the non-whites need to also move beyond the colour lines, since their own perceptions might prevent them from accepting the dislocation by the ‘whites’. Back (2010) does not necessarily argue there is a need to stop being white, instead, he argues it is important to allow for a positive step forward that moves away from colour as an identifier of importance, and sees people as humans. To do this, Back argues Hage’s (2003) ‘ethics of care’ can be helpful in guiding society, as opposed to a worrying, fearful or paranoid society. Similarly, this is also why Geschiere (2009) argues against claims for belonging based on autochthonic arguments about a special (birth-) right to the land.

However, despite intentions to think about belonging ‘beyond the colour line’ (Gilroy 2001) to find a ‘third space’ (Bhabha in Bhabha and Rutherford 1990) that is not an extension of the past, discrimination and racism still seem to exist. Based on the explorations in chapter 3, this needs to be understood and explored further with those who potentially are vulnerable to such discrimination.

Whiteness is not just about racial hegemony. It is also about a cultural and social hegemony that shapes the nations dispositions and norms, and it needs to be fundamentally devalued, re-arranged and re-articulated if social equality is the goal. It is damaging if it constructs barriers to belonging and perpetuates racial, cultural and social hierarchies. This is a connection Back (2011) seems to find significant because it is racism that is negative and produces privileges and barriers, and that should be the focus. It should not be on developing some white identities (that can slip into a white victimisation or white pride attitude). Here Back seems to agree with Frankenburg who argues that to “speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism... racism shapes white people’s lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life” (1993: 6).
Racism is also complicated in our multicultural ‘post-modern’ societies (i.e. things are not “black and white”). In Chapter 3 I touch upon what some call ‘new racism’ (Dunn et al. 2004) and how migrants and people with a refugee background often claim they experience racism and discrimination. ‘New racism’ encompasses more than just race. It is a racism that includes cultural, religious and ethnic differences and struggle; it is a source for how social hierarchies are maintained and structured. ‘New Racism’ can be the enactment of whiteness and when experienced, is equally a barrier to belonging since it can cause alienation and social exclusion. This next section will examine how ‘new racism’ creates schismogenesis or divisions and hierarchies in society, not just based on race and colour, but based on different cultural, religious, and ethnic categories. If whiteness is about white privileges, ‘new racism’ is about discrimination against those deemed ‘different’ from the ‘mainstream’, for reasons that potentially go beyond race and colour.

‘New racism’ and the ‘space of commonality’

Whiteness studies are about trying to racialise ‘white people’ and disrupt the neutral position whiteness has had in ‘Western’ societies, such as Australia, and expose how it shapes society today. Because of links that go back to the colonial and imperial past, racism and cultural and religious intolerance can be seen as the hurtful and discriminatory actions stemming from a hierarchical worldview and racial embodiment. In Chapter 3 I outlined how this may affect the experiences of new Australians, particularly those who are not white and not from a ‘Western’ country. Moreover, I established that previous research finds that racism and the level of belonging a person experiences and their general health and wellbeing are interconnected (Nelson et al. 2011; Nelson and Dunn 2013). In this section I discuss some of the theoretical work that underpins ‘new racism’, to clarify the complexity of the term and its movement beyond race to mean something more like cultural intolerance or any exclusionary attempts, by certain groups, to justify the existing boundaries (Yuval-Davis 2011c). I also link this to the notion of the ‘space of commonality’, which is how Hage (2011) explains and understands some of the publicly supported actions taken towards asylum seekers in Australia.

‘New racism’ is understood as a move away from colour as the determinant for racism to more cultural, religious and ethnic aversion or stereotypes. It has been identified as a subtle but pervasive form of racism evident in the news media (Van Dijk 2000) and it entails explicit or implicit disapproval of certain cultural and religious groups or practices (Dunn et
al. 2007). However, it does not just mean disapproval, it can also be the boundaries that exist for some who might not conform to what the hegemonic majority have decided is the norm or acceptable behaviour, and hence might not stem from a malign aversion by those who implicitly accept the boundaries. For example, by claiming Australia is a Christian nation, all other religious people (or Atheists) are prevented from that ownership or the benefits that Christian groups have received (Nelson and Dunn 2013). Christians then have autochthonic claim to the nation (Geschiere 2009) while groups that are not Christian, are sidelined.

New racism is less about blatant racism, instead it can be about more subtle hierarchies, which have their roots in colonial times but also more recent events, such as after September 11 and the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment. As such, Nelson and Dunn (2013) argue that it is important to recognise the ongoing and implicit cultural privilege that the Anglo-Celtic, White or Christian Australians enjoy, while those deemed the Other cannot just be neutral Australians; whether it is their ‘visible difference’ (LaRRC 2009) or their perceived cultural difference. They have to justify their allegiances in a different manner. This can have implications for new Australians and their sense of inclusion.

Hage writes about the barriers that are constructed and exclude some groups or people from “the space of commonality” (Hage 2011). This is a particular way to create schismogenesis, and different from claiming Governmental belonging, as explored by Hage in ‘White Nation’ (Hage 1998). It is also different from the more traditional racism that views the other with disgust and as inferior and so on. These barriers are linked to ‘new racism’ since it is not ‘black and white’ and has to do with social and cultural exclusion and acceptance.

The exclusion from the ‘space of commonality’ (Hage 2011) attempts to deny people even some recognition of humanity; even though they might be situated on different social locations, with different hierarchical positioning. Hage mentions how there is a move to make sure that asylum seekers are not included in this space of commonality, hence they are deprived of even basic rights and support. The Government (and those who support the Government’s policy) want asylum seekers to remain outside this space of commonality (for example in detention centres). However, once they enter the space of commonality, some humanity must then be recognised, which poses difficult questions for those who have been outside the space, but now have been give ‘permission’ to remain on the inside, and even become ‘Australian’. To re-cap, this can then potentially create what Bhabha called an ‘uncanny’ feeling towards Australia. How this feeling is created is not clear, and this research
will hopefully provide insights into this, particularly in relation to belonging.

To experience the ‘uncanny’ because you have been outside the ‘space of commonality’ can lead to what Hage (2011) calls the ‘racist anti-racist’. It is the person who might experience racism directed at them (now or in the past), but who responds by proclaiming their own superiority (cultural or religious for example) and their own right to entitlements. This complicates the issue, since it does not just place racism comfortably with the dominant group (which whiteness studies do) but also as something that can be potentially seen in other groups in society. This can cause conflicts and Hage argues it needs to be recognised by those interested in anti-racism strategies.

It can be argued that ‘new racism’ is a reason for the apparent schismogenesis in society since it reinforces cultural and social privileges, and positions certain groups outside the space of commonality (Hage 2011) without accepting that such actions are racist. Sometimes it might be very subtle, such as the racism described in an article by Waleed Aly in response to the more blatant racism (‘goonish racism’) exposed via YouTube or in the hate mails he receives (Aly 2013). Aly argues there is a ‘subterranean racism’ that most Australians carry with them, which shapes their response to ‘Others’ (sometimes unconscious). It is often polite and even educated, but more difficult to identify or change (ibid). However, sometimes the ‘new racism’ is in fact more blatant. Manning (2004) argues that there is evidence of Orientalism in discourses used by the Australian media when they describe ‘Others’, particularly people from the Middle East and Muslims. This positions those groups outside the space of commonalities, even though they are ‘inside’ Australia.

Despite all the comments about racism, Hodge and O’Carroll argue that “Australia is not fundamentally a racist nation” (2006: 90) and “Australia is no longer officially a racist state” (2006: 114). Even though this comment seems to be disputed by Australia’s Human Rights Commission in the quote included earlier; “The Constitution still allows racial discrimination” (AHRC 2014: online) Hodge and O’Carroll would maintain that people are equal in front of the law and there is democracy and freedom, so that even though the constitution contains elements that ought to be changed and deleted, Australia is not officially racist. However, and this is what Hodge and O’Carroll attempt to show, this does not mean there is not racism in Australia (whether it is objective (structural) or subjective (interpersonal)) or that there is not a social gradient that stems from colonial and explicitly racist periods (the postcolonial argument). Hodge and O’Carroll avoid sweeping statements
about Australia being racist since they argue these are counterproductive. They position Hage’s argument presented in ‘White Nation’ as a criticism, while their work “seeks to build, not just criticise” (2006: 55).

Postcolonial theories, whiteness studies and writings about ‘new racism’ show how the ‘space of commonalities’ is a socio-historical construct, and that schismogenesis in general is a process that can be disrupted and ultimately, if there is a will, changed. Hage explains:

[The] important task is to try and think about how it [racism] does so: how it circulates and how it ‘captures’, hurts, and sometimes even destroys people. It is in that sense that one looks at continuity and change in Australian racism, not in the mode of the ‘more or less’. (Hage 2011: 1)

**Part 2: Belonging and the Politics of Belonging**

The questions of belonging and the politics of belonging constitute some of the most difficult issues that are confronting all of us these days. (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 1).

In previous chapters I have referred to the term ‘belonging’, however, term, has not been developed or explained in any depth; instead its meaning has been taken for granted in many respects. This section will take a more theoretical and analytical look at belonging and the politics of belonging.

This thesis focuses on belonging on a personal level, therefore ‘to belong’ is understood as feeling connected, included, safe, at home and at ease somewhere, which leads to an emotional attachment (Anthias 2006; Hage 2002; Hamaz and Vasta 2009; Ingnatief 1995; May 2011; Taylor 2009; Yuval-Davis 2011a). However, the aim, as pointed out in Chapter 3, is also to understand how certain socio-political, socio-historical and discursive aspects (referred to generally as ‘the politics of belonging’) are experienced, negotiated or spoken about, if at all. It is these aspects that are potentially open to change or adjustment, while the emotional attachment is something that can develop or grow (it cannot be provided as such). Therefore I am less interested in belonging from a social psychological position and more on belonging as a sociological experience, i.e. shaped by relational and subjective factors within specific social and ‘objective structures’. Instead of moving ‘beyond belonging’, something Geschiere (2009) suggests should be done, I wish to open up the concept, in a way which
refutes any attempt by specific groups to ‘return it to the local’ (ibid: 1) and for such groups to perpetuate an ‘autochthonic’ (ibid) and exclusionary right to belonging. Such exclusionary positioning can lead to arguments about ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012; Li 2002). Back et al. (2012) explain that hierarchies can act like a continuation of previous ‘colonial racism’, and such exclusionary belonging becomes a concern when there is ‘global conjuncture of belonging’ (from Tania Murray Li in Geschiere 2009: 6) for different groups who claim belonging for different reasons. It is such claims that ultimately lead to ‘borderwork’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006) and shape the politics of belonging. Hence the focus is not about who can prove belonging or can grant belonging, but firstly, who senses belonging and why, and secondly, what prevents others from experiencing belonging and what can be done to foster a broad sense of belonging, without constructing barriers? For this reason, the term needs further clarification.

Belonging is often seen as a “self-explanatory term” (Antonsich 2010: 644) or “a synonym of identity” or citizenship (Ibid: 644) but Antonsich argues it is still “vaguely defined” or “under theorized” (Ibid: 645). It is also a phenomenological experience, shaped by the person’s aims and interests in that particular moment, making any generalisations difficult. Drawing from Alfred Schutz, Overgaard and Zahavi explain: “[m]y aims and interests decide how I experience things and people around me... these interests are mainly practical rather than theoretical (Schutz 1962: 208)” (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009: 12). In phenomenological sociology ‘aims and interests’ are often seen as ‘taken for granted’ or ‘natural attitudes’ (Husserl 1982: 27 in Ibid: 12) shared in an “intersubjective world, a world I share with others” (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 37) but for newcomers in that ‘world’ (i.e. Australia) this might not be straightforward. Because of the relational and phenomenological aspects the question becomes, is it then possible to really define belonging, or should that even be the aim? The term needs to be flexible and open, allowing for different meanings and definitions. To belong to the nation is different from belonging to one’s community or family. It can change at any time and fluctuate, and as such it can be understood as ‘reflexive’ (Giddens 1991). If there is a hegemonic construction of what national belonging should mean, will it be rejected by those not part of the dominant group, the Outsiders, while they still construct their own areas in which to belong? If someone says they do not feel belonging, but they do not really care, it is still important to understand what and why they might feel that way. In some respects that is what this thesis is about, i.e. how boundaries in a postcolonial nation may be experienced by men from refugee backgrounds, and, if so, what might they be? In this section
I will draw from the literature to link belonging with a number of factors, which theory suggests should be present in the men’s narratives.

Here I am not aiming to provide an exhaustive account of ‘belonging’. I am instead trying to conceptualise it and clarify how it is possible to approach this complex notion, while recognising there might be many different ways of belonging. Belonging and identities, as narratives, are often seen as closely linked (Yuval-Davis 2011a) particularly for refugees or people from refugee backgrounds who are sometimes described as being in the process of ‘identity formation’ (Westoby 2009). In Chapter 3, I discussed how identity is discussed in the literature as a challenge for men from refugee backgrounds and that belonging is often just stated as ‘either/or’, but the process for belonging is less understood or explored.

Identity can refer to “identification with, and participation in” (Westoby 2009: 104 italics in original) a particular social or cultural group. In other words identity is relational and it can be understood as one aspect of belonging, and less an essentialist category, which ‘identity’ is at risk of becoming if seen as dialogical (Tabar et al. 2010). However, how the participant men speak about ‘identity’, or if at all, remains to be seen.

Hamaz and Vasta do not ask in their research whether someone belongs or not. Rather, they are concerned with how belonging is lived and negotiated and how it relates to both self and structures. To do this they “define ‘belonging’ as feelings of community, home, ownership of, acceptance and affiliation in, and to, spaces and places in and outside the UK” (Hamaz and Vasta 2009: 8). Here a failure to connect to your community, to sense you are not ‘home’, a lack of ownership, acceptance and affiliation influences the person’s sense of belonging and vice versa in a non-linear way. Hence ‘we’, the wider (or dominant) community, cannot provide ‘belonging’, only the space that might enable belonging. Failure to ‘identify with’ relates to limited connection, and a lack of affiliation with others, which can affect participation, and subsequently the ability, or capacity, to develop belonging.

I describe belonging as a ‘fuzzy concept’, meaning any attempt to make a clear definition is futile and most likely to be reductionist (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). However, I do use Yuval-Davis’ (2006a, 2011a) analytical framework to explore how belonging can be understood. Yuval-Davis’ framework is recognised as one of the most “comprehensive analytical efforts to study the notion of belonging” (Antonsich 2010: 645; see also
Christensen 2009). Using her framework allows me to explore belonging as a personal attachment to a place, but also to argue that it is shaped by different categories that are intersecting in different social locations. I am also able to explore how belonging is constructed based on certain ethical and political values, which leads to the ‘politics of belonging’ or ‘boundary maintenance’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a). As mentioned, I argue that to experience being outside the ‘space of commonalities’, or outside the boundaries for national belonging, can lead to social isolation, social separation and alienation. Therefore belonging can conceptually be understood as a social justice issue, not just a subjective, or phenomenological experience, or an aim for integration (as in Ager and Strang 2008, explored in chapter 3). To develop this argument I draw heavily from Nancy Fraser’s (1996, 2000; Fraser and Honneth 2003, Fraser and Naples 2004) theoretical social justice theories that focus on both distributive and cognitive injustices but also representational injustice (Fraser 2008; Fraser and Naples 2004) and her argument for ‘parity of participation’ as a social justice goal.

Belonging a fuzzy concept

To understand belonging as a ‘fuzzy concept’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006) allows for a wide interpretation. It also avoids an attempt to reach a clear answer about belonging, and instead understand belonging as a process that is ongoing, fluctuating and never isolated from the rest of society. Probyn argues that “belonging hinges on not belonging” (Probyn 1996: 14). In other words it is never stable, even when it might appear to be. It is subjective and relational and as such it can be understood as a phenomenological experience. Somers explains a challenge with the general phenomenological concepts: “There is no reason to assume a priori that people with similar attributes will share common experiences of social life” (1994: 635) so in that regard, it is subject dependent and any assumptions about what influences it or shapes it should be avoided. May explains belonging “as a sense of ease with oneself and one’s surroundings” (2011: 368) while Ignatieff argues that to belong is to feel ‘safe’ but also to be “recognized and… understood” (Ignatieff 1995: 10). Moreover, what this means is that any comment reflecting a sense of ease or unease, of feeling safe or unsafe, or a sense of being recognised or misrecognised, understood or mis-understood, are comments on experiences that may speak to belonging.

Yuval-Davis writes:
Like other hegemonic constructions, belonging therefore tends to become ‘naturalized’ and thus invisible in hegemonic formations. It is only when one’s safe and stable connection to the collectivity, the homeland, the state, is threatened, that it becomes articulated and reflexive. (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 528)

Belongingness in this sense goes beyond “culture, identity and rights” (Buonfino and Thomson 2007: 6). Buonfino and Thomson write in their report for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in Britain that it is “a basic frame of reference which relates to human need, and encompasses the many ways in which people find points of recognition in their lives” (Ibid: 6). As a result it does not reduce the subject to a label or an identity; it is a human need to belong, whether to a family, community, religion or a nation. Neither Yuval-Davis nor Buonfino and Thomson define belonging precisely, because it is experienced subjectively within a specific space and cannot be reduced to one aspect or one experience alone. Hence it is vague, or fuzzy. As Morley argues; “[i]f the home, the neighbourhood and the nation are all potential spaces of belonging, this is no simple matter of disconnected, parallel processes” (2001: 433). It is therefore, as Morely suggests, important to focus on how these spaces of belonging interconnect and what takes precedence in people’s lives when they talk about it.

Further, by allowing for belonging to remain fuzzy, we are able to understand belonging in a more open way. Hamaz and Vasta (2009) attempt this when they explain that we should allow:

...for a more sensitive and differentiated lens on constructions of belonging in culturally plural societies, one that neither seeks the celebratory dis-embeddedness of cosmopolitan transnationalisms, nor the perceived conflicted terrain of ‘multiple belongings’. (Hamaz and Vasta 2009: 4)

Because, as they write, the aim should be to “reveal the many layers and shades of belonging” (ibid: 4) to avoid essentialising one belonging as incompatible with another (leading to potentially conflicting loyalties). Hamaz and Vasta clarify that belonging is “formed through the interplay of the subjective self, individual agency and structural positioning” (ibid: 7) and should not be conflated with citizenship or cultural integration (ibid: 7). This is similar to Calhoun’s (1999) critique of how citizenship and social belonging
are understood. However, Calhoun argues that we need to recognise there are different modes of social belonging. There is belonging within ‘communities’ (interpersonal and informal but not necessarily sharing the same “cultural styles”), ‘categories’ (groups that share “cultural similarities”) and then ‘publics’, defined as “quasi-groups constituted by mutual engagement in discourse aimed at determining the nature of social institutions including the states” (ibid: 220). It is in the latter, which can be understood as the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006), that Calhoun argues it is essential to develop a sense of belonging for true democratic participation. For ‘minority groups’ or ‘marginalised groups’, even if there is a strong belonging in an ‘ethnic enclave’ or within one’s local community, Calhoun makes it clear that it does not mean one has any belonging to the larger publics, or that the dominant group for that matter see ‘minority groups’ as inclusive in Their publics. This is significant for this research, because, according to Calhoun, this can have an impact on democratic participation. Calhoun concludes that:

Within... larger settings it is not an adequate response to human differences to allow each person to find the group within which they feel at home. It is crucial to create public space within which people may engage each other in discourse – not just to make decisions, but to make culture and even to make and remake their own identities.

(Calhoun 1999: 228)

Calhoun’s differentiations have importance for this research, as it clarifies that a person might have different ‘levels’ of belonging, depending on which space they are thinking about at that moment. Even though Yuval-Davis (2011a) argues that ‘levels’ can indicate a hierarchy (discussed in the next section), questions raised by Calhoun remain important; will the participating men have a sense of belonging to Australia as a nation or to the dominant group in Australia, i.e. the Anglo-Celtic majority? Because it is the dominant majority that, according to the postcolonial understanding of Australia's contested narrative explored earlier, still controls and shapes the national narrative (Elder 2007).

Putnam’s (1995) work also has relevance. He has contributed with the concepts of ‘bridging capital’ and ‘bonding capital’ to differentiate between different social ties. Bonding capital refers to the links or connections to the group you have interpersonal relationships with and share certain cultural similarities with, while bridging capital are the links across to other groups, who might have different cultural habits or backgrounds. If you are from a ‘minority
group’ and lack bridging capital – or belonging in the publics – are you less likely to experience a strong connection to the dominant group or dominant culture, even though you might have strong bonding capital or a sense of belonging with your interpersonal connections?

The point is that it is possible to belong to these modes in different ways, for different reasons. I believe this has also been the argument for Yuval-Davis, who has developed a useful analytical framework for belonging, which does take into account the personal, the political and the structural, because belonging is, as she states, always a “dynamic process” (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 12).

**Belonging as three facets**

The analytical framework developed by Yuval-Davis enables belonging to be separated into three facets, “social locations; identifications and emotional attachments; and ethical and political values” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 199). Each is equally important and interconnected to each other, but each also has its own dimension of belonging. This framework clarifies how this fuzzy concept can be approached and allows for a more nuanced understanding of it.

**Yuval-Davis’ analytical framework**

Yuval-Davis (2006a) differentiates between Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. The former she describes as the feeling of ‘being at home’; it is ‘emotional attachment’ to a place. She refers to Hage who has written that to feel at home is ‘an ongoing project’ (Hage 1997: 103) and that it requires a ‘sense of hope for the future” (Ibid: 103). Yuval-Davis’ framework makes it easier to see how belonging can be seen to depend on both agency and structure. Agency, the capacity to do what you want to do (Giddens 1991), can be restricted or encouraged by the social and institutional structures that exist around the individual. This is a central theme in sociology, the “relationship between self and society” (May 2011: 364) and in the sociology of everyday life. It is also important for Bourdieu and his ‘theory of practice’ (1977); that society is not some static entity but a social and structural creation that can both change and shape people, but also ultimately be changed by people (if the hidden forces are exposed). Similarly, belonging is, if we look at Yuval-Davis’ framework, a social, ongoing process that depends on the self and society. If society is a social construct, it follows that it is possible to establish a space that encourages and enables belonging, whether or not the
individual wants to belong. This is what I believe is the aim in a multicultural society, since we might not always want to belong in all situations (see May 2011 for the argument that to not belong is sometimes a desired state).

Yuval-Davis states:

It is for this reason that struggles for recognition always also include an element of construction and it is for this reason that studying the relationships between positionalities, identities and political values is so important (and impossible if they are all reduced to the same ontological level). (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 201-202)

As mentioned already, the three facets are; “social locations; identifications and emotional attachments; and ethical and political values.” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 199). I will examine each of these and attempt to clarify how these relate to this research in order to both complicate and clarify belonging, but also to make it clear how the term is conceptually understood in this research. Yuval-Davis’ framework allows for a clear overview of belonging and, I believe, other approaches, such as Hamaz and Vasta’s (2009) and Buonfino and Thomson’s (2007) understanding of belonging which sit alongside this framework, but also highlight how other aspects can influence the different facets, such as a specific need for agency (Hamaz and Vasta 2009).

Identification and emotional attachment

Identification and emotional attachment is what belonging is about, according to Antonsich (2009). He argues that the other facets in Yuval-Davis’ framework are more to do with discursive practices that construct the boundaries for belonging; hence they are more about the ‘politics of belonging’. This facet contains the personal narratives, the attachments we can experience, both on a ‘surface level’ (Probyn 1996) to elements of everyday life, but also to deeper emotions (connections to childhood, for example). The emotional connection to a place is what Hage focuses on when writing about belonging as feeling ‘at home’ or ‘homeliness’ (Hage 1997, 1998). Where we feel ‘at home’ might differ. For example, Hage would argue that for the White nationalist, home is Australia or Australia is their home, hence others are visitors or present on the White nationalists’ terms. This is what Hage calls

11 Yuval-Davis used to call the three facets ‘levels’ (Yuval-Davis 2004, 2006a) but argues that levels indicate a hierarchy and that can be misleading (Yuval-Davis 2011a).
‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998). Buonfino and Thomson (2007: 11) refer to the same ownership as “extreme belonging” to the nation. But for many others, home might be a rather small space within Australia, or a particular community, that a person emotionally connects and identifies with, whether or not they connect to Australia per se.

However ‘home’ is constructed or understood, ‘homeliness’ is about connections to other bodies (people), not just imaginary concepts (see also Zournazi 2002). Here belonging is equally about connections to others, but it cannot be isolated from the social and the structural. Yuval-Davis refers to Ignatieff who links belonging not just to feelings of homeliness, but to safety and an emotional connection to a place. Antonsich writes that Ignatieff’s link to safety should be understood within the “context of inter-ethnic violence and therefore he conceives belonging mainly as protection against this violence” (Antonsich 2010: 648). However, as pointed out earlier, Ignatieff also argues that belonging is about being “recognized and being understood” (Ignatieff 1995: 10) which is broader than ‘inter-ethnic’ violence and can be understood in relation to migrants and refugees in a settler country such as Australia. Yuval-Davis also refutes Antonsich’s point; she explains that safety does not just mean safe from violence, but also safe to be angry and upset (Yuval-Davis 2010: 10). To feel safe can also refer to what Noble, quoted in Chapter 3, describes as ‘ontological security’ (Noble 2005). In other words when you belong somewhere, you feel valued and understood and you are free to show your emotions, or feelings, in that place.

Miller, coming from a philosophical position using ‘Kierkegaard taxonomy’, argues that the opposite to belonging is ‘despair’ (Miller 2003: 220), which is explained as a “pathological state of being in which the individual is not properly connected to others or themselves” (ibid: 220). This does not necessarily mean that to be connected will automatically lead to belonging, as explained by Crisp (2010), or that a person who belongs will want to be connected to everyone else (ibid), but rather to experience despair is to experience being isolated, with little hope. Antonsich (2010) does not use ‘despair’, but he argues that the opposite of belonging (or ‘place-belonging’) is ‘alienation’ or ‘isolation’; the emotional response an individual has when being outside belonging. Both terms are mentioned in Chapter 3 as aspects that can be detrimental to health and wellbeing. Antonsich argues that ‘exclusion’ or identification as the Other (a misidentification since it is an essentialising category, often based on stereotypes) is more about the ‘politics of belonging’ (the act to exclude) which then can lead to a lack of belonging and an emotional response. However,
what this also shows is that it is within the politics of belonging that work can be done to make sure belonging, as an emotional attachment, is more likely to be experienced.

This is because belonging can be understood as a process: “individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning” (Probyn, 1996: 19). For Probyn, this process also applies to identity, in the sense that it is also connected to both being and wanting to become. Identity then relates to the emotional element of belonging, the relational and self, not a reductionist label or definition, which ‘identity politics’ has been criticised for using (see for example: Fraser 2000; Yuval-Davis 2010a).

Antonsich extends this facet and puts forward a different and more detailed analysis of the personal dimension of belonging, something he argues Yuval-Davis does not do. Instead, Antonsich focuses on ‘place belongingness’, a place where you can ‘feel at home’ (Antonsich 2010: 646). As mentioned above, definitions of home can vary, but it is a close emotional attachment to a space, an environment, to people, but also to habits and ways of being and talking. Antonsich identifies five factors that he argues influence this type of belonging; “auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal” (Ibid: 647). If we look at belonging as part of the social process forced migrants go through, these are not straightforward, but it is clear they relate to the ‘core domains’ for integration that Ager and Strang (2008: 170) outline in their normative framework (explored in previous chapter). Autobiographical refers to one’s life history, which for a migrant is mostly not here, but located elsewhere. Relational refers to connections and ties to others. It can be family that one lives with or family that is far away. These factors relate to Ager and Strang’s (2008) ‘social connections’ while cultural factors can be understood as ‘facilitators’ (ibid). The cultural factors can be many, but Antonsich argues that language is often the most important factor (also explored by Butler in Butler and Spivak 2010). Economic aspects are linked to the ability to work and make money for individuals and their families, to feel financially secure and hopeful. For Ager and Strang, this can be separated into both ‘markers and means’ (‘employment’ being one of them) and ‘facilitators’ (‘safety and stability’). As explored in chapter 3, employment has been identified as a particularly important factor for men (Fisher 2009), who do not always just provide for their immediate families but also for relatives in their country of origin (Johnson and Stoll 2008). Legal factors are also essential, relating to being a legal citizen and legal resident of a country, similar to Ager and Strang’s ‘foundation’
that entails ‘rights and citizenship’.

According to Antonsich these factors will shape and influence the emotional attachment a person has to a place, their ‘place belongingness’. If we are trying to understand how forced migrants experience belonging and how they develop or fail to develop it, some of these factors can be challenging. For a forced migrant, personal connections to a place can be limited. They have few (or no) historical ties to the place, potentially minimal links to family and social networks, and they might come from locations that have different cultural practices and habits compared to the hegemonic majority in Australia, or they might have difficulty finding employment and a sense that they are secure. So in many ways they are more influenced by (or vulnerable to) social and structural aspects and discursive practices that create inclusion or exclusion. Antonsich writes: “[T]his means that one’s personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place” (2010: 649).

Before I discuss the politics of belonging I will look first at the two remaining facets of Yuval-Davis’ framework. Apart from emotional attachment to a place, a person’s sense of belonging is also influenced by their social location and to understand both of these, she advocates an intersectional approach, a concept Antonsich (2010) does not elaborate on but is worthwhile to examine in some detail.

Social Locations – an intersectional approach

Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2011a) focuses on ‘Social Locations’, a rather complex ‘power grid’, that will shift and change, depending on socio-historical moments. The location relates to the different positions a person might hold, based on different categories, such as their gender, ethnicity, class, cultural background, age and so on. It is their social and economic location, in the larger social power grid. A ‘low’ location equates to limited agency and limited capital. One can also think about this using Bourdieu’s (1993) term ‘fields’, which is the contested ‘space’ where an individual has a certain (also contested) social position, or location, but different amounts of agency to move around (related to ‘capital’ if we use Bourdieu’s concepts). In some fields, or ‘social settings’, different categories (such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion) are more valued and certain social groups might have more agency than others, while all fields relate to each other in a hierarchical structure. Hence a person can be relatively high on the social gradient in one field, such as their local community, while
remaining relatively low in a different field. It is these ‘positionings’ that can be understood as being related to the normalised postcolonial hierarchies explored earlier, which in turn relates to the postcolonial history in Australia (see chapter 2). Yuval-Davis’ framework makes it explicit that such structural and social hierarchies influence a person’s sense of belonging in a particular field, and cannot be understood without understanding the socio-historical and socio-political forces behind the ‘social locations’ (2006a, 2010). These were explored in chapter 2 and the first part of this chapter.

According to Yuval-Davis, different categories intersect with each other, at different locations, and each category can have different effects, in different situations, influencing the belonging experienced in that moment. Christensen, who also builds on Yuval-Davis’ work, explains; “it is therefore necessary in concrete intersectionality analyses to make strategic choices about which are the most relevant intersections for specific groups at a specific time and on specific issues” (Christensen 2009: 38) It is the different categories that dictate “people’s ability to move up those grids of power” (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 13) and the reason Yuval-Davis argues for an intersectional approach. This also demonstrates the fluctuating nature of such positionings and the possibility of change. One can see here why Hamaz and Vasta refuse to essentialise belonging, arguing that belonging is “formed through the interplay of the subjective self, individual agency and structural positioning” (2009: 7). Hence the ability to move up the ‘grid’ is determined by these factors, which in turn are shaped by – and shape – the person’s emotional attachment to a place (and any political projects that exclude or include). The refusal to essentialise belonging is similarly supported by Anthias who ‘complicates’ not just notions of identity but also of belonging. Anthias also argues that we should understand these terms as processes that depend on many different intersecting categories; that are also social processes and not static. The danger, as pointed out by Anthias, is when people homogenise certain categories (such as race, ethnicity, gender or background) while ignoring others (Anthias 2006).

An intersectional approach has become a widely accepted approach that challenges past theories that did not just homogenise categories, but prioritised one category over another, such as specific identity politics and their projects. An intersectional approach can therefore be used to understand ‘everyday experiences’ about belonging and what it means for the individual (Caxaj and Berman 2010). Scholars have accepted that these categories ‘intersect’, evoking a metaphor of a road intersection (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 6). The approach opens up
the possibility to analyse not just one category, but instead how several categories influence each other and are differently dependent on the historical and political moment. This is the reason why Somers (1994) explained that we should avoid making assumptions about others a priori. In other words, we should not assume certain categories are always experienced the way we might think they are.

An intersectional approach was first developed by feminist scholars, and the term was coined by Crenshaw (1991), an African-American feminist who identified that black working class women do not have the same struggle as white working class women, since the black woman does not just have to deal with being working class and a woman; she also needs to deal with being black in America. None of the categories can be separated from the others. It became a critique of the previous feminist theorists, who often came from the white middle class, and how these theories did not capture the challenges faced by marginalised women’s lived experiences.

Although discourses of race, gender, class, etc. have their own ontological bases which cannot be reduced down to each other, there is no separate concrete meaning of any facet of these social categories, as they are mutually constitutive in any concrete historical moment. (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 7)

An intersectional analysis then opens up the focus, allows for multiple angles to be examined and as such, avoids essentialist perspectives or claims. This can be useful when trying to understand men and their situation. In chapter 3, I included some men’s studies and ‘refugee men’s’ research that focused on masculinities. Even though this is an important area to investigate, I argue that if we take an intersectional approach, an initial (a priori) focus on gender can narrow the research and include assumptions about masculinities and ideas around manhood, which might not be helpful. Masculinities might be an important aspect of the men’s lives, but other categories might be more important in certain situations or moments.

On a more macro level, in the ‘age of migration’ (Castle and Miller 2003) an intersectional approach provides a more complex picture of why certain groups move around. Thus to reduce reasons for migration to one single category are producing a simplistic picture. An example might be that the current ‘age of migration’ is only about movement based on supply
and demand, when in fact other intersecting categories, or ‘regimes’, are dictating why people are on the move (Lutz 2008). Similarly, one can argue that it is equally easy to fall into the trap of reducing refugees to one category and assume homogeneity for them (for example poor and vulnerable) or that they have certain experiences (for example war trauma) and face challenges in a similar way.

Belonging is a difficult concept that cannot, and should not, be reduced to something less complex. An intersectional approach recognises this and makes it clear that to belong somewhere is dependent upon different social locations the person is situated within, at that particular time and space. Here spatial, temporal, political and historical forces shape belonging. The value placed on specific categories is usually based on different ethical and political values in that space, hence in a postcolonial nation, such values can be formed by the colonial past or the dominant groups’ ideologies and world-views (explored earlier), but also the ethical and political values each individual has. This brings us to the last of Yuval-Davis’ three facets.

**Ethical and political values**

What values are then placed on different social locations and social identities and how are these ‘judged’? This is a part of the “specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/should be drawn, in more or less exclusionary ways, in more or less permeable ways” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 203). For new migrants, and forced migrants in particular, any hegemonic values and ideologies that are naturalised in society will have to be negotiated. This can be problematic and difficult if the newcomer (their background, culture, religion or ethnic background) is positioned as different, as the ‘Other’. Yuval-Davis refers to these inclusion and exclusion boundaries as different social political projects, or the ‘politics of belonging’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a, 2011a). Antonsich explains that the “politics of belonging involves two opposite sides: the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of ‘granting’ belonging” (2010: 650). Here one side has agency, while the other side does not; there is not an equal equilibrium or parity. This further suggests that agency is required for belonging (Anthias 2006; Buonefino and Thomson 2007; Valentine and Sporton 2009). However, despite Antonsich’s arguments, the ‘ethical and political values’ are not just the values the dominant group holds. They can also be the values that dictate whether or not a person wishes to belong in that space or how they perceive the dominant group. So even though one side can grant or deny belonging, it is
plausible that the other side can reject or dispute the ‘required’ rules.

Because belonging is understood as a concept that is ‘thicker’ than citizenship (Crowley 1999), it goes beyond legislative rights and contains different facets, all operating in an intersectional and fluid way. For migrants, who are less able to negotiate and challenge any hegemonic politics of belonging, there is less potential opportunity to dictate and choose where they will be able to develop belonging, while more dominant groups have agency to be able to develop ‘selective belonging’ (Savage et al. 2005) or belonging according to their own choices and decisions.

Considering the number of people on the move, the different politics of belonging that create boundaries needs to be constantly examined and challenged, if the aim is to ensure that all citizens, in the legal sense of the word, are able to develop belonging to the nation. It is the values and ethics that underpin and shape the boundaries that position some people on the outside, while others are on the inside. They are clearly related to socio-historical values, such as postcolonial hierarchies, since they construct borders based on specific values. This is why Yuval-Davis refers to Crowley (1999: 30) and writes that the politics of belonging is “the dirty work of boundary maintenance” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 204). It is also what Hodge and O’Carroll call ‘borderwork’ (2006); it results in the political projects that create schismogenesis in society – it is also these values that can justify specific social locations or be behind misidentifications. In this next section I explore the politics of belonging further, since it is ultimately about who is on ‘the inside’, and who is on ‘the outside’.

**The Politics of belonging**

The politics of belonging is about the intersection of the sociology of power with the sociology of emotions, but it is the normative values lens which filters the meaning of both to individuals and collectivities, differentially situated along intersectional glocal [global + local] social locations. (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 14)

The power Yuval-Davis is writing about is not imposed power, but internalised and naturalised (Yuval-Davis 2011a) and it is this power that will have long term effects on individuals and society. This exposes the challenge for how changes to the politics of belonging are supposed to take place (influencing the ‘sociology of emotions’), but Yuval-Davis also provides insight into what is required (social and structural changes that can break
up the boundaries around who is allowed to belong. She writes that by using an intersectional approach, we can be “deconstructing simplistic notions of national and ethnic collectivities” (Yuval-Davis 2011a: 2).

Having first explored the contested national narrative in Australia in Chapter 2 and then how postcolonial and whiteness theories can be used to understand how narratives about the nation are linked to socio-historical experiences, I can now position such contestations within what Yuval-Davis calls the ‘politics of belonging’. I argue that instead of a focus on ‘social cohesion’, which can be seen as the intended outcome for ‘integration’ (Spencer 2006), the politics of belonging focuses more on the structural and socio-political aspects that maintain the ‘borders’ separating the insiders from the outsiders. The politics of belonging is less about the outcome and more about an ongoing process of exclusion and inclusion. In the Australian report ‘Mapping Social Cohesion’ (Markus and Dharmalingam 2013) ‘social cohesion’ is understood as a “continuous and seemingly never-ending process of achieving social harmony” (ibid: 25) that contains belonging as one of its aspects. However, belonging is only explained to mean “shared values, identification with Australia and trust” (ibid: 26) and they argue that to develop a sense of belonging is an essential part in the work towards social harmony. What I have tried to show is that to develop connection to and within a space, in other words to develop a sense of belonging somewhere, is more complex than the definition utilised by Markus and Dharmalingam. I have attempted to show that belonging is dependent upon many different aspects, evident in Yuval-Davis’ three analytical facets. I do concur with Markus and Dharmalingam (2013) that to develop a sense of belonging for all people is essential for a healthy society; where I differ is that I understand belonging is more than just one of the categories that make up social cohesion. It is in fact that which enables social cohesion, in other words, social cohesion (and integration) are the by-products of people experiencing that they belong in that space (the nation or the larger community). Social cohesion, explained with links to social justice or equality, is not without its problem as cohesion can rely on social homogenisation, and according to postcolonial and whiteness theories, is based on un-even power dynamics. This links ‘claims for cohesion’ to ‘claims for a hegemonic norm or status quo’ that maintain the cultural hierarchies in the national narratives, and it can therefore be argued that unless it is understood how the politics of belonging function and are experienced, it is not possible to really understand what potentially might unsettle ‘social cohesion’.

I have shown in previous sections that hegemonic national narratives that exclude and create
divisions, are naturalised and internalised by the dominant group (Elder 2007). However, the dominant group is not a homogenous group. Instead even this group has to be complicated by an understanding of intersectional categories and how intersections stretch across the power grid (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). So, informed by postcolonial theories and whiteness theories, a White or Anglo-Celtic Australian who is relatively low down on the socioeconomic power grid in terms of financial capital, will still be potentially included in the national narrative that positions them as the norm, or as a ‘true’ Aussie. This explains why some Anglo-Celtic Australians develop a ‘governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998) or ownership over the national narrative and feel it is their right to protect it against those deemed the other (Noble 2009). In some ways this can be understood as a move towards what Yuval-Davis refers to as the ‘autochthonic politics of belonging’, mentioned in chapter 2, meaning the more cultural version of ‘new racism’ (Yuval-Davis 2011c) that constructs who is on the inside and who is on the outside, who is included in the ‘We’ and who is positioned as the ‘Other’, based on a ‘special’ link to the land.

The ‘politics of belonging’ materialises itself in national narratives, since such narratives can lead to some people or groups experiencing a ‘discomfort’ in their space or within their nation. For some groups it can limit their ‘ontological security’ (Noble 2005) because the dominant group maintains an image of the nation that the ‘Others’ do not fit into. Here the imagined narratives lead the ‘Others’ to feel excluded and rejected or not ‘being at ease with their surroundings’ (May 2011). However, such unease can also be experienced by those who do not lack ‘ontological security’ and who do fit into most of the dominant criteria for what constitutes ‘a national’. For example, consider the unease explored in auto-ethnographic research by two white academics in the Netherlands, who originally came from the US, when people asked them the question ‘where do you come from?’ (Davis and Nencel 2011). The unease is experienced even when the question is well-meaning, since it positions them as ‘not really Dutch’, despite having lived and worked in the Netherlands for over 30 years and speaking the language fluently (ibid). Davis and Nencel argue that for newcomers to ever feel ‘at home’ or to belong to the nation as equals, the national identity (whether it is Dutch or Australian) “would need to include a space for hybridity”, (2011: 484) connecting the postcolonial notion of hybridity with pathways for enabling belonging.

When certain politics of belonging (or social exclusion, the act or process of excluding) leads to social isolation, particularly if the person has limited capital or agency (positioned lower down the social ladder), it can have adverse health and wellbeing consequences. Because of
this, to experience social isolation is one of the main social determinants of health and wellbeing according to the World Health Organization (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003) and it is this that leads to the conclusion that belonging is not just one aspect of integration or part of social cohesion factors. It can be thought of as also a social justice issue.

**Belonging; a social justice issue**

If belonging is seen as a requirement for being a ‘full member’ of society (Anthias 2006) it can be understood as a question of equality. To be a full member, Anthias argues, in terms of social equality, the focus should not be on ‘identities’ but on that which prevents or limits ‘social engagement’ or people from becoming full members in society, i.e. what are the different politics of belonging that disable such engagement? This is in line with my stated presupposition (in the Introduction) that in a multicultural society it is essential all members feel they are able to engage with others, and that they can participate and belong, as equals, in their community and the national space.

Drawing partly from Fraser’s work (2000; Fraser and Honneth 2003) on social justice and Crenshaw’s (1994) work on intersectionality, Anthias focuses on those areas that can enhance common “struggles and solidarity” (2006: 29) and as such disrupt the politics of belonging that exclude rather than include. She suggests 6 areas that need to be the focus in order for social engagement to be possible; these can be understood as ways to approach national politics of belonging (including postcolonial barriers explored earlier). Firstly, ‘naturalisation’ and the idea that we need to ‘denaturalise’ socially constructed ‘differences and identities’, such as national identities and stereotypes. Secondly, we need to examine ‘collective attribution’ to understand how individuals are shaped by different intersecting categories holding different social positions and status. Thirdly, challenge cultural hierarchies to allow different cultural practices to be practiced on equal terms, within a human rights framework. Fourthly, ‘disassociate racial and ethnic categories’ in the political space, while respecting that communities have their own ways of life, but only as long as these do not challenge people’s human rights. This cannot be possible when people sense they are being discriminated against because of their ethnic and racial background. Fifthly, people have both ‘rights and responsibilities’ towards each other, which requires agency and lastly, “[m]echanisms of accountability within institutional frameworks” (ibid: 30) which means that both intentional and non-intentional discrimination and social injustices are redressed and adjusted.
To experience being not a ‘full member’, or not able to socially engage with society, can occur for a number of reasons, some explored in earlier chapters, such as when certain people encounter hegemonic barriers constructed by those deemed ‘naturalised’ nationals. An example is the white Dutch people who used a narrow white/ethnic identity to exclude other whites born overseas (Davis and Nencel 2011) or when the Anglo-Celtic groups in Australia re-affirm (sometimes unconsciously) how the nation belongs to them through using myths and stereotypes (Elder 2007; Hage 1998). Judith Butler writes that we ought to be “suspicious of any and all forms of national homogeneity, however internally qualified they may be” (Butler and Spivak 2010: 32). She is identifying how the nation state can create hierarchies of national belonging, and she uses Hannah Arendt’s work to ask whether there are modes of belonging that are non-nationalist (ibid). Butler finds no real answer, but questions any national narratives that create a hierarchy of belonging, because they must exclude rather than include. Butler does not mention ‘hybrid belonging’, instead she writes, following on from Arendt, that we need to move away from nationalism. This is different from ‘civic nationalism’, which Ignatieff (1995) argues is not exclusionary and limiting, but needed in multicultural nations. Even though I am avoiding the debate on whether to embrace nationalism or not, it is possible to link Butler’s suspicion to the claim that it is crucial to question when the national debate is experienced as propagating a specific and exclusionary narrative by those who are part of the hegemonic and dominant group, and when ‘ethnic nationalism’ (Ignatieff 1995) places boundaries against belonging.

To understand how the politics of belonging can be used to create naturalised hierarchies or imagined homogeneity that limits the ability to develop belonging for some groups has political ramifications. I draw in particular from Fraser’s work (1996, 1997, 2000, 2008; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Fraser and Naples 2004) to establish the link between her social justice concept ‘parity of participation’ and belonging. I argue that this will be useful when trying to understand how the ‘sociology of emotions’ can be supported by social and structural factors, so that the ‘normative value lens’ that shapes the politics of belonging can be challenged.

As already mentioned, both Ignatieff (1995) and Noble (2005) link the need to be recognised with belonging. Noble writes that the “ability to be comfortable in public settings also rests on our ability to be acknowledged as rightfully existing there: to be recognised as belonging” (Noble 2005: 114). Noble writes that this is required to be ‘fully human’ (ibid: 115). He continues to explain that this is sometimes denied to those who are positioned as the ‘Other’
and excluded. Noble argues there “is an active process of Othering and exclusion” (ibid: 118) that does not stem from lack of understanding, but more from a conscious effort to propagate social hierarchies because of a feared threat or social insecurity. The logic behind this, also mentioned by Yuval-Davis (2006a) and Crisp (2010), is that having become comfortable on the top, one does not need to worry about the gradient below. But once it all starts to feel unstable (i.e. the economic, cultural, social or political ground one is standing on), it is necessary to articulate (and reaffirm) one’s own position; then the politics of belonging becomes an active act. Hence for both feminist theorists and postcolonial theorists, one aim is to disturb the normalised ground, to expose its social construction, so that it is possible for those affected to participate in the re-articulation of narratives about the nation and challenge stereotypes that essentialise. This can then undo privileges around belonging based on certain categories, such as ethnicity, class or gender.

I draw on Fraser’s work to argue that Yuval-Davis’ analytical framework is useful to both complicate and simplify the notion of belonging and the politics of belonging, but it does not provide a framework for examining the social importance of belonging in terms of social justice and social equality. Yuval-Davis’ framework indicates that belonging (as an emotional attachment, strong identification with others and shared values) cannot be provided from the outside or top down. Instead ‘a space’ for equal participation, that does not discriminate because it is less hierarchical, can be supported. This can then potentially lead to the development of a stronger sense of belonging, since a person might experience being closer to a ‘full membership’ with equal opportunities and equal rights. Any barriers to equal participation are therefore potential barriers for the development of belonging as an equal.

Fraser’s model can be used to understand the dialectic relationship between socio-economic injustices (structural and material or ‘maldistribution’) and socio-cultural injustices (‘misrecognition’) (Fraser 2000). Both can shape different politics of belonging (‘Us vs. Them’ dichotomies for example, or structural discrimination). Hence Fraser suggests that economic and material disadvantage is intertwined with cultural or social disadvantage, and both require attention for social justice to flourish. It is here that her main difference with Axel Honneth lies (debated in Fraser and Honneth 2004). For Fraser, the potential injustices are not only redistributive and recognitive, but also representative injustices.

Humpage and Marston (2006) use Fraser’s theoretical frameworks to try to understand how belonging is constructed at different levels by refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPV)
in Australia and the importance of this for their social integration. Humpage and Mastron argue that refugees living on a TPV are recognised refugees but made into second-class residents, with limited rights. They are then according to Fraser, ‘misrecognised’ by the state; not allowed to belong as an equal, but they are also suffering from what Fraser call’s ‘maldistribution’, the unequal access to limited economic and material resources. Despite this, they are often able to establish some sense of belonging among their peers and the community in which they live (Humpage and Marston 2006). Humpage and Marston use Calhoun’s three modes of belonging (explored earlier in this chapter) to explain what they call an “apparent contradiction” (ibid: 115) in the development of belonging. Humpage and Marston connect Fraser’s framework with notions of belonging in an informative way, whereby they are “situating recognition and respect as key elements of social belonging” (ibid: 124). This is something this research continues to explore but with a different cohort. Humpage and Marston focus on refugees on TPVs, which is a unique category and with a clear element of misrecognition, while this research focuses on individuals – with a refugee background – who are settled in Australia permanently.

When Fraser writes about redistributive and recognitive injustice she is coming both from a Marxist and a feminist perspective in the sense that she argues social justice hinges on equal distribution, or access to, resources (material, practical, structural) as well as being recognised as an equal, or to have equal social status. This differs from identity recognition, in the sense that identity politics argues for a reification of a group identity, while Fraser argues that recognition should be understood in relation to status, hence misrecognition is social or status subordination. This means that to be misrecognised is to be given an unwanted social position, or location. This can be linked to one of Yuval-Davis’ facets for belonging; ‘social location’. Fraser explains that the aim should not be to ‘solidify’ a specific identity. Instead the aim ought to be to deconstruct any hegemonic identities (Fraser 1997), such as the archetypal ‘Australian’. This is echoed by Putnam when he argued that we should construct a new ‘Us’, as opposed to changing how immigrants are (Putnam in Lloyd 2006). This concurs with what is argued in postcolonial and whiteness studies, i.e. the need to disrupt hegemonic constructs and notions (Leonardo 2002). However, Fraser is coming from a social justice position, and her argument that links cultural and structural aspects takes into account not just the potential challenges around identities for a person with a refugee background, but also focuses on the structural and economic barriers they face, whatever their identity might be. The difference is important and particularly relevant when trying to
understand people from a refugee background who have lived in a country for some time, and who have moved beyond the initial ‘settlement period’ even though their settlement process (for which belonging can be seen as a goal) is still ongoing.

Fraser does not focus on a specific group in society but states that; “Redressing the injustice requires de-institutionalizing that value pattern and replacing it with an alternative that promotes parity” (Fraser 2000: 115). For Fraser this is an important task, to consider the alternative, and she proposes that it is helpful to use a ‘status model’ instead of an identity model. An important point is that “the status model is not committed a priori to any one type of remedy for misrecognition; rather, it allows for a range of possibilities, depending on what precisely the subordinated parties need in order to be able to participate as peers in social life.” (Fraser 2000: 116). This seems useful for the current research which takes an epistemological position, that it is the men’s perspectives that need to be understood. The important point is that ‘to be able to participate’ is linked to the social position the person has, their ‘status’. This in turn also depends on the normative and ethical values (another of Yuval-Davis’ facets) in that socio-historical moment, but also on economic and structural aspects. The relationships between the different aspects influencing a person’s ownership of status are different for different groups of people and different individuals.

It is this that Fraser sees as the ‘status order’ and a person’s position in that order is determined by different categories and structures. A person’s social position can be found on the social gradient (the term the WHO uses to describe this as a determinant of health) or what Yuval-Davis calls ‘social location’. A persons’ social location can prevent them from having equal access to security, employment, healthcare and education and as a result they are prevented from participating as equals in society; they are not ‘full members’ (Anthias 2006). However, Fraser’s ‘status model’ provides insight into how this order is shaped by cultural, economic and institutional or structural forces, moving away from simply focusing on different categories, such as gender, race, ethnicity and so on.

While Yuval-Davis’ framework is an analytical attempt to understand and in many ways simplify belonging, Fraser’s status model is based on a normative principle to establish ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000). For Fraser this means “justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life” (Fraser 2008: 405). Fraser outlines a ‘three-dimensional’ theory (Fraser and Naples 2004: 1117), which means there are three ways parity of participation might be prevented, either by the economic structures, the
social and cultural hierarchies or by being denied a political voice (Fraser 2008: 405). Each can prevent participation on equal terms and one can argue that those with the least parity are the ‘subaltern’ (Spivak 1988) who have very limited agency. But even further up the social ladder, from the unskilled workers to the higher end of the ‘middle’ classes, parity might not be equal, because of religion or cultural preferences, or name, physical attributes or ethnic appearances, which influence social position (or status) in a particular setting. For Fraser, the philosophical discussion is about how to transcend a lack of parity, and she suggests an “all-subjected principle” (Fraser 2008: 411) which means it is not just about membership to a nation or humanity, but that the concerned people all share “joint subjection to a structure of governance” (ibid: 411). A similar post-national approach is described by Butler in Butler and Spivak (2013). In terms of relating Fraser’s work to the current research, which focuses on Australian specific experiences, I suggest that to be able to participate in the nation as an equal is a requirement for national belonging, even though it is possible to participate and not experience emotional belonging, or to have a sense of belonging without wanting to participate in some fields. To feel prevented from participating because of one’s place on the social ladder or other barriers (discrimination or racism for example) can be assumed to affect one’s level of belonging. I have attempted to show how Fraser’s three dimensional theory relates to Yuval-Davis’ framework for belonging, as economic structures shape social locations, certain values and identifications shape hierarchies, and imposed identification can essentialise a person and prevent their voice from being heard.

Because of this, I argue it is possible to conceptualise that the ability to develop a sense of belonging and to participate cannot be separated, nor conflated. However, ‘to belong’ is more than ‘to participate’. It has the emotional attachment to a place, to feel ‘at home’. For new-Australians, who arrive as refugees or asylum seekers, it is important to be able to participate. It is part of the social process required for ‘integration’ into Australian society, but the link between parity of participation and belonging is not clear, though both experiences are related.

In our modern, postmodern or postcolonial societies there are many ‘horizontal complexities’ when it comes to the status order, making any effort to understand, challenge or change such an order complex. In more traditional societies, the status order can be more straightforward, with a clear hierarchy, but in modern multicultural societies, many different ‘fields’ or social sites have their own ordering. As touched upon earlier, different spaces (including large spaces such as a nation or a city) place different values on different things, but also on tacit
ways of being and acting, shaped by the (socio-historical) space, i.e. there is a site specific ‘habitus’. To ‘act Australian’ refers to specific, taken-for-granted dispositions, based on hegemonic and historically shaped narratives about how an ‘Australian’ should act. For this reason, the habitus in a specific space can be confounding and perplexing for newcomers, while not being something the ‘locals’ are aware of. Some of it can be illuminated within the stereotypes perpetuated by the dominant group (for example the ‘Australianness' in *Kath and Kim*). But, and this is the important point, this is not static, even though entrenched in structures and practices. Here Bhabha is useful again. As already identified, Bhabha explains how each culture, at any moment, is a hybrid version of the past, changing and moving in-between cultures and regions, making any clear distinctions in a multicultural space reductionist (i.e. the Us and Them rhetoric) (1994).

Armstrong and Thompson, who are critical of Fraser’s theory, argue that the complexities around social relations in a complex society makes the task of considering what a status order, that will enable parity of participation, might look like very difficult, or whether it is possible at all (Armstrong and Thompson 2009: 112). Their argument is that one person might be on par with another in a particular social space (or field), while experiencing disadvantage somewhere else. In many respects what they are identifying, (without expanding upon), is that the status model is dependent on different intersectional categories. Armstrong and Thompson claim that Fraser argues we should aim at parity in every aspect of the social order, and they argue she is failing to tackle complex situations. They write that “if PPP [parity of participation] requires parity in every aspect of the status order, then it has not been demonstrated that such a goal is possible given the apparently conflicting imperatives of status equality within diverse arenas of that order” (Armstrong and Thompson 2009: 113). However, Fraser (2000; Fraser and Naples 2003) makes it clear that some situations need to be examined in their context, and it is not enough to claim to have a right to something. Instead it is necessary to show that something is impeding one’s parity. However, to gain that right, one cannot impede someone else's parity of participation. This is the difference between Fraser and those who advocate identity politics which focus on rights linked to identity (Fraser and Naples 2004). Fraser’s argument should be understood to have many dimensions; there is parity within one’s own field, and also parity between fields. So an individual’s status in her community is one aspect, but her status in the mainstream community, or how she is represented in the media, might be another. Each dimension might require different redistributions and recognitions, which are not assumed a priori. Here
Fraser’s model moves away from cultural relativism and identity rights, in order to understand social justice and pathways forward that will entrench “new value patterns that will promote parity of participation in social life” (ibid: 116).

Armstrong and Thompson ask important questions in terms of how the status order can be challenged and what is meant by parity among and between different groups. I argue that in order to understand belonging, it remains useful to focus on levels of participation for groups that are not part of the dominant group, particularly when it is possible to argue that the social hierarchies that exist have not changed much since colonial times, when a particular culture or habitus was prioritised.

The dominant group cannot control other social groups’ sense of belonging, i.e. the emotional attachment to a place and to feel ‘at home’, but it can, and does, shape the different facets that can influence belonging. Some of those facets are the different political projects, the ‘politics of belonging’, that can include or exclude, to varying degrees.

**Conclusion**

This chapter lays out the theoretical and conceptual foundations for this research project. It is the theoretical lens through which I will examine and make sense of the data, in order to clarify and understand what shapes the men’s sense of belonging.

In Part 1 of this chapter I used postcolonial and whiteness theories to identify how national narratives can be essentialising, homogenising and dichotomising. Because Australia’s contested narratives (explore in Chapter 2) are shaped by its colonial history with clear cultural and ethnic hierarchies, it is possible that this will influence or shape people’s experiences of belonging when their background is not ‘Western’ or ‘European’.

Postcolonial theory uses specific terms, such as ‘hybridity’, ‘stereotype’ and ‘the uncanny’ to understand the postcolonial situation, but also the sources for ‘new racism’ or how ‘cultural hierarchies’ are maintained and cause social divisions (Nelson et. al. 2011) in a postcolonial society. It is these divisions that Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) call ‘schismogenesis’; a term I adopt in this thesis. Hodge and O’Carroll argue that this term is more hopeful than ‘racism’ for example, because it allows for a more nuanced understanding of social conflicts, divisions and disagreements. However, it is important, as I point out in this chapter, that the arguments
for ‘cosmogenesis’ (i.e. ‘social harmony’) are not conflated with acculturation or assimilation.

Whiteness theory is a framework for understanding racism and privilege by examining the normalisation of ‘white’ and how that causes schismogenesis in society. By revealing this, the aim in whiteness studies is to expose privileges attached to whiteness even when the white person is not ‘racist’ per se. Whiteness is, according to these theories, something non-whites have to negotiate and is also a source of some of the ‘new racism’ that can be evident in society (Dunn and Nelson 2013). Moreover, it is a source of some of the discrimination that some new Australians claim they have to deal with because they are Muslim or from the Middle East (Chafic 2008) or who experience being visibly different (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007). I am suggesting that ‘racism’ might be experienced when ‘whiteness’ is assumed (even implicitly) by the dominant group as the norm.

In Part 2, I aimed to clarify how I understand belonging and the politics of belonging. I started by arguing that belonging is a ‘fuzzy’ concept (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006), meaning it should not be defined in strict terms. I then proceed to use Yuval-Davis’ analytical work (2006a, 2011a) to understand and conceptualise ‘belonging’. Yuval-Davis’ framework allows belonging to be approached from a sociological point of view, which I argue is needed in order to understand non-dominant groups and their senses of belonging (or barriers to belonging) in Australia. If some groups or individuals do not experience a sense of belonging, they might feel a ‘sense of unease’ (Noble 2005) in Australia. This may be shaped by either one, or all of, Yuval-Davis’ three facets; their identification (as an outsider or just different from the dominant group), their social location (or a sense they are not valued equally because of a low status) or different ethical and political values (which shape social boundaries or the ‘politics of belonging’).

For Markus and Dharmalingam (2013) belonging is part of social cohesion. However, I suggest that belonging is much broader and cannot be reduced to one aspect of social cohesion or integration. Rather it is the pre-requisite for both and the ideal goal. Buonfino and Thomson write: “[w]eak belonging or lack of belonging can explain the way newcomers may fail to feel at home in a new place; it can explain why many people experience loneliness or isolation” (2007: 7).

I conclude with a (re-)conceptualisation of belonging as a social justice notion, not just an
emotional connection (Antonsich 2010) or to ‘feel at home’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a, Hage 1997), but the ideal goal for integration and as a prerequisite for how social cohesion should be approached (i.e. not from top-down but bottom-up). To do this, I link belonging to Fraser’s normative standard for social justice: ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000: 119). The (re-)conceptualisation of belonging as a social justice issue draws on Fraser’s work to argue that belonging cannot be separated from recognitive and distributive injustices.
Chapter 5: Methodology and Method

There is no such thing as a monolithic experience.
(Edward Said 2004: 199)

Introduction

Having a visual communications background and experience as a professional photographer, I was inspired by Freire (1970) to explore creative methods to research issues concerning men from refugee backgrounds. The use of creative and visual methods were, I believe, a suitable approach to gain further insight into the men’s experiences, but also to change the power dynamics between the researcher and the research subjects and allow the men to be more in control. The work of Carlson et al. (2006), Didkowsky et al. (2010), O’Neill and Hubbard (2010), Ornelas et al. (2009), Rishbeth and Finney (2006), Surriyeh (2008), Nunn (2010) and others in the field have demonstrated success in using creative methods when researching ill-defined or nebulous terms such as ‘home’, ‘racism’ or ‘belonging’ with non-dominant groups.

This chapter will start with the methodology and the research design. I will explain my purpose and provide an overview of the ontological and epistemological research assumptions, the underlying research paradigm and finally the research strategy, which is the logic suitable for answering the research questions. This will clarify and justify the decision to use qualitative ethnographic research and an abductive research strategy. This is followed by a description of the actual empirical journey, an explanation of the decision about who to research, challenges around recruiting men, and the rationale for conducting two photography workshops and how the workshops became vital for the research, not as data collection activities but as relationship building activities. I will then move on to a description of the interviews, which became the main data source for this research.

Part 1: Methodology or Research Design

The research methodology is the logical cornerstone of any research. It dictates and provides coherence and structure to the research undertaking. It includes analysis of how the research should proceed and the rationale for the process. In this sense it involves the intellectual
perspectives and approaches taken in order to answer the research questions. In the Social Sciences, or ‘Social Studies’ as Mills (1959/2000) prefers to call them, it is important to be clear about the methodology used since there are many differing intellectual paradigms. However, according to Norman Blaikie (2007, 2010) the term ‘methodology’ is sometimes, if mentioned at all, mixed up with the term ‘method’, which has a very different meaning and refers to the actual techniques used to conduct the research, such as interviews or focus groups.

In order to justify the methodology I have used, I will start by explaining the purpose of the research design, articulate the underpinning research assumptions, describe the research paradigm relevant to this research and clarify how these have led to the research strategy I have employed.

The purpose of the research design

The purpose of the research design is not the same as the aim. Drawing on Blaikie, the purpose of the research design is, “concerned with the types of knowledge a researcher wants to produce” (2010: 69). This knowledge can be used for different purposes that go beyond the initial research purpose. So in this sense, the research purpose can be to “explore, describe, explain, understand, predict, change, evaluate…” (ibid: 69) and each research undertaking might have a number of purposes. In terms of the current research it was clear early on that I wanted to first explore a phenomenon (belonging) for a specific group of people. Initially the purpose was concerned with change and drew inspiration from action research, but it became clear early on that the real purpose was an attempt to understand the phenomenon by seeing the problem from an insider’s perspective, not change per se. However, I have remained influenced by some aspects of Participatory Action Research (PAR) that has change as its goal, particularly my interest in collaborating with the research subjects.

The research design is shaped by the researcher’s ontological and epistemological assumptions, and has significance for the development of the methodology and subsequently the methods used.
Research ontology and epistemology

In terms of this research, social reality is experienced, but made up of many shared ‘interpretations’ that are reproduced and shared with others (Blaikie 1993: 93; see also Berger and Luckmann 1991; Schütz 1967). In that sense the experience is a mental and social construct, dependent on shared values, views, perspectives, worldviews, habits and so on. This is sometimes called an ‘idealist ontological assumption’ (Blaikie 1993).

This has clear epistemological consequences since this ontological view rejects the positivist idea that objective knowledge is possible to gain about social reality, as experienced by particular groups or individuals.

Therefore, one of the epistemological assumptions taken in this research is that the knowledge we can acquire about ‘social reality’ using social science research, is a ‘socially constructed reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Individuals construct their social reality (Denzin and Lincoln 1994) but they do so within existing social and cultural structures. Berger and Luckmann clarify how this does not mean our experiences are independent from others; instead “we live in an “intersubjective world, a world I share with others” (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 37).

Constructivist epistemological assumptions lead the researcher to focus on an individual’s experiences and impressions, often using qualitative methods. However, it is important to note that social reality is not independent from socio-historical and socio-political contexts, which means that it becomes important to be able to provide a context for the research subjects and to be attuned to the socio-political influences and social structures that shape personal experiences.

In the current research I have clarified a historical and political context of asylum seekers and refugees in Australia but also Australia’s history, as a colonial nation with a contested narrative, since it shapes and continues to influence the dominant national narratives (Elder 2007). However, how these contexts influence and affect each male participant cannot be assumed, and this research attempts to explore with a group of men how they see themselves now, as new Australians within this context.
In the next section I briefly discuss what Blaikie calls ‘Research Paradigms’ (Blaikie 1993, 2007, 2010) and identify the paradigm framing in this research.

The Research Paradigm

Blaikie, like Thomas Kuhn (1970), uses the term ‘Paradigm’ to mean the overarching intellectual ideology that shapes the agents’ (the researchers’) thinking and doing. The paradigms provide links to particular positions and histories and can help to guide the research and selection of Research Strategies, without placing specific boundaries on the research (Blaikie 2010: 97). This current research fits well into the classical paradigm known as Interpretivism (Blaikie 2010, Weber 1905/2002), since that tradition sees social reality as something that is experienced and interpreted by the social subject, rather than being experienced purely in a sensory way.

Some criticism has been put forward that it is not accurate to assume that all reality is interpreted. Instead there is an outside reality ‘out there’ that sometimes might be negotiated unconsciously, i.e. not interpreted in a conscious manner. Such criticism and new insights lead to the development of what Blaikie calls ‘contemporary paradigms’ (2010), which include Critical Theory and Feminism. Blaikie argues the paradigms can be helpful but that they are not something research needs to strictly adhere to. Rather, they are more a source of inspiration. Consequently I will not examine them in detail since some of this is clarified in the previous chapters.

In summary my research is situated within the ‘Interpretivism tradition’ following Max Weber (1905/2002) and the political interpretive sociology that C. Wright Mills argued for in *The Sociological Imagination* (Mills 1959/2000). It is also influenced by Structuration theory (for example Giddens 1986, also Berger and Luckmann 1991) and contemporary Feminism (particular Anthias 2006, Fraser 2000 and Yuval-Davis 2011a). More specifically, I am also inspired by postcolonial writers who follow the traditions of interpretivism to interpret and challenge postcolonial hegemonic situations (for example Bhabha 1994; Said 1994; Moreton-Robinson 2003).

Informed by these different traditions and a critical lens, my research questions are aimed at gaining an understanding of the experiences of a specific group of men within a specific
socio-historical and socio-political space, which can enable the sociological imagination to consider what belonging means for that specific group of men and how it can be approached.

**Revisiting the questions**

In the current research I am asking what it is that influences and shapes belonging to Australia for a group of Australian men from a refugee background. Since belonging can be understood as a ‘fuzzy concept’ and lacking a fixed definition (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006 but also Yuval-Davis 2006a) and as shaped by both agency and structure, I am not asking about belonging specifically. Instead I am guided by the following research questions, aimed at teasing out what factors, or facets shape the men’s sense of belonging in Australia. It is based on the loose definitions that the literature suggests shape and influence a person’s sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006a). The aim is not to provide an ‘either/or’ answer, but to understand the facets that influence the men’s connections and attachment to Australia or their isolation from, or lack of belonging in, Australia.

Thesis question:

What influences belonging in Australia for men from refugee backgrounds?

From this the following secondary questions emerged:

*What facets of belonging can be extrapolated from the men’s narratives about their experiences in Australia?*

*When talking about different (dis-)connections and (non-)attachments to Australia, what do men from refugee backgrounds discuss?*

*How is it possible to (re-)conceptualise and understand belonging for men from refugee backgrounds who are living in Australia?*

**Research Strategy**

So far I have outlined the ontological and epistemological assumptions and their related specific research traditions, or paradigms. This led me to consider which research tradition enables the research to explore, within an historical trajectory, how refugee men experience factors that may be influencing belonging in Australia. I will now take all these assumptions
and look at what kind of logic suited my purpose, to answer the research questions.

Traditionally, two approaches to research have dominated research endeavours; deductive and inductive. Blaikie, however, explains that it is possible to identify four types of logic of enquiry, or research strategies. These strategies are Inductive, Deductive, Retroductive and Abduction (Blaikie 2010). In this research an Abductive Research Strategy is used because it is consistent with a constructivist framework and deals with understanding, as distinct from an objective truth or answers to predefined hypotheses.

Abduction research strategy

An inductive approach starts with an observation and researchers work their way to the theory; as a result it is open and exploratory. A deductive approach has a theory or hypothesis and researchers set out to test it in order to confirm or deny the theory. Blaikie argues that a retroductive approach searches for regularities and construct models. An abduction approach starts by trying to understand the subjects (Blaikie 2010); this is achieved normally using qualitative methods. From there the researcher is able to transform the subjects accounts ('lay accounts' - i.e. the interview data for example) into social scientific accounts (this is the actual abduction) that describe a perspective and a specific concept or experience.

Before I start explaining the method I will explain the abduction approach further and compare it with Grounded Theory (GT) to identify differences. This will further highlight the suitability of this strategy.

As explained, abduction is concerned about ‘understanding’. Understanding how people experience something and how they explain such experiences. In other words: “Abduction is the logic of enquiry in which the researcher, at least initially, takes on the role of learner and seeks to be educated by the people being studied [and the] objective is to both describe and understand the problem at hand” (Blaikie 2000: 77).

One key aspect of an abduction strategy is that the collection of ‘lay accounts’ is ‘iterative’, in the sense that the researcher immerses themselves in their research subjects’ worlds, withdraws and reflects, and then returns, i.e. the development of the accounts is repetitive. It is in this way that theory is “generated as an intimate part of the research process; it is not invented at the beginning nor is it just produced at the end” (Blaikie 2010: 156). Blaikie then
explains that the theory is developed “depending on the particular branch of Interpretivism within which the researcher is working” (ibid: 156). Blaikie himself is following Weber, Schütz and Becker and develops ‘Ideal’ types, something I will not proceed to do. Instead I aim to (re-)conceptualise belonging for the specific research cohort and follow Mills’ (1959/2000) call for ‘the sociological imagination’, which I discuss below.

Because an Abductive Research Strategy can be confused with Grounded Theory, it is worthwhile to explain briefly how the two approaches differ. These differences will also highlight the difference between narrative research (which I argue can use an abductive approach) and the grounded approach.

**Abduction Research Strategy and Grounded Theory**

In terms of the difference between Grounded Theory (GT) and Abduction Research Strategy (ARS), Ong argues that ARS sees “social reality as socially constructed by social actors” (Ong 2012: 424) and as a result it is more in line with the Constructivist Grounded Theory Method (CGTM). Ong explains that one intellectual difference is that ARS “is firmly grounded in European interpretivism, constituted largely by hermeneutics, phenomenology, existential sociology as well as social constructivism” as opposed to CGTM’s roots in “American symbolic interactionism and postmodernism” (Ibid: 429). Being linked to more interpretive sociology, ARS follow the traditions of “Weber, Schütz, Garfinkel, Winch, Douglas and Giddens” (Ibid: 426). This is also evident in Blaikie’s writing about the Abduction Strategy (2007, 2010).

Secondly, according to Ong, CGTM is very focused on rigid coding, sometimes even ‘line-to-line’ coding, which Ong points out can lead to a “loss of a sense of context and of narrative flow” (Ong 2012: 427). ARS is more focused on researchers “immersing themselves in the form of life of respondents in order ‘to know how to find one’s way about in it, to be able to participate in it as an ensemble of practices’ (Giddens, 1976, p. 161)” (Ong 2012: 427). It is this that supports the claim that ARS is focusing on the research subjects’ accounts, as opposed to researcher focused accounts that Ong argues is the case with GTM and CGTM. Furthermore, in ARS it is important to use the ‘postulate of adequacy’; which I understand to mean that the explanation of a phenomenon that is being observed can be understood by those it concerns (at least at the findings stage). Because of this ARS is also initially more “sympathetic to lay language” (ibid: 429), in terms of language used for
describing the findings. These differences have also been identified to exist between narrative research and the grounded approach (Riessman 2008).

Blaikie’s criticism of Grounded Theory (GT) is it “has a strong empiricist tendencies. ‘Facts’ and ‘data’ are treated as being unproblematic… There is a failure to recognize that observation is always theoretically saturated” (Blaikie 2010: 144). Blaikie also points out that there are problems with GT when the role of the observer is seen as unproblematic and that “no consideration is given to the problem of meaning or to social actors’ constructions of reality” (ibid: 144) The main issue seems to be the fact that GT does not take, according to Blaikie, a strong bottom-up perspective.

An abductive approach is most consistent with the purpose of the current research project. Understanding and the experiences of belonging (and barriers to belonging) are subjective and not clearly defined. Ong writes that “the abductive strategy entails ontological assumptions that see social reality as socially constructed by social actors” (Ong 2012: 424). Being influenced by constructivism, this reality is also shaped by the socio-historical and socio-political context the actors operate in. Hence the aim “to describe and understand social life in terms of social actors’ motives and accounts” (Blaikie 2000: 101; also cited in Ong 2012: 424) cannot be separated from the context. This became the main rationale for starting with an analysis of the historical and social context the men are situated within, and then to use qualitative research to gain access to the men’s (the ‘actors’) insights and perspectives.

To do this requires an approach that enables the researcher to gain trust and insight into a group of men from refugee backgrounds, in order for the men to feel comfortable in opening up about their experiences. This also became the rationale for considering creative research approaches in order to collect narratives from the men about their experiences; consequently this research approach is a version of narrative research.

Narrative inquiry

The qualitative research in this thesis is a version of narrative research, but aligned with sociology rather than psychology or psychotherapy. In other words, I am interested in men’s stories, not to change them or treat them, but to hear how they explain their own world and experience, so it might be possible to understand how they experience society. But I understand the narratives to be also shaped by relational experiences and social structures.
Narratives are both personal and social. As Giddens explains; “A person's identity is not to be found in behavior...but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going” (Giddens 1991: 54). Bhabha, also focused on narratives, has written about the ‘narration of the nation’ (1994); the narrative a nation’s inhabitants collectively ‘tell’ about who belongs and who does not. To search for narrative is a way “to find and uncover the elusive nature of human experience and to offer glimmers of truth [there are many] that help society better understand what it is made of” (Oliveira 2010: 1019). Susan Chase explains that narrative is ‘meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience” (Chase 2011: 430). Narratives, in particular “small stories” (Ibid: 430) should be viewed as ongoing. It is a process that we do continuously about the past, present and future. Here it is worthwhile to go back and acknowledge how Westoby (2008, 2009) writes about the ‘refugee healing process’ as an ongoing process, hence no narrative about such process will be complete or ever finalised.

Narrative research also understands experience as phenomenological and as a result, the stories cannot be decontextualised from their socio-historical context. The aim therefore is not to discover the truth of an event but “the meanings people attach to those events” (Hammersley 2008: 479 in Chase 2011: 424). Somers explains this further,

A narrative identity approach assumes that social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities – and less because of the interest we impute to them. (Somers 1994: 624)

The sociological task, according to Mills (1959/2000) is to have ‘sociological imagination’; to be able to imagine, using sociological systematic insight, what contexts and structures influence and shape social environments. Riessman explains; “Building on C. Wright Mills, a narrative analysis can forge connections between personal biography and social structure – the personal and the political” (2003: 6). Mills was against any positivist traditions in the social sciences, and as a result he did not attempt “sociological neutrality” (Aronowitz 2003: 5). His influence can be seen in varied recent research traditions that focus on extracting counter hegemonic narratives, such as feminism and postcolonial research.

In The Sociological Imagination, Mills outlines his criticism of what he called ‘abstract empiricism’ and ‘grand theory’ (Mills 1959/2000). The ‘Abstract empiricist’ collects data for
data’s sake, without developing a theory, while ‘grand theories’ are argued as being too broad and of little value in the real world. Narrative research using an abductive research strategy aims to produce social scientific knowledge from the agents’ accounts and the narrative approach enables acknowledgement of both individual and social narratives. They make possible a conscious attempt to avoid abstract empiricism, while refraining from any grand theory development. I will elaborate on this in the next section.

What it is that constitutes a narrative varies and within the sociological tradition, a narrative can mean the answer provided during an open-ended interview (Riessman 2003) but also photographs or other creative texts (Chase 2011). If a narrative is used as data, whatever the narrative is, it requires interpretation (Riessman 2003) and that occurs in both the abduction (if the researcher is using an abductive strategy) and later in the discussion.

To recap, the narrative inquiry shapes the research methods but it is not a research method per se. In the tradition of narrative research I am – as a researcher – interested in many different potential narratives, such as ethnographic data, my own visuals, any creative outputs the research subjects produced or interview data. Anthias links this to belonging;

...narrative accounts by actors are often the most accessible for social researchers who are interested in the ways individuals understand and interpret their place in the world and are of particular interest to scholars of collective imaginings around belonging. (Anthias 2002: 498)

**Interpretive and narrative research with an abductive strategy**

To avoid abstract empiricism or ‘grand theory’ it can be helpful to align narrative research with an abductive research strategy. How this is to be achieved is not clear cut. Instead it can be valuable to look back at some aspects of interpretive sociology to make some distinctions about what that means, particularly the rationale behind ‘ideal’ scenarios.

**The ‘Ideal’ conceptualisation**

For Weber there was a clear difference between statements of facts and statements of values. I would like to clarify this since it is a fundamental distinction that needs to be clear from the outset. I will not attempt to shed new light on this rather complex issue, however, I will
examine it from my perspective and explain how I understand this difference.

For Weber, there are two ways to understand a subject; one is an empathic understanding and the other is a rational understanding. Empathetic understanding is a type of psychological understanding that does not lead to action in the social world, i.e. it is essential to develop a rational understanding in order to understand social actors in the modern world. For Mills this was the reason behind the ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 1959/2000). It is within this tradition that I am hoping to position this research.

Weber’s methodology is primarily about conceptualization and the problem of producing intersubjectively meaningful selections from a vast reality. The tool around which Weber addressed this problem and reflected on its difficulties is the ideal-type (Eliaeson 2000: 250).

Similarly Mills produced ‘ideal types’ by producing “a composite profile” of the subjects (Aronowitz 2003: 20). The aim with Mills’ composites, or ideal types, is to in the end “re-place them in the larger political, economic and cultural situations” (Ibid: 20) and critically examine how the elites perpetuate their domination, but also how their domination might be countered. In other words the goal with ideal types is to promote social change and challenge dormant and hegemonic ideals. It is not to portray something as ‘ideal’, as in ‘excellent’ or ‘perfect’.

Taking an abductive approach, and focusing on narratives, the aim is to reinterpret the narratives told by the subjects. This is the “ideal type of a narrative in Weberian terms, not a collective narrative but a pattern developed in a selective way determined by the analytical categories discovered” (Overland 2010: 70). The ideal narratives, the reinterpreted narratives, are built from aspects that the research subjects have in common. It is these narratives, not their psychological intentions, which are relevant for the current research since whether or not the person wishes to belong, the value position is that belonging should be possible. So in the abstraction, the aim is to search for aspects that might prevent or hinder belonging from developing. Eliaeson explains it as:

The normally expected course of social interaction can be described in terms of an ideal-type without reference to psychology. The deviations from the type and anomalies
might be accounted for psychologically, but the social pattern itself, as Weber conceived it, has a kind of autonomy from psychology. (Eliaeson 2000: 243-44)

This can be of importance, since even though settlement issues and belonging are experienced in a subjective way, it is the social patterns or practices that are of interest in sociological research. It might be possible to come up with ‘ideal’ conceptualisations, that can help guide certain policy decisions or specific support for groups of people who share some of the relevant criteria. As a result it has “nothing to do with values or feelings”. Instead it is “a matter of historical or empirical fact” (Eliaeson 2000: 244). It is an idealisation but not any obfuscation of the issue. Instead Weber’s “enterprise was...one in which he attempted to preserve explanations in “everyday terms” accessible to any member of the present culture.” (Eliaeson 2000: 246). In other words, “Weber constructed a “theory from below” rather than a “theory from above”” (ibid: 248). Here, Weber’s methodology, and Mills’ after him, goes beyond a purely narrative thematic analysis in that it attempts to do something with the data and the analysis that has relevance for those who are being researched.

For this research, a person’s belonging and national identification are likely to be dependent on many causal and subjective aspects, but according to Weber, the aim is not to identify all those aspects. Instead it is to ignore personal and psychological deviations, and develop an ideal picture of a person based on certain aspects of their narratives. Considering that this research concerns men from refugee backgrounds and notions around belonging to Australia, the ‘ideal type’ might not be as suitable to use as an ideal ‘situation’ or ‘process’, based on the stated value statement that all citizens should be able to belong. Such processes can be explored after the initial analysis of the narratives (after the first part in the discussion) and direct how we ought to think about – or conceptualise – belonging in Australia as developed from this particular group of men’s experiences. I am not proposing here that I will necessarily establish an ideal of belonging, but the findings can direct how we understand national belonging for this group that go beyond a simple ‘to belong or not’ which leaves it with the individual and fails to take it any further.

As Weber said, in discussing the kind of abstraction necessary for any kind of explanation: “[e]ven this first step thus transforms the given ‘reality’ into a ‘mental construct’ in order to make it into an historical fact. In Goethe’s words, ‘theory’ is involved in the ‘fact’” (Shils and Finch [Weber], 1949, p. 173), (Eliaeson 2000: 257).
Some criticism towards the ‘ideal types’ is that it is a method that has “‘a built-in protection from refutation’ (Sayer 1984: 238)”, (Prandy 2002: 587) or that it “seems to offer a mode of deflecting criticism” (Giddens 1982: 202 in Prandy 2002: 587). Prandy comments that “[i]n everyday life stereotypes allow people to avoid confronting complexities and contradictions in their experience; in intellectual life ideal types [or process] allow theories to preserve themselves from empirical challenge” (ibid: 589). However, as stated, in this research the thinking around ‘the ideal’ is not the aim, but the mechanism by which to use Weber’s methodology to think about social action.

**Concluding remark about methodology**

The purpose of this Methodology section is to provide a rationale for the intellectual perspectives and approaches taken in order to answer the research question, while the purpose of the next section – the Method – is to describe the empirical journey and data collection. I argue that this separation makes it easier to follow the logic behind the research but it also gives me, the researcher, an opportunity to provide the ontological and epistemological rationale that underpins the entire research before going into the empirical journey, which was less clear from the outset and changed during the course of the research.

**Part 2: Method or how to avoid “naïve empiricism”**

Phenomenological statements, like philosophical statements, state the obvious and the necessary. They tell us what we already know. They are not new information, but even if not new, they can still be important and illuminating, because we often are very confused about just such trivialities and necessities. (Sokolowski (2000) p. 57 in Starks and Trinidad 2007: 1373)

This research required methods seeking to uncover phenomenological insights. The term ‘phenomenology’ is used in many different ways, in many disciplines, but fundamental to most research in this tradition is the acceptance that the focus is on the link between what is experienced and how that is experienced by the subject. Neither can be reduced to the other (hence the term ‘intentionality’ which refers to this link).

I have approached phenomenology as an approach that uses narratives to gain insight into how research subjects understand and experience their world. To go from the narrative
accounts to sociological analysis is the ‘abductive approach’ described in the Methodology section. If an abductive approach is taken, the insight gained from qualitative work could lead to sociological insights, not just theory development. The first aim is concerned with the individual, while the second is to conceptualise how the individual experience is related to the structural, socio-political and socio-historical of belonging.

The qualitative beginning

In the previous section I outlined the methodological pathway undertaken, which privileged a bottom-up approach to research.

Because phenomenological insights were important for me, I did not begin the research with a clear method in mind. Apart from positioning this as qualitative I wanted to remain open about how I would work with my research subjects.

My research started out with three open-ended pilot interviews, or conversations. The aim was to speak with a few men from refugee backgrounds to gauge if the research was meaningful, and for insight into the approach to take and questions to ask. A key contact asked three men that she knew, if they would like to speak to me and share their views on my research topic. These conversations, held in cafes of the men’s choosing, were not audio recorded but were transcribed immediately afterwards, from memory, in my research diary. They validated the need for research with men concerning belonging and identity and also highlighted the importance of avoiding a reductionist label, such as ‘refugee’.

After the pilot conversations I also explored the possible benefits of visual methods in conducting the research. With a background as a professional photographer and casual academic at the University of Technology, Sydney’s design school, I felt comfortable in exploring how photography might be useful in the research.

There is a rich tradition in Anthropology of incorporating visual methods in research and this is also a growing trend in sociology, often referred to as ‘Visual Sociology’ (Harper 1988) or ‘Visual Studies’ (Prosser 2001). Researchers are now using “visual narratives as data and forms of presenting research” (Chase 2011: 423) and some are arguing that visual methods are able to better “convey moods and emotions. They can generate novel ideas and
inferences” (Schwartz 2009 in Prosser 2011: 481). It is argued that; “images can enhance empathic understanding and generalisability [and that] images provoke actions for social justice” (Weber 2008: 44-46).

This does not imply that visuals should replace the traditional methods, such as interviews. In many instances both words and images can be used to convey how people are experiencing their lives, and whether or not the results from creative research actually provide deeper insights has been questioned (Buckingham 2009).

Initially I wanted a method that was flexible and creative, but also one that allowed participants to be active agents in the data collection, because I was aware there could be power dynamics between the researcher and the subjects. As a researcher I wanted to be innovative and explorative, something not uncommon in the social sciences and with qualitative research (Taylor and Coffey 2009). Moreover, I wanted to tap into the growing field of creative and visual methods used in academia (Gauntlett 2007; Lapenta 2010; Margolis and Pauwels 2011). Furthermore, I was also influenced by Paulo Freire (1970, 2004) and the idea of letting the research subjects take an active part in research that concerns them (Brydon-Miller et al. 2011; Wang and Burris 1997). Based on this I did not want to be ‘the photographer. Instead I wanted to give my research participants the opportunity to engage in visual ways to explore and tell their stories, in order to acquire what I was hoping would be insightful phenomenological data.

My intention was to offer the men the opportunity to explore their understanding and experiences of belonging using visual methods. It would essentially be a participatory photography project incorporating aspects of the Photovoice structure, as outlined by Wang and Burris (1997), Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) and Oliffe and Bottorff (2007). However the details of this participatory action project would develop over the life of the project and in consultation with the men participating in the research.

**Research population**

In Chapter 3 I argued that there has been relatively limited research focusing specifically on men from refugee backgrounds, particularly men who do not have a specific ‘problem’ or ‘illness’. Because this is an exploratory study into how a group of men from refugee
backgrounds experience belonging, I did not target any specific group in terms of ethnicity, religious beliefs or country of origin. For example, Chafic notes that it is important to avoid supporting the feeling that Muslims are ‘singled out’ (Chafic 2008: 20) or to generally support stereotypes about specific populations, with specific backgrounds, since they might not wish to see that as an identifying characteristic or any hindrance or barrier to belonging in Australia.

My only sample criterion was that the men had identified with being a male from a refugee background and for practical reasons were able to speak enough English so we could communicate. They also needed to be over 18 years of age, having arrived in Australia as an already recognised refugee or having applied for refugee protection once in Australia and finally, that they had permanent residency or Australian citizenship. I did not ask for proof of their citizenship, but it is assumed that a person who is granted refugee status and permanent residency is able to apply for citizenship if they wish to do so, since that is one important aspect of being accepted as a refugee.

Recruiting or ‘men won’t do anything!’

Recruitment is often a challenge for certain groups. With this in mind I was slightly deflated when I presented the research to a number of people working with ‘emerging communities’ in Western Sydney. One participant said it is nearly impossible to get ‘migrant men’ to do anything – “men won’t do anything” (quote from research diary).

It has been reported that people from refugee backgrounds might feel problematized by being the objects of research (Chafic 2008) or view researchers with the suspicion that the research will not give them anything and their voice will be unheard (see for example Pittaway and Muli 2009). These issues were even more profound because I was an outsider, a ‘white male’ who did not enter Australia as a refugee or asylum seeker, but as a more privileged migrant who was now a ‘researcher’. I am not able to say whether this fact actually contributed to any difficulties from the participants’ perspective or was merely my own concern. However, because of that I was extra careful in how I approached different men, and it contributed to the relatively long process of establishing contacts and eventually recruiting men for the workshops and the interviews.

I initially approached a migrant resource centre in western Sydney and I was invited to speak
to a group of men who worked there; themselves persons from refugee backgrounds. It was at this moment that the idea to run ‘photography classes’, as opposed to a research focused Photovoice project, was brought up. To teach photography was perceived as a way of not just asking the men to produce data, but to give something back to the men.

The initial aim was to make contact with around 15 men, from any ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Essential and important for this type of research is the quality of the relationships established in order to explore the research question in-depth. Starks and Trinidad write, “data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon—and who can provide a detailed account of their experience—might suffice to uncover its core elements. They argue a typical sample size for phenomenological studies ranges from 1 to 10 persons” (Starks and Trinidad 2007: 1375).

Using a range of organisations, peak bodies and professional contacts, I issued invitations to men from refugee backgrounds to a photography course, designed to provide skills in photographic techniques and introduce the research project. Thirteen men took part in the two photography courses I ran, and five of these consented to taking part in the interviews. A further seven men were recruited for interview through the networks of the men interviewed in the pilot study and in the photography workshops, workers in the Migrant Resource Centre, and through informal meetings at cultural events described below. All the participating men were given time to reflect and respond before accepting or declining to participate in the workshops and the interviews (no one declined).

**Ethics application**

As per the ethical guidelines for qualitative academic research at University of Western Sydney, I submitted a National Ethics Application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Ethics clearance was given by the UWS Human Research Ethics Committee on 30 March 2012 for the research proposal with registration number H9459.

**Background to the empirical journey: Data collection via two stages**

This section describes the background information that shaped the ‘empirical journey’ in this research.
Stage 1: Photography workshops and the ethnographic research

In this part, Stage 1, I briefly describe the two photography workshops inspired by participatory photography methods, which were a relationship establishing process, and then I explain the ethnographic fieldwork. This is connected to the workshops since some of the men I connected with during the workshops invited me to a number of different cultural events where I was able to participate with and observe communities that I am not part of, or would not have been able to access in the same way without these connections. This was immensely important for me personally, in order not just to ‘get the data’, but to feel that I was genuinely connecting with the men and to be able to experience and witness diverse cultural events ‘from the inside’ (though being aware I was still an outsider).

Photography workshops

After an initial discussion with caseworkers within a Migrant Resource Centre, I decided to invite men from a refugee background to a photography workshop. Invitees were informed that I was conducting a PhD and that the workshop was part of it. They knew the research concerned men from refugee backgrounds and issues regarding belonging and identity in Australia. I ended up conducting two 5-week workshops; the first had a total of seven male participants, the second had a total of six male participants. All men spoke English. The first workshop was conducted over five weeks in a migrant resource centre in Western Sydney, where participants had some connections to the resource centre and expressed an interest in photography. The second workshop was held in a community centre in a different suburb in Western Sydney, over five weeks and all the participants had an Afghan background. They had replied and expressed interest to a group email sent by one of the workers at the first migrant resource centre, also from an Afghan background.

Not all men attended every single workshop, but each contributed in some ways to the discussions and thoughts both about photography and being in Australia. From these 13, I recruited five for my interviews that I conducted once the workshops were completed. These five had attended most sessions and they displayed an interest in talking about their experiences and sharing their stories with me.
Workshop structure and results

Both workshops followed the same structure. I introduced myself and the research aim and then, after the introduction, I started by explaining how the camera works, basic composition and lighting theories. I also introduced photography ethics; the power of the camera and the responsibility of the photographer (in terms of what, how and when you take a photograph). This is also an important element in Photovoice (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001). I also encouraged the men to bring in any photos they wished to share, to show what they are photographically interested in, but also images that they liked for whatever reasons. Discussions about being in Australia happened ‘on the side’ while talking about photography or other issues, or when something was brought up by one of the participants.

After each workshop I encouraged the men to take photos and explore the techniques discussed in class. During the fourth session I asked the men if we could talk about their experiences in Australia as men from refugee backgrounds and discussed whether it would be possible to photograph such experiences. It was at this stage that I wanted to consider ‘Photovoice’ and ‘collaborative’ or ‘participatory’ image production (Lapenta 2010: 206-208) and whether this would be possible, considering the topic of my research. The aim was to collaboratively discuss the topic; belonging in Australia, and make it into a “brainstorming exercise to develop a list of photograph (photo) assignments for future sessions” (Ornelas et al. 2009: 554). The discussion covered general challenges and experiences and the men were encouraged to think how they could visually tell these stories. The images taken, however, provided no further information than the discussions during the workshops, which were much richer in detail. Furthermore, there was no real interest expressed by the participants to continue to visually ‘tell their story’. One man asked me, ‘what should I take a photo of?’ (from research diary) and another man in the first workshop eventually just said ‘why can’t I just tell you my story?’ (From research diary).

It became clear during the workshops that to ask people to capture something that can be a ‘fuzzy concept’ is challenging, particularly when I, as a researcher and photographer, did not want to suggest topics or subjects for the photographs nor provide a clear definition of belonging. Some Photovoice projects, such as those by Carlson et al. (2006) and Haque and Eng (2011) ask their participants to go out and capture specific images from their neighbourhoods. These projects have a relatively clear and practical idea behind them; what
works in the specific area and what does not work. They focus on disadvantaged groups and their relation to their immediate spaces, while other creative approaches focus on youth (see for example: Didkowsky et al. 2010; Hubbard 2012; Surriyeh 2008). But for adult men, to ask about fuzzy notions such as belonging and identity was less clear-cut.

Considering the relative lack of critique of visual methods in research (Piper and Frankham 2007), these were challenges I did not expect and I found, as did Mason and Davies, that; “‘the visual’ is not straightforwardly or always best accessed by visual methods” (Mason and Davies 2009: 588). As a result, I adjusted my approach and used a more traditional method to collect the data.

Before I discuss Stage 2, I will discuss the ethnographic observational research, which was also important both for relationship building and to observe and engage with groups with whom I have previously had no contact.

Participatory observations

The ethnographic research element was not substantial in this research and it cannot be argued that I was involved “in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3), nor was I ‘invisible’ to the research subjects. Both actions have been traditional in ethnographic and anthropological research (Malinowski 1961; Wolcott 2005) but I did attend a number of events with men from refugee backgrounds by invitation, and I was able to observe and speak to many men from refugee backgrounds at those events. It included three separate cultural events; two sports events, three musical concerts, three church meetings and three street rallies in Sydney. The cultural events were predominately attended by non-Anglo-Celtic Australians and at two of the cultural events; most of the addresses to the audience (including poetry readings and singing but also information about specific situations overseas) were in languages other than English. The data collected (notes in the research diary) from these events are not substantial, however, the ethnographic process was integral to the overall research process in the same way as were the workshops. Both experiences allowed for closer contact to emerge with some men who I later interviewed.

It was my intention that by attending these events and gatherings I could demonstrate that my interest went beyond traditional research and data collection. I hoped that by participating the
men felt I was supporting causes that were important for them and that I was interested in their cultural practices and their friends, while sharing my own migrant experiences with them. This did seem to have an impact because once I began to interview the men, they knew me and we were able to speak about experiences shared prior to the audio-recordings and the unstructured interview. I believe this enabled me to gain insights that would have not been possible if I had previously not been known to the men or shared with them different experiences and the migrant background.

Stage 2 outlines the interview process, which became the main data collection method.

**Stage 2: Unstructured qualitative interviews and data saturation**

*Unstructured interviews*

I decided that the most suitable method would be a more conventional method – but not less complex (Gubrium et al. 2012) – to collect the data I was requiring. I conducted interviews with 12 men with whom I had already been in contact and had established a connection. The men came from Afghanistan (two men), Burma (two men), Iraq – Assyrian (three men), Sudan (one man), Iran (four men, one of those men was Kurdish).

The previously established relationship potentially lessened any gendered ‘threat’ the men might have experienced if they had not known me beforehand, something Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) write can occur when men are interviewed, particularly by another male. As a researcher I did not perceive that any such threats might be experienced, but it is worthwhile to note that such threats might not be visible. Similarly, as a ‘white’ and ‘western’ researcher, it is plausible that the men felt restrained concerning certain social, cultural or religious topics. It is only feasible to make sure the situation is as unthreatening as possible and to be aware of power dynamics.

Because the aim was to collect narratives from the men that could tell me something about their ‘social realities’, without any assumptions a priori what the men prioritised or placed value on, the interviews were unstructured (Punch 1998). The interviews were therefore only guided by a few initial open-ended questions, informed by the theories and frameworks I discussed in Chapter 4, while allowing the men’s narratives to emerge the way the men wished them to emerge. Since I had come to know the men, I had acquired some rapport and
previous knowledge of them and their situations, which meant the interviews could become more conversational, a requirement for successful unstructured interviews (Patton 2002). As a result it is also a suitable approach in terms of ‘theory developing’ as opposed to theory testing in an abductive approach.

As audio-recording is the preferred method of recording unstructured interviews, I obtained the men’s permission to tape the interviews (Fontan and Frey 2005). The recordings of the interviews were later supplemented by my impression of the interviews afterwards; to reflect upon what had worked and what I thought were the important points. These reflections helped me to conduct the next interview, but also when I transcribed the interview it enabled me to better remember the interview and note non-verbal signs.

The unstructured interviews were conversational, but intimate; they did not have a set time, as it was important to allow the men to tell the story they wanted to tell, even if some aspects did not seem initially to relate to my research. Because of this, the interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 105 minutes. This approach corresponds with how Anthias writes one should approach research subjects in qualitative research about belonging and identities; “researchers in the field know from experience that it is best to allow subjects to talk about themselves, their lives and their experiences” (Anthias 2002: 492). Strang and Ager also support the bottom-up approach: “that in researching a social process it is essential to seek to understand that process from the perspective of the key actors” (Strang and Ager 2010: 601) who in this research are the participating men; they are the experts in their own lives.

I initially explained that I wanted to hear the men talk about their experiences in Australia so far, to tell me ‘their story’. This enabled them to select and speak about aspects they wanted to, and I did not probe them about personal reasons for coming to Australia or past experiences. If they mentioned something that related to my research questions I encouraged them to expand on their story and tell me more about that particular incident or explanation, without trying to lead them into a direction. Anthias suggests a similar approach, explaining that direct questions about belonging and identity:

...asks that a subject has a ready-made story to tell about who they are and where they feel they ‘belong’ and that the migrant or minority subject, in particular, should answer it in terms of a well understood genre about ethnicity as a possessive property (Anthias
In other words, to ask about identity and belonging can lead to a specific narrative. Edward Said has explained that construction of identity (for example when asked about it) can lead to the “continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us”” (Said 1994: 332). So even though I remained curious about identity and masculinity, I viewed both notions as part of what might shape belonging, but I did not want to lead the discussion and ask about this specifically.

Being a qualitative research project that aimed to understand the research subjects, data saturation was achieved when I had collected rich narratives, and this was achieved with the 12 men who were interviewed.

Notes about the coding and analysis

The interviews were manually transcribed. The interviews were then examined and emerging large themes were identified and connected, and they were later discussed with my supervisors. This process is a cyclical process, abducting from the narratives, that requires the researcher to go back and forth between the transcripts and search for links and thematic relationships. The actual process enables the researcher to also get a deeper insight into the interview material, which was helpful in the later stages.

Initial themes were the main structures of the narratives, identified by what the men talked about. Most men started to explain something relating to their initial experiences coming to Australia in a relatively linear way. This was interspersed with examples or stories about particular episodes or experiences. The initial coding attempted to make sense of the key areas that they spoke about, such as the pre-arrival experiences, experiences with detention centres and initial encounters with Australian settlement support services and episodes of discrimination, racism or other difficulties.

The initial thematic organisation was developed and refined, sorting the transcript data into thematic sections that demonstrated the relationships and links between the men’s narratives and experiences. This is the first step in the abduction process. The raw findings are presented in full in Appendix 2. The findings are organised into different topics or themes, based on the shared experiences or significant individual experiences.
The process allows the researcher to look back at the findings (the narratives and the themes) in Chapter 6 and 7 and attempt to make sociological sense of what had been said by the men and infer what shaped their experiences around belonging in Australia. This second stage of abduction enables the researcher to re-examine the data and explain the narratives (the men’s experiences) informed by sociological theory, both in relation to postcolonial theories and theories concerning belonging. This process also allows for a re-conceptualisation of belonging based on the findings and the inferences.

In the findings chapter and in the discussion I use pseudonyms for the men. Any cultural or ethnic readings into the names and their meanings are unintentional.

Limitations of the study

In accordance with the stated purpose of exploring and understanding issues regarding belonging for a specific group of men with refugee backgrounds, I acknowledge that the exploration and understanding of the research is limited. The unstructured interviews produced a large amount of data about the participants’ lived experiences. All the data generated could not have been comprehensively analysed and it might require further investigations to elicit insights into this group of men’s experiences beyond those that were the focus of this study (belonging and connections to Australia). The research attempted to provide as comprehensive a picture and understanding as possible, while acknowledging the inherent limitations of this sort of qualitative study. Some contradictions or experiences are always missed or unaccounted for because the research gaze was on a stated focus, but also because of the researcher’s own biases and interests. These are difficult – if not impossible – to eliminate from a qualitative research project containing large amounts of narrative data, but hopefully the reflective, iterative nature of the research analysis minimized these to some degree.

Being a limited qualitative research project, the number of participants also means there are limitations in terms of making any generalisations about any specific group of men, from a specific ethnic or cultural background. To make such claims, a larger cohort from the same area would have been required, but this was not the intended purpose; partly due to the time restrictions placed upon the PhD study and partly due to the wish to avoid such generalisations in the first place, since it can essentialise certain personal or cultural categories while failing to recognise other categories.
Concluding remark and some reflections on this chapter

Even though the empirical journey took a different turn from what was initially suggested and planned, it proved to be a journey that was essential for me to take, as a researcher exploring fuzzy notions with a group with whom I had no previous experience, or contact.

The empirical journey took me from wanting to use visual data, because of personal experiences and previous readings, to realising that the importance of creative approaches might not lie as much with the data collected as with the process itself. In this chapter I have tried to provide a comprehensive account of how the method’s journey developed, from the readings to the personal experiences and the approach taken, and then highlight how the creative attempts enabled me to develop strong relationships and what I experienced as trust and respect between the researcher and the researched. The interview data contains rich information about these men’s experiences and perceptions, not just of their lives in Australia but also more broadly, of those factors which shape their lives and senses of belonging in a space.

In Appendix 2, the ‘raw data’ is presented, organised into themes and sub-themes. In the next chapter I will analyse the findings and discuss these in light of the theories discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 7 I take this one step further in order to re-conceptualise belonging as a social justice issue, and discuss a normative framework that can be used to understand and approach belonging for new migrants, such as men from refugee backgrounds.
Chapter 6: Findings and discussion in three parts

Introduction

In Appendix 2, I present the raw data; the men’s narratives, that emerged around six key themes: the ‘the journey’; ‘support and services’; ‘connections and participation’; ‘disconnections and disenchantment’; ‘beliefs, values and identification’ and ‘employment’.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings in three parts, arising from what the men spoke about and informed by theories discussed in Chapter 4; ‘Social recognition and shared values’, ‘Social location and limited agency’ and ‘Misidentification and misrecognition’. These three parts attempt to clarify what aspects from the men’s narratives can be understood as enabling, or limiting ‘belonging’, which can manifest itself as being ‘at ease’, ‘connected to’, ‘recognised’, ‘at home’, ‘being an equal’ or the opposite; as an ‘outsider’ or being positioned as the ‘Other’ (Antonsich 2010; Anthias 2006; Hage 1997; Ignatieff 1995; May 2011; Yuval-Davis 2006a).

Because the term ‘belonging’ is both ‘too common’ and ‘too undefined’ (Antonsich 2010) and generally understood as ‘fuzzy’, not amenable to a strict definition, the findings of this research do not attempt to make conclusive statements about the participating men’s sense of belonging. This research also understands that belonging should epistemologically be understood in a phenomenological way and cannot be observed from ‘the outside’. This also facilitates an opening up from a rigid definition of how we might understand belonging (Antonsich 2010; Buonfino and Thomson 2007; Hamaz and Vasta 2009; Harvey 2000; Yuval-Davis 2006a, 2011a).

Mainstream work sees belonging as an ‘emotional attachment’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a) and although researchers approach belonging in various ways, Antonsich (2010) argues that Yuval-Davis’ (2006a, 2011a) work remains the most developed analytical framework to date. Yuval-Davis (2006a) argues that there are three interconnected facets that shape belonging; ‘Social locations’; ‘Identification and emotional attachment’ and ‘Ethical and political values’ and in order to understand belonging, one has to study “the relationships between positionings, identities and political values” (Yuval-Davis 2010: 9-10). However, how that relationship is actually experienced can never be assumed, so this discussion starts with an
attempt to understand the findings in relation to how these facets are evident, if at all, in the men’s narratives.

In this chapter I also draw from Ager and Strang's (2008) framework for ‘integration’ because as they argue, integration is a process that has belonging as its end point, making it potentially relevant to the findings (see Chapter 3 for discussion about challenges inherent in the term ‘integration’). Their framework can be understood as identifying what shapes the process (i.e. integration) of belonging. This positions Yuval-Davis’s work as a framework for belonging, while Ager and Strang’s framework indicates what might lead to, or limit belonging.

Belonging in three parts

Different elements emerged as shaping belonging for this cohort of men. These key facets are abstracted from the findings and I argue that they can enable or inhibit belonging for this cohort of men. The experiences discussed potentially shape a person’s ‘ontological security’ (Noble 2005) and position them either within, or outside, the ‘space of commonalities’ (Hage 2011).

I discuss the findings with a particular reference to Yuval-Davies’ distinctions of social locations, identification and emotional attachment, and ethical and political values, but in a different way, so as to take into account the specifics of the men’s experiences, which do not neatly fit within these categories. It is here that I also draw from Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework for integration, because integration in the way Ager and Strang define it can be seen as a *process* that should (ultimately) lead to belonging (Strang and Ager 2010).

None of the three sections fit neatly into Yuval-Davis framework. Instead I argue that the first facet; ‘Social recognition and shared values’, can be understood as *enablers of* belonging, since they focus on positive experiences around social recognition and shared values. Here, Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework provides the opportunity to understand these to be related to ‘social connections’. The second facet, ‘Social location and limited agency’ is linked more to Yuval-Davis’ framework, but focuses on the experienced structural and practical challenges (Ager and Strang 2008), which I argue are shaped by the men’s social location and their (limited) agency. The third facet; ‘Misidentification and
misrecognition’, explores how different values, ideologies and understandings about ‘the Other’ contributes to schismogenesis (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006) for the men, leading to experiences of a sense of unease because of a low status compared with others.

Social recognition and Shared values

*The first thing that we have are feeling we are human beings, we have rights…*(Paul)

*What I like Australia is the freedom, in particular freedom of speech….* (Tun)

Relational aspects, an important aspect of belonging (Antonsich 2010) were important in the men’s narratives, particularly when they spoke about social recognition among people who shared their background as well as from the broader Australian community, but also values shared with others, both migrants and the wider Australian community. Some comments, such as Paul’s above, indicated the importance of the experience of being recognised as another ‘human’ (worthy of care, support or equal rights) and such recognition is recognised in the literature as essential for belonging to develop (Ignatieff 1995; May 2011). Furthermore, social connections that enable social recognition are also an important component in Ager and Strang's (2008) integration framework, which is useful for understanding not just the structural and practical challenges facing those from refugee backgrounds, but for recognising the importance of social connections and social bonding, that can lead to social recognition and expose shared values (as in the above quotes). The ‘social connection’ component, required for social recognition, is less developed in Yuval-Davis' (2006a) framework but this research focuses on such connections because, for the interviewed men, they can be seen as *enablers* of belonging, whether or not the persons involved occupy the same ‘social location’.

Baraz, in this research, says, “I am human, I feel good”. He expresses how beneficial it was to be recognised as a human and provided with support and assistance. Zaw comments that the Government provided them with “everything” when they arrived, because they were *recognised* as people in need of support as they had arrived with nothing. This was a positive experience. It was this type of Government support in Australia that Hassan called simply “amazing”. Paul equally mentioned how they had everything prepared for them, but by their extended family in Australia, which made it easier; it enabled their re-settling and the sense that they were being cared for. Wilkinson and Marmot explain the human worth of
recognition, or feeling valued, as a fellow human within a group (whether it is an ethnic community or the nation) in their report for the World Health Organization; “Belonging to a social network of communication and mutual obligation makes people feel cared for, loved, esteemed and valued” (2003: 22). Here it is not about any of Yuval-Davis’ facets; social location, identification or social values concerning the politics of belonging, but more about a responsive recognition, as a person worthy of support and care (which means something else than being identified as a person in need; it goes beyond that and it is more inclusive). So it is apparent that to feel cared for and supported can be understood as being recognised as someone who others feel is worthwhile, and this can foster positive relations, evident in some of the narratives, which in turn can support a sense of belonging.

Adar describes his experience as not just about finally (after detention) being identified as a genuine refugee, but being recognised as a human being with social and equal rights, something he explained that he, as a Kurdish person, lacked in Iran. For Adar, he felt he was, to borrow from Hage, inside the ‘space of commonalities’ (Hage 2011) because he could now own a car and get a job. He was not an outsider having to ask for permission, with limited rights. If belonging can be understood, not in an essentialist way nor as about membership of some group, but as a contingent process (Garbutt 2009), i.e. dependent on circumstances, the experiences Adar spoke about, as a relative newcomer to Australia, can be a start for belonging to develop further. It is a fragile process, but this is the beginning. Kamran spoke about the fact that many Hazara people realise they have a lot more opportunities in Australia than they would currently have in Afghanistan and this strengthened (in a contingent process) their positive feelings toward Australia. In other words, the findings indicate that social recognition and shared values can be understood as aspects relating to ‘social connections’ (Ager and Strang 2008) that shape “how people feel about place and people (whether local or national) and their relationships with one another” (Spencer 2006: 15). This may lead to, or at least provide a space in which, an ‘emotional attachment’ can take root.

Sometimes the social recognition might be the ‘small’ or ‘ordinary incidents’ in one’s life, such as the existence of an ‘Asian’ grocer “for our cooking style” (Zaw) that do not just evoke the past, which is often lost or disrupted for refugees (Taylor 2013) but also create a ‘homely feeling’ (Hage 1997). These ‘smaller’ incidents are important in terms of the ‘refugee journey’ or the ongoing settlement process (Hage 1997; Halilovich 2006). It includes encountering friendly people (Hassan), discovering you have something in common
with others, which Javed said people did not have in the broader Iranian society. Javed pointed out that a shared love for what he understood to be core values in his new country was important. These values were also explained by other men, such as “freedom” (Tun, Adar) or “human rights” (Akbar).

For forced migrants, even when they are in a ‘safe’ country, as they describe Australia, sadness, social isolation and loneliness can be common (Brough et al. 2012). The men’s stories suggest that signs of social recognition and shared values can potentially alleviate, or limit, some of that isolation. For Hassan the initial alleviation of his isolation occurred when other Afghans settled into his neighbourhood and he made more friends, mainly because they spoke the same language and they shared a past and certain dispositions – a familiar ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977), making connections easier to develop. Moreover, Hassan later explained how his university was also welcoming (he was recognised) and because he learnt English quickly and understood other Australians’ dispositions, he made friends and felt less lonely. Gebre-Selassie argues there is a need to create “an inclusive and welcoming society” (2008: 7). The point though is not just to be ‘nice’ but that this initial sense of being welcomed, or greeted in a friendly way, can be understood as an indication of being accepted by people, important to sensing whether one belongs or not (Crisp 2010). Ager and Strang’s work (2008) is important here, since they focus on the process – integration – complementing my focus on the ideal aim, experiences of belonging. Their work gives clues as to how to examine this. For Ager and Strang, the social connections are very important for this process. They explain that for refugees to feel ‘at home’, they are dependent on people’s friendliness and “being recognised and greeted by others” (2008: 180). The initial welcome to Australia, or the university, might not be enough for belonging to be experienced in full, but it is a start of the process, so these positive connections and experiences are important to identify as the foundation, the root, from which belonging can grow. For example, Baraz explained when asked about the initial support he received; “very good. I got caseworker. Went with me to Centrelink for the first time. To the bank. I started to believe myself…”. Here the support is not just about a nice and friendly action, but the recognition he received, which enabled a sense of self-worth, or regaining of lost agency. In other words, Baraz could believe in himself again.

Related to this, shared social values were indicated in the findings as having importance for the men, evident in the quote by Tun at the start of this section. Yuval-Davis (2006a) argues
that it is ethical and social (or political) values that construct and maintain barriers around belonging (who is in and who is out). Here similarities or shared values can be seen as “experiences of enablement in society” (Anthias 2006: 20) or that which can start to overcome barriers to belonging by exposing similarities or stereotypes that are at the root of any schismogenesis. To find that one’s most important value, for example “freedom” for Adar, is shared in Australia is a positive enabler in society and something Adar can embrace himself, but it can also be a source for others to connect with Adar, making shared values important to identify for both the men and the community at large. Here it is less about Adar integrating (into an existing space), but more about being an equal, or not different (or worse deviant, unable to share ‘our’ values, something migrant or ethnic groups have been portrayed as previously, as explained in Chapter 2).

Shared values emerged quite strongly from the men as an important aspect of their feeling connected with Australia. Javed spoke at length about how for a long time he felt disconnected from the people he worked for. He approached his customers only thinking about money, but a friend of his (also from a refugee background) helped him change that attitude to one of service. This change enabled Javed to recognise he shared many values with the people he worked for. His work suddenly had a purpose, he could feel useful again and able to participate in society. Ager and Strang argue that “shared values” are not about sameness. Instead they can provide “a wider context within which people [have] a sense of belonging” (2008: 178). Similarly, Akbar mentioned how he had relied on his friends a lot, including friends who did not have a refugee background but who shared some social values. This enabled him to engage and participate in society more (to get a scholarship to attend university for example). This in turn allowed him to discover more shared values and opportunities to participate (sometimes as an activist with other activists). Hassan also mentioned that when he developed a more diverse group of friends at university, it was a positive development, but again “shared values did not deny diversity, difference and one’s identity within a particular group” (Ager and Strang 2008: 178). Instead recognition of shared values opened up for connections to develop across cultures. They enabled Hassan to appreciate, and understand, the ‘good things with Australia’.

The importance of ‘social connections’ were apparent for many men since they can be sites for recognition and, according to Ager and Strang, ‘social connections’ contain core domains for integration (‘social bridges’, ‘social bonds’ and ‘social links’) which create what they call
the “connective tissues” required for integration (2008: 179). They argue that this ultimately leads to ‘belonging’ (ibid: 178). For the men who socialised in what might be viewed as ‘ethnic enclaves’ (Colombo et al. 2009) such as Anton, Mark and Paul, the ‘collective recognition’ (they all shared the same ‘ethnic’ background) and the shared values in their church setting (Christianity being one set) was an essential part of their ‘Australia’. Here they did not express a disjunction in terms of their beliefs and values with Australian society at large, potentially because they are Christian, which is the largest, and most dominant, faith in Australia (see Jupp 2009 for an extensive overview of Australia’s religious makeup). What is clear is that for a person from a different faith background (even just through their nationality), a sense of disjunction can be experienced (explored further in later sections).

The church group provided Anton, Mark and Paul with what Putnam called ‘bonding capital’ (1995) or belonging within a ‘community’ (Calhoun 1999), while Ager and Strang would suggest these three men had strong ‘social bonds’ (2008) with their own families and friends. For example, their children now have their own families and employment, and this ‘success’ was an important factor that gave the men a sense of achievement and joy in Australia. The social connections to, and shared values with, their religious and ethnic group and the strong bonds to their families – indicating the establishment of roots in Australia – were spoken of very positively by the men, giving them recognition as valued members of a community. These connections suggest the possibility that “people maintain senses of belonging independently of personal relationships with any majority group” (Hamaz and Vasta 2009: 11).

Even though Anton, Mark and Paul did not speak about ‘bridging capital’ (Putnam 1995) or connection to the ‘publics’ (Calhoun 1999), which can be seen to comprise members of the majority group, they did not allude to feeling not part of, fitting in or connected to, the broader Australian community. Whether this is a version of what Colombo et al. (2009: 54) called a ‘mimicry’ identification, a wish to ‘fit in’ or ‘blend in’ with the majority, or whether it is a connection based on genuinely shared values, is worth exploring. Anton, Mark and Paul did not have many critical comments at all about Australia; in fact Paul stated, when asked if he had experienced discrimination in Australia, said “No, no… I told you from the beginning… it is very good here” (Paul). Mark in particular spoke about the superiority of Australian products and how Australians are educated, which he identified with. Furthermore, the men explained that they were happy in Australia and they rated Australia as
a great country. In their positive comments, these men did not separate themselves from the ‘publics’ (Calhoun 1999) or the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006). In fact, Anton and Mark in particular saw themselves as ‘Australians’. However, to link that to mimicry seems to be problematic, since mimicry connotes a more complex idea in postcolonial theory. It is not just about fitting in. Bhabha explained it as being “almost the same, but not quite” (1997: 153) and it can contain a sense of ambivalence that was only evident in the men’s narratives of the challenges in trying to find suitable work. Colombo et al. (2009) acknowledges mimicry can also be about trying to ‘hide’ one’s past but in the current study these men, who might be classed as having clear acceptance of all things Australian, did not attempt to hide their past. Instead they might be better understood as having strong allegiance with Australia based on select shared values, but also a strong sense of hybrid identity (Bhabha 1994, something I will discuss further later in this chapter). Therefore it seems misguided to attempt to understand their social connections in a mimicry model, or to see their ‘ethnic’ connections as a substitute for connection with the wider Australian community (something argued by McPherson 2010).

Other men were less wholehearted in their estimation of their new country and could not be described within Colombo’s schema (Colombo et al. 2009) as engaged in mimicry or allegiance with the mainstream in a similar way. Zaw, who arrived with his family, and Tun who arrived by himself, indicated that they had forged limited social connections beyond their ethnic groups and while both expressed gratitude and acceptance about their new life, they were not without their reservations. Tun was more vocal than Zaw in talking about social values that he appreciated in Australia, such as respect for human rights and freedoms, but was also more critical of the wider Australian community and a failure to uphold these values (something I will discuss later).

The importance of acknowledging shared values, not just by migrants but also by a responsive ‘host’ nation, is explored by Fitzgerald (2007) when he describes how Chinese-Australians, during the White Australia Policy, shared many values with the Anglo-Celtic majority. However, instead of having these recognised, they were as a group demonised as incapable of embracing such values, enabling a ‘moral panic’ based on fear (Cohen 1972). Shared positive values and beliefs can therefore be pathways to establishing connections, to assist ‘re-imagining’ and opening up the ‘nation’ and establishing what it means to belong to the nation. Baraz brought up his newfound compassion and belief in human rights that had
taken root once he arrived in Australia. He spoke about how he cried all night after seeing asylum seekers crying for freedom in a detention centre and said; “we must help us, must help myself, each other…” This compassion enables him to connect to others who also share those values in the community and for Baraz, this is a positive aspect of his ‘settlement experience’ and for his development as a person. He spoke about going from being ‘racist’ in Iran to a compassionate activist in Australia. Fitzgerald’s (2007) study indicates that it is important to recognise and identify when people do not experience belonging in the Australian community, but still share certain values. It is this that can both humanise and connect people and lead to an understanding of shared “struggles and solidarity” (Anthias 2006: 29). Akbar said he did value ‘human rights’ and ‘democracy’ and when others demonstrated that they shared these social values (by participating in activism for example) it was a positive experience, opening up for ‘cosmogenesis’ to be experienced by him (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). However, when Akbar observed people’s lack of care towards refugees as an indicator of racism – it led to a ‘symmetrical schismogenesis’ for him (ibid).

The realisations that they all shared something, that they are ‘human’ – a term a few men used in their narratives – affected the men and how they felt they could participate. Shared values (behind a shared purpose) shaped the men’s actions and experiences but were partly also evident when the men spoke about their work, or engagement, with other asylum seekers. The engagement with asylum seekers seems to be based on values they shared with other people (activists or asylum seekers). For example, Baraz spoke about how he visits asylum seekers in detention centres and jails “because they don’t have family here. They don’t have family here so I think it is my family”. Akbar is also engaged in activism supporting asylum seekers because, as he said, ‘we’ should be “standing for right society”. In both narratives there are strong connections to other asylum seekers which, while it might not be enough for belonging to develop by itself, it may enable the men to recognise, and to ‘fight’ for a common set of values that they share with many others in the wider community. Peter and Hassan were equally involved and mentioned, as professional support workers, that they do what they can to try to help others, even though they had experienced many challenges. As an activist, Akbar said he was engaged and active because he “still thinks we can change it [asylum seeker policies]…”

Activism and support work, whatever it might be, seemed to give some of the men a sense of worth or recognition. The connections they experience through these shared values or goals
may alleviate or prevent social isolation. Social isolation is according to Antonsich (2010) the opposite of belonging, hence the support and activism work, whatever it is, can be enablers for belonging. It is also a claim that can be used to support the importance of engaging in ‘volunteer work’ (or just opportunities to ‘help out’, as Paul would explain it). It is important not just for the ‘social and civic contribution’ such work might bring, which Hugo (2011) claims is often ignored, but also as a practice that might have social and physiological health benefits for men in general, as in the findings of the National Male Health Policy Report (NMHP 2010).

Even though activism or specific community work does not necessarily indicate belonging to the broader Australian community, it indicates a sense of inclusion and social participation within a specific space based on a shared belief. Within that space, the boundaries for belonging are drawn in an inclusive way, emphasising values that the men share with others in the community.

Yuval-Davis (2006) explains how different values shape ‘categorical boundaries’ about who can and should be included in the national space. Because of this, any shared values are opportunities for the majority group – that “has the power of ‘granting’ belonging” (Antonsich 2010: 650) – to open up the space for belonging. That means to be inclusive and to not act as Fitzgerald (2007) described the Anglo-Celtics did towards the Chinese, or attempt to essentialise specific immigrant groups as deviant or incompatible and fundamentally different. Creation of social divisions, based on essentialising characteristics, have been linked to proposals by academics such as Blainey (1984) and Windschuttle (2004) – mentioned in chapter 2 – i.e. with a focus on schismogenesis and not cosmogenesis. Exposed shared values can also be a way to diminish any ‘discomforts’ some people have towards Others and lead to the ability to have ‘hope’ (Hage 2003) for a shared future.

Shared values and social recognition can also be seen in the reaction of Adar who claimed ‘Australia is my second country’ even while talking about the difficulties he experienced while being detained in Australia. However, as a free man, as a new Australian, he is now filled with positive attitudes. He said it was now possible to do those things he previously had never been able to do. Here he experienced an agency that he had been prevented from in Iran because here he is recognised as a citizen with rights. He can do things, he can own things, and he can experience a freedom unthinkable in Iran. It has been argued that the
refugee journey is about creating “a future in an uncertain world” (Correa-Velez et al. 2010: 1399) so to recognise opportunities, possibilities and rights in the way Adar has, seems to be very important, even though there is an ambivalence in his story when he speaks about his time in detention and his friends who stayed behind when he was released.

Multiculturalism was equally spoken about in a positive way, and was perceived as a good policy when mentioned or alluded to. This can be seen as in contrast with, or despite, Hage's (1998) or Jakubowicz’ (2009) critical comments about developments concerning multiculturalism, as being something developed for ‘whites’, by ‘whites’, for example to visit ‘ethnic’ restaurants (Hage 1998). In fact, for some of the men, multicultural areas – with different types of food and shops – made them feel more at home and less different. This is more in line with Hodge and O’Carroll’s (2006) critique of Hage’s comment; they argue the ‘ethnic’ restaurants, and ‘ethnic’ areas, are positive aspects of a multicultural place, not just something for the benefit of ‘whites’. For the men in this study multicultural areas allowed for individuals to sense recognition as part of the multicultural whole and to be at ‘ease’. It was not shaped by any ‘integration ideology’ (Jakubowicz 2009) that claims unwanted outsiders should integrate or change their being in order to ‘fit in’ and not disturb the social cohesion that existed prior to their arrival (whether that social cohesion was imagined by the wider Australian society or actual).

It is worth noting that the participants who mentioned multiculturalism in this study differ from some participants in Westoby’s study, who were more negative because they likened multiculturalism to “assimilation and loss of Southern Sudanese cultural identity” (2009: 106). None of the participants in this study spoke about any disadvantages with multiculturalism or positioned it as a threat to their ‘identities’. Instead to be able to participate in cultural, and multicultural, events seemed to be a valuable experience that enabled them with opportunities to retain and remember their past culture. For someone like Hassan, there was no link between multiculturalism and unwanted assimilation. In fact he was successfully able to uphold multiple cultural connections (or negotiate a hybrid cultural identity). For the participants in this study culturally specific events are in fact important for the development of a connection to Australia, because they are sites where one’s own culture (and history or past) is recognised, accepted and enjoyed within a hybrid space. It was hybrid because it was not about any essentialist cultural or religious identity. I noticed this while attending cultural events in Western Sydney. The men were clearly enjoying the events and
engaging with people from similar backgrounds, but also enjoying the opportunity to show their art and performances to others.

Such events can also be sites where shared values can be expressed and reinforced, such as family values, cultural values, respect for others but also general human rights, creating social bonds and connections. To have one’s own culture recognised is particularly important when the culture has been suppressed in the ‘homeland’, as in the case of the Hazara and Karen people. Both groups experienced ‘structural, cultural and direct’ violence (Galtung 1996) in their countries of origin, namely Afghanistan and Burma (Myanmar) (see Brough et al. 2012; Maley 2010).

The one voice critical of multiculturalism in the current study was from Tun. He expressed concerns that his culture (Karen culture) was devalued and at risk of being forgotten, but this was not a critique of multiculturalism or a multicultural community; instead it was a critique of a lack of ‘true’ multiculturalism, where all cultures are recognised as equal, something that will be examined more in the last section and when discussing hierarchies of belonging.

Social recognition and shared values appeared to be, at least initially, most available through those who were ‘knowable’ to some degree to the men. For Anton, Javed, Mark and Paul this was initially other people from their ‘ethnic’ communities in Australia (Assyrian or Persian) or their extended families (particularly for Paul) while for some others it was people in the broader community who provided support to them (Baraz and Zaw) or to friends and colleagues (Kamran and Hassan).

It is important to note that not all men spoke about connections to others in a positive light. Instead it was sometimes the inability to connect, or barriers to connecting, that were raised. Akbar said the reason people from refugee backgrounds lived in ethnic enclaves or socialised with other refugees was because they were ‘pushed by society’ into these enclaves, hence it was not a choice. Javed explained that the period when he was unable to interact with non-Persians, was a very bad period for him, and he went from “one detention to another”; he was ‘detained’ in his ‘ethnic enclave’ with very limited agency to move along and to ‘break free’. What has emerged as a central point is the importance of what Ager and Strang (2008) explain as social bonds and connections, which are based on social recognition and shared values. It is equally important that the person has some agency over, and feels satisfied with,
the social situation in which they find themselves. However, many challenges involved in this emerged in the narratives and the next section will explain some of the practical and structural challenges, and discuss how these experiences are linked to the men’s social location and limited agency.

Social location and limited agency

...but now [we] have to survive our own, went to work, it is okay, I don’t mind work… I do afternoon cleaner… (Zaw)

Because wherever they go; ‘ah you can’t speak English’, due to the language barrier, so many challenges, put them back, they are useless… (Tun)

Structural and practical challenges to resource access (required to be able to re-start or continue one’s life as one chooses) were indicators to the men in this research that they occupied a social location with limited agency. Zaw did not complain, but was unable to ‘break’ out of his situation which meant he is, after over 10 years in Australia, ‘still’ a cleaner despite having had a relatively high-status role when living on the Thai / Burma border (manager and designer in a factory with 400 employees). Zaw explains he grew up to paint, as an artist, and that being an artist is his ‘right job’. Here Zaw indicates, whether it is realistic to survive as an artist in Australia or not, that his own understanding of himself is not being recognised in his current role as a commercial cleaner. Tun’s quote above links the practical challenge of learning a language to feeling ‘useless’, unable to participate and contribute. Here the men describe challenges associated with occupying a social location with reduced status, which limit their agency to be able do something else or to choose another path. To experience feeling ‘useless’ or at the ‘bottom’ was equally reported as common for men participating in research by Correa-Velez and Gifford (2011: 38).

Both Tun and Hassan specifically mention language as a major barrier for many men, even for those who have been in Australia for a long time. To learn a language as an adult requires a lot of suitable support, which the participants indicated was not always available. Tun explained that learning a language within a tight time frame is very difficult, particularly for illiterate or older people. Both Akbar and Javed spoke about how the English classes available to them were inappropriate and ‘useless’ because of the structure of the classes, the difference in skills within the class and the unfriendly (sometimes even racist) atmosphere.
For these reasons, Javed said the English classes he went to were “just a useless environment that you don’t want to be in.” For Mark and Anton, who spoke English relatively well when they arrived, financial pressure made it more important to find paid work than to refine their English skills. For all the men who spoke about learning English, the classes did not provide them with what they needed most at the time, which was the capacity to learn English in a suitable environment that fitted in with their overall aims and interests (such as finding work). To learn English is one of the first major practical challenges for refugees arriving in Australia, not just for this cohort but across other cohorts as well (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; Hugo 2011; Pittaway and Muli 2009). It is not just a practical difficulty; instead it can also be seen as a practical barrier to belonging. Ager and Strang (2008) suggest English language skills can be understood as a ‘facilitator’ for integration, partly because it is often required to get specific jobs (Mestan 2008) but also to be able to participate beyond one’s ethnic group in society and establish connections and attachments.

To learn the local language is therefore an important domain of Ager and Strang’s (2008) ‘integration framework’. In the current study men’s motivation to learn English was clear, but even though Ager and Strang propose that learning a language should be considered a ‘two-way’ process (2008) – the responsibility lies with both the ‘host’ and the new resident – the structure for learning was not always experienced as suitable, either because of financial pressures or the learning environment. To get enough funding to establish suitable language support is an ongoing issue in Australia. For example, in the 2014 report from the Refugee Council of Australia, community concerns are raised about the “funding constraints of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Settlement Grants Program (SGP)” (RCOA 2014: 79).

The structural and practical challenges attached to trying to learn a language can have implications for belonging, since ‘to be understood’ is one prerequisite for belonging outside one’s language group (Ignatieff 1995: 10) and a failure to learn a language will make it difficult to change social location and eventually get into a position that will enable the person to participate in dominant hegemonic discourses and practices. As an aspect of integration, the process of learning the language of the country the person is settling in, cannot be separated from the process of establishing a sense of belonging within the majority community, or to be able to develop enough agency to move around within the larger ‘imagined community’ of the Australian nation (Anderson 2006).
To participate and be “part of society” (Javed) seems to be a shared goal among the men in this research. Language is evidently an enabler for participation. For example, Kamran mentioned specifically how he made a conscious effort to learn English in order to be able to participate in Australian society. However, not being able to grasp English limited the capacity to do what the men, based on their previous experiences and wishes, believed themselves capable of. To experience that one is not a part of society, and unable to be understood as one wishes, takes away agency and can be, as Tun explained, both embarrassing and intimidating (to feel ‘stupid’ and ‘useless’). Even when not expressed in a negative way, to apologise for one’s lack of English (which both Baraz and Zaw did) indicates the person perceives himself or herself to lack the ability to express their thoughts, or that they might be difficult to understand. The findings suggest that language is a practical, and sometimes ongoing, challenge for the men and limited English contributed to a sense of limited agency, or the capacity to take control over their lives and achieve their goals (i.e. to participate, be active and valuable, to find suitable work). This has serious implications for connection to, and belonging within, Australia.

The desire to achieve their own goals emerged as a strong motivator for the men, however, the support necessary to provide the space for the men to achieve their goals was sometimes missing. Anton and Mark, who arrived when they were over 40 years old, explained how the initial courses offered through refugee resettlement did not provide them with the opportunities they hoped for in terms of finding suitable and relevant employment to support their families. Tun proceeded to question how the Government, or some of those ‘supporting’ refugees, sometimes do not understand the challenges and needs people have who are trying to settle into a new society. This can lead to inadequate support, as experienced by Anton and Mark. The issue was not for these men, a lack of desire to contribute, but in the support that was perceived as unhelpful, such as courses that did not lead to, or help with, paid employment. Tun gave an example when explaining that people from refugee backgrounds do not need support in raising their children (which he suggested some support workers attempt). This can be inappropriate for the person’s practical needs and wishes (at that very moment) and reinforce a hierarchy based on assumptions about the ‘Others’ capacities. Here the findings support Hugo (2011) who explains that if humanitarian entrants are given the chance, they will contribute significantly to Australian society since they want to work and contribute. These are the reasons that McPherson (2010) is critical of ‘settlement education’, because as she describes, it is running for the wrong reasons. The refugees are not taught to
be active and valuable (and valued) citizens. Instead they are taught to fit in or pass a test, sometimes within a specific time frame as Tun indicated. What they do say they need is to have an “equal chance” to climb the social ladder (Hugo 2011: xxiv) and this fundamentally requires agency in a supportive social structure, such as recognition of past experiences that enables the men to use those past experiences, and their skills, in suitable employment.

In the current study employment and the barriers to having achievements recognised were mentioned by several of the men. Often challenges associated with employment were understood as evidence of the men’s limiting social location. The men were ‘forced’ to accept certain jobs below their qualifications and experience or to change occupations completely (Anton, Hassan, Mark, Peter, Zaw). Hassan said that for many men it is “...hard finding a job” and Anton provided an example; “I am an engineer, but no one give me job for that”. Some of the challenges around finding employment were explained as practical, such as English proficiency, but also the difficulty in finding work using the ‘normal channels’, friends or acquaintances were seen as the only hope of getting employment (examples were given by Zaw and Hassan). Others indicated that the barriers were simply the result of being new to the country, positioned as a person ‘without a valid past’. Both Mark and Anton explained that they were told they needed ‘Australian experience’ to get a job, which they as ‘new Australians’ obviously lacked. This came across as the significant issue, not the lack of work per se. However as Peter highlighted, the lack of effective support services for refugee men trying to find work is problematic. He argues the Government “is not planning well to utilise [the men’s] skills”, a comment that raises questions considering Peter’s experience working with men from refugee backgrounds. It is also made even more significant considering the fact that previous research also identifies that employment is a challenge and ongoing issue for men from refugee backgrounds, but also other ‘culturally diverse’ migrant men. For example see the Employment Action for Cultural Diversity report (EACD 2011) and also other extensive studies or reports mentioned in this research (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003; CIRCA 2010; AHRC 2009; Hugo 2011; LaRRC 2009; McDonald et al. 2008; Pittaway and Muli 2009; RCOA 2014; STATT 2012).

Employment is not just about financial opportunities; in fact there is a link “between employment and well-being or mental health” (Fozdar 2009: 1342 see also EACD 2011; MacDonald 2006; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). This is supported by this current research and some of the comments the men made, about feeling inadequate or worthless. Mark
argued a failure to find suitable employment leads to a "waste of talents" and he suggested this can lead to social isolation or even alienation, and ultimately ill-health. Mark even explained that employment challenges “destroy too many [refugees]” while Tun provided an emotional account about his own frustration dealing with an employer and the reduced status he experienced. He felt his employer treated him unfairly and tried to cheat him because, as Tun said, he was just a ‘refugee’. Tun explained when retelling this story; “I am sometimes tied in my body… I hate it…” Tun dealt with his issue but it was clearly a struggle because he experienced very limited agency, something that still affects him, leading to frustration or even a sense of entrapment.

Previous literature has highlighted the importance of, and challenges concerning, gender in the refugee experience (for example, Ellis et al. 2010; Johnson and Stoll 2008; MIC 2006; Simbandumwe et al. 2008; Pittaway 2005; Wille 2011). Wille explains, after researching with Australians originally from South Sudan, that “the role of gender [is] vital in the process of developing a sense of belonging” (Wille 2011: 96). Similarly, other research has identified how there are ‘issues’ or ‘problems’ with masculinities for migrant men (Donaldson et al 2009) or identified that gender relations, or new gender roles, contribute to settlement challenges, such as domestic violence (Pittaway 2005; Pittaway and Muli 2009). This research did not focus a priori on gender or masculinity, but instead it focused on the men’s narratives (similar to research by Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011; Este and Tachble 2009; Farah 2007) and the findings indicate it would be misleading to frame the challenges as the result of any gender identities or gender relations. For this research I believe it is important to clarify what the current data suggests about gender, and how this might affect the men in terms of their settling into Australia and developing a sense of belonging, but also the limitations a gendered focus can have.

Gender roles were important for some of the men, in terms of the roles they felt they ought to have. It is worth noting that it is important to keep in mind that the researcher is a ‘white male’ from a ‘western country’, and as such, the men may have felt a need to not disclose challenges they have faced as men in Australia, however, it is still possible to elicit an understanding from their comments. For example Mark experienced failure to find suitable work as contributing to a sense of powerlessness; he wished to be the provider for his family. Peter mentioned that this is not uncommon. He explained how some men can become frustrated when they experience that their role, as a man, changes and they are unable, or
prevented from, being the provider. What the current research did not identify was that there were issues around the men’s understanding of ‘gender’ or ‘gender relations’, which is how Connell defines masculinities (Connell 1995) or that these differed from the wider Australian communities’ understandings of gender roles. Peter suggested that disruptive gender roles can cause frustrations, but changed gender roles are not a “major issue for belonging” for refugee men. Here the findings of this research are similar to those of Pease (2009) who noted that immigrant men in Australia did not see their masculinity changed or challenged, even when there were some challenges that can be understood as gender specific, such as difficulty in being the provider. If there are challenges that make it difficult to be the provider, the findings indicate it is the men’s capacity to provide that is of concern. This was a reason Mark and Anton wanted to get work instead of attending courses. It was the reason Peter held a job below his qualification and Zaw has continued to work as a cleaner. The challenge appeared to be about a reduction in the capacity, or agency, to get a decent and suitable job and to provide, rather than a challenge to their gender per se. or towards any perceived, in Australia, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Byrne (2006) recognises that some men are pressured to send money back to their families in their country of origin (or wherever they might be), i.e. the ‘global breadwinner roles’ (Byrne 2006; Farah 2007; Johnson and Stoll 2008). But again, the ‘problem’ does not appear to stem from a confusion or challenge to their ‘gender identity’ or the actual transnational obligations. Instead I argue it can be understood as a practical challenge stemming from their limited agency, that is linked to the men’s social location, and it is this that is causing frustration or a sense that they have been ‘devalued’.

The findings of the current research do not suggest that challenges regarding gender relations are not accurate, or that domestic violence is not an issue among immigrant families. Rather as Connell (2005) argues, in a patriarchal society, male agency (to be the provider and protector) is hegemonic and this is the same in all patriarchal societies. What the current research indicates is that we need to be wary of suggesting or assuming that men from specific cultures have problematic gender constructions and then assume gender is the problem in terms of integration, belonging and participating within the nation or within their community or even family. This allows us to consciously move away from any claim that gender roles need to be changed, taught or supported, and instead opens up the potential to
focus on the ‘lost control’ that Darvishpour (2002), Este and Tachble (2009) and Muller (2008) mention can lead to family conflicts and divorce but also contribute to a general dissatisfaction or disenchantment. It is this ‘lost control’ that the men indicated they experienced, which can be attributed to their social location and limited agency.

A different issue, in terms of reduced agency, and evidence of an enforced low social location, is articulated by Kamran, Javed, Baraz, Adar and Akbar when they spoke about their time in immigration detention centres. The treatment they received amounted to a complete removal of any agency and any status they might previously have had. Javed talked about being taken to detention “like a dog”, something that still haunts him. The men spoke about detention as a punitive and a negative experience. For example, both Baraz and Adar spoke about having a “depression” and Baraz described detention as worse than prison. The practical implications stemming from being detained and having one’s agency taken away appear to be ongoing, since the associated emotional issues can be debilitating. Adar indicated a potential for re-traumatisation when he explained; “I go to detention centre I am crying, they are my friends…”. Because of this he refrains from going there much, missing out on seeing his friends (and they miss out on the support). The implications of detention for belonging cannot be dismissed, because it can have long-term effects that can create “so much hatred in society” (Javed) because some feel society “cheated” them once they left detention (Akbar). The long-term consequences of detention that are explored in recent research by Fleay and Briskman (2013) can be viewed as challenges preventing a sense of equality and ease in the person’s surroundings and as such, a potential disruption to the development of a sense of belonging. However, these challenges do not just affect people who spent time in detention. These implications are also problematic for those men who work with asylum seekers and people in community detention. Hassan and Peter, who both are employed as ‘support workers’ said they tried their best, but it clearly is not easy as some types of support cannot be provided and is at the mercy of Government policies. Hassan likened the lack of the right to work for some asylum seekers in the community to “torture”, even though he was never in that position himself. Here Hassan identified with the refugees he worked with and he wanted to support them. Peter said funding is particularly difficult for male specific support, even though he believed it would help. However, the men experienced limited agency in their professional roles as support workers.

Others experienced different tensions and conflicting realities, which can be viewed as
resulting from their lower social location, such as being given an unwanted label or lacking certain abilities. Tun described support workers (without refugee backgrounds) who treat people who are trying to settle into society as victims or as unable to do (or understand) certain things, such as raising a family. Fozdar has described this ‘victimisation’ as a form of discrimination that can affect a person’s health and wellbeing (2009). As such it can be located in the structural support (or lack thereof) offered to men from refugee backgrounds, and this can be an issue even when the aim is to support integration into society.

Ager and Strang’s framework can be useful for its focus on practical domains, such as language skills, access to employment and access to support services that are practical and relevant. However, what is missing from this framework is an appreciation of a dimension which is related to this practical support but also independent of it, namely agency. The men did not want things done for them; they wanted to make their own choices and to take responsibility for themselves and their families, such as Anton who said he changed his approach (trying to find work as an engineer, his previous job in Iraq) and accepted the work he could get in Australia, to make him and his “family happy”. The importance of agency emerged very strongly from the men’s narratives and, whilst the focus may have been on language proficiency or employment, the underlying message was the need for an acknowledgment of their capacity to do (not intention to do) what they want, which is how Giddens (1986) defines agency. The findings therefore support observations made in the report from La Trobe’s Refugee Research Centre, which identifies a ‘lack of agency’ as detrimental to the settlement process and the development of belonging (LaRRC 2009). This further supports the findings of Marlowe that the men should be understood as “agents in their own lives who are capable of making meaningful contributions to the society” (2010: 195). In other words, the data from the current research supports a focus on how a loss of agency is interlinked with the distributive challenges, such as unequal access to employment or limited resources allocated for targeted assistance.

I suggest that articulation of ‘agency’ within Ager and Strang’s framework would clarify how agency is not just needed to be able to ‘express your own identity’ (Sporton and Valentine 2009) but required within many of the other domains for integration as identified by Ager and Strang (2008). In other words, agency is not its own domain, but the enabler of core domains in the framework. Gebre-Selassie, in providing an overview of how different countries have dealt with integration, defines ‘integration’ as “equal participation in the social, economic,
cultural and political life of a country without abandoning the cultural and linguistic
background of individuals or groups“ (2008: 12). This requires equal access to resources and
opportunities, which the men stated that in their experience, they did not have. So to
‘promote’ integration, there has to be an understanding of the different challenges that might
make this difficult. The findings discussed in this section support Wille, referring to Maja
Korac, who explains; “when there is a space for agency to develop and when agency is
acknowledged, people will feel respected and willing to be part of the society” (Wille 2011:
86). A person with agency is then more likely to participate in that space and to be active in
their ‘integration’ – understood here as a process leading to belonging (Strang and Ager
2010). This position might be missed if the focus is restricted to the practical facilitators for
integration or re-settlement. Even though Hamaz and Vasta suggest that belonging is “formed
through the interplay of the subjective self, individual agency and structural positioning”
(2009: 7), I suggest agency is not a category per se. but an overarching dimension that shapes
the men’s experiences. As such it cannot be separated from structural positioning and must be
situated at the centre of belonging, shaping the enablers or barriers. Buonfino and Thomson
(2007) also connect agency with belonging, arguing that belonging requires one to be an
‘equal member’ of society with equal capacity to participate and engage with others. This is
linked to how Gebre-Selassie (2008) defines integration. Equal capacity would mean not just
agency but equal access to resources, i.e. social location is not a barrier. Ager and Strang
(2008) do not use the term ‘social location’, even though they raise the need for equality in
terms of participation. But Yuval-Davis (2006a) explains that the ‘social location’ a person
holds cannot be separated from the ability to develop belonging to the wider Australian
community and the nation. A ‘low’ social location equates to limited agency, which means
limited capacity to exercise agency in relation to practical and structural challenges, but it
also relates to status reduction, which I will discuss further in the next section.

So far in this section, I have explored how challenges around practical matters, in particular
those linked to learning a language and finding suitable employment, disrupted the men’s
sense of being ‘at ease’ in Australia, or an ‘equal member’, which Buonfino and Thomson
(2007) argue is required for belonging. I argue that these challenges can be understood as
interlinked with, and shaped by, the men’s social location and the men’s subsequent limited
agency. It is clear that these practical challenges are important (Ager and Strang 2008), but
the frustration and potential disenchantment for the men lies in that which makes the practical
challenges difficult to deal with, and that is the social position in which the men are located
and the limited agency they experience. Yuval-Davis’ work (discussed more in the next section) provides further insight into how we might understand the more ideological dimension of the men’s experiences that can be traced to the socio-political and socio-historical situation in Australia. I would argue that to be a ‘full member’ as Anthias (2006) would suggest belonging is about, is not just about what can be understood as ‘distributive challenges’ (access to resources or material disadvantages), which can be practical barriers, but also those challenges aligned with political and ideological dimensions, or values, that shape the men’s experiences.

In the next section I therefore explore how the ideological contestations that lie behind ‘misrecognition’ and ‘misidentification’ have been experienced. Ager and Strang's (2008; 2010) framework is valuable in articulating the practical and structural challenges people from a refugee background may face, however it is less able to tell us how the men experience and understand the ideological contestations or the source of such contestations. These contestations are linked to ‘identification’, which is one facet of Yuval-Davis’ (2006a) framework, or dichotomising identification, leading to a ‘misidentification’; one aspect of misrecognition (Fraser 2000). In the following section I explore how experiences relating to misrecognition or misidentification emerged from the narratives of the men and how these can be understood as barriers to belonging. Such misrecognition or misidentification can shape social divisions, or create ‘schismogenesis’; a social division (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006).

**Misrecognition and misidentification**

*I tell you my view of Australians, a majority, more than 90 percent, 95 percent, racist. But they not going to show them, they are being polite to you, they cover it.* (Akbar)

*Some employers have that mentality that refugees or coloured people sometimes that they cannot offer you employment, even afraid. This is affecting your settlement, your belonging to the country, which you feel you are part of it...* (Peter)

The above quotes are not about practical or structural challenges, even though they might lead to such. Instead they are fundamentally about schismogenesis, divisions between the person or group affected and the Australian majority. It might be old racism, new racism or be misrecognised as the ‘Other’, to be different, not quite fitting in. This can create divisions
leading to misidentifications not just by the wider Australian society, but also by those deemed to be the ‘Other’, including other migrant groups.

One of the frustrations, which several of the men voiced, was concerned with being unable to find suitable employment. The reasons given included experienced discrimination (as in the above quote from Peter), limited or no recognition of previous experience or a perceived social location – as being useless – that prevented them from experiencing agency in their lives. Some men described being in positions far junior to those they occupied in their homeland. For example, Mark worked as a School Principal in Iraq and he had his teaching degree recognised, but he could not get a teaching position in Australia. Equally, Tun, Zaw, Mark, Javed and Akbar spoke about their frustration in having been ‘demoted’ to positions or occupations far inferior to those they had previously held and unable to move up the ladder. Some of these challenges should be understood as practical and structural, related to the men’s new social location and the lack of agency they experience. In this section, I look at how ideological contestations, based on political, ethical and social values, contribute to misrecognition and misidentification within the group, which in turn can be understood as barriers to an emotional connection, (i.e. belonging) within the mainstream because they contribute to schismogenesis between the men and the mainstream, (the dominant group) but sometimes even other immigrant groups.

Javed spoke about not being able to say he belonged anywhere, that he lost that sense. It appeared he was unable to identify with Australia as a place where he belongs because he has been devalued and excluded for too long. Even though Javed spoke about what can be understood as “fragmented and multiple identities” (Anthias 2006: 20) linked to his refugee experience, he did not suggest that this caused his ambivalence towards an Australian identity. Instead it was a culmination of experience and challenges that he has faced that contributed to him not identifying with Australia or experiencing that he was an equal in Australia. Javed spoke about the ‘Australian society’ he encountered not being “warm” and how “Australians” were not welcoming, and he mentioned being “useless” in this society because he was disconnected from it. This was not just a practical challenge (though it has practical implications). Instead Javed indicated that ideological challenges and racist perspectives create barriers in society. The barriers are not just constructed by society, but also by those who experience the exclusion. Javed did not feel ‘mainstream’ society was inviting and as a result he remained external to that society for a long time, unable to even sit
comfortably in a non-Persian cafe. Similarly, Akbar (above) found the majority of Australians to be racists, creating a barrier between himself and that large majority. Peter is less explicit, but makes links to ‘Australia’s racist’ past and how that might have shaped and informed modern Australia.

Belonging “is about emotional attachment” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 197) that can arise from “being accepted and or being a full member” Anthias (2006: 19) in society. Anthias links the ability to develop a sense of belonging with being recognised as an equal, in terms of status and opportunities (both material and ideological). For Nancy Fraser, to be misrecognised (i.e. not an ‘equal’) is not a “distortion of one’s relation to one’s self and an injury to one’s identity” (2000: 109) but instead, it is better understood as ‘status subordination’ (ibid). Here Fraser’s ‘status model’ is useful because it does not assume a priori whether status reduction is due to misrecognition or maldistribution. Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) recognise that status reduction is a significant problem for people from refugee backgrounds but, looking at the findings, the challenges are not associated with ‘identity reconstruction’ or ‘acculturation’, which was something Colic-Peisker and Walker focused on. It is this subordination that may more fully describe the frustration the men are experiencing when using a term such as “useless”, which the findings indicate is independent of their own identity construct.

Tun’s experience of underemployment, of being misrecognised or not being seen completely as an equal, is consistent with how other men spoke about the frustrations of feeling devalued and not being allowed to be their best or what they understand themselves to be (‘an artist’ for Zaw or a ‘teacher’ for Mark). Fraser explains that the point is not that the person is just devalued, but that misrecognition “is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem” (Fraser 2000: 113). Charles Taylor writes; “Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (1994: 26), and Fraser’s status model provides insights into what due recognition actually means.

For Yuval-Davis (2011a) identification consists not only of how the individual is identified by others, but also how the individual identifies his or her self, and how he or she identifies others. This shapes the emotional attachment to people or place. For this reason, identification with others can evoke an emotional attachment, to feel ‘at home’ in that space.
with those people; one’s ‘habitus’ is aligned with others. This can create belonging, but can also be the source of the politics of belonging (who is identified as an ‘insider’?). Here I do not separate belonging from the politics of belonging (something Antonsich in 2010 attempts with his theoretical approach), but instead take Yuval-Davis’ advice that belonging and the politics of belonging cannot be understood to exist independently of each other. For this reason, when the findings indicate there are misidentifications, whether it is relating to the mainstream or how the men perceive themselves as being seen, it can create schismogenesis. Such divisions are barriers to any emotional attachment or belonging, perpetuating certain politics of belonging based on that which is the source of the misidentification (ethnicity, religious affiliations, class or status and so on).

When Tun has difficulty saying he is Australian, it is about a dialogical difference, as the Other or the Outsider, which is what Said (1994) has warned ‘identity politics’ could lead to. Claims that Australians are a certain type is to misidentify what Australians are, since there are no neutral ‘Australians’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). In contrast to Hussain and Bugguley’s finding that some of their participants felt they belonged but also felt they were not accepted by the Anglo-Celtic population, Tun said explicitly that he did not feel he belonged to Australia. Misidentification is often based on stereotypes and specific socio-historical frameworks, which in Australia can be shaped by the postcolonial situation. As a result, it is not just a one way process. In the current study the men also use stereotypes, as did Tun, to understand ‘mainstream Australians’, which furthers the process by which the men were, or are, excluded. In some sense they were excluding themselves and creating boundaries against who they attach themselves to, an important step according to Yuval-Davis (2011a) for emotional attachment to develop. For both Tun and the participants in Hussain and Bugguley’s research it seemed that the desire was the same; a wish for “recognition rather than ‘integration’” (2005: 421). Here the sentiment seems to be that integration is dictated from above, while recognition is to be an equal participant in a space, but sometimes prevented because of misidentifications from both sides.

For Fraser the path forward is not to recognise or restore an identity per se. but for the misrecognised person to become “a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest” (ibid: 114). This is what Fraser means by ‘parity of participation’. Similarly, Anthias (2006) argues that ‘to belong’ is to be a ‘full member’ in society, so to not be a full member, or to not be equal with others, is to be socially excluded, leading to isolation or even
alienation, the opposite of belonging according to Antonsich (2010). Hence to develop a
sense of belonging, the focus needs to be on “structures and processes of equality” (Vasta
2007: 25) that impede a person from being a full member, but also on how dialogical
differences are maintained or supported by the mainstream or the dominant group.

The findings indicate that identity or identity issues per se were not prominent for this cohort.
This places the findings in a different position to previous research focusing on identity(s).
As already explained, work in the field of belonging has understood the experiences
described above in terms of identity and the need for “identity reconstruction” (Colic-Peisker
and Walker 2003). I recognise that there has been a great deal of refugee research concerned
with specific challenges concerning ‘identity’ for migrant and refugee men. For example,
Fozdar and Hartley write that when “adapting to Australia, many refugees are faced with a
sudden loss of identity” and this “can be a major source of tension and conflict for families,
communities, and service providers” (2013: 46). Colic-Peisker and Walker argue that
refugees “lose aspects of their identities” which is why they maintain there is a need to
“reconstruct their identity” (Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003: 337). Moreover, Byrne (2006)
identified that ‘loss of identity’ is the most pressing health and wellbeing issue for ‘refugee
men’ and he suggests that “refugee men may need to forge a new identity” (Byrne 2006: 37).
Furthermore, the NSW Refugee Men Fact Sheet (NSW Health 2009) concurs with Byrne
(2006) that ‘identity loss’ is the most pressing health and wellbeing challenge for refugee
men. Farah (2007) also focuses on ‘identities’ and writes about identity challenges for men
from the Horn of Africa, explaining that there is a need to find ‘displaced identities’. Farah
reported that the men stated they felt part of their old identity had been lost when arriving in
Australia. I do not dispute these findings, but I argue, based on the current men’s narratives,
that it cannot be assumed that identity is a useful starting point. In fact it might fail to tackle
important concerns, while also only contributing to the notion that refugees or migrants have
different identities (or malign identities) and potentially need to change to ‘fit in’ with the
naturalised Australians, rather than being recognised as individual agents capable of ‘fitting
in’ on their own terms.

The current research findings show that instead of understanding the men’s experiences as
being primarily connected to their identity, the challenges are shaped by misidentification
(both their misidentification of others or the sense that others are misidentifying them) and
the sense they are misrecognised (conferring a reduced status). Both aspects were evident
when the men spoke about how they could not identify with certain aspects of what they had experienced in Australian culture (racism for example), or could not share the Government’s, or many of the public’s, negative attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees, or that they did not see themselves as 100% Australian because their stereotypical ‘Australian’ is White or Anglo-Celtic Australian. These ideological contestations are “the contradictory processes” which “are as important as the symmetries experienced” (Anthias 2006: 26), or the shared values discussed in the first part of this chapter, in understanding a person’s experience in a new country.

The implications of misrecognition are many. Akbar links the conflicts he experiences to intentional misrecognition where ‘reffos’ is not just about the essentialising label. It is also about the ‘status subordination’ that the label implies, positioning the ‘reffos’ as people who are not equals or welcomed. Akbar said society “puts us [“reffos”] very much down”. For Javed the failure to connect and to not be an equal (up until very recently), led him to feel unsatisfied with himself, to feel ‘useless’ in society. He experienced Australians as not friendly and he placed them in one category, however, the resulting sense of failure or social ineptitude also affected Javed’s relationship with other Persian people. Here Javed, and also Kamran, expose some of the ambivalence a person can have, not only towards the mainstream society but also towards one’s own ethnic group. Kamran initially wanted to disengage from his cultural roots, while Javed ended up disengaged from other Persian people and from mainstream society. He explained that he was held up by his own insecurities, limited self-worth and his understanding that ‘society’ was unfriendly and people were unapproachable.

In other words, this research did not indicate that there were challenges attached so much to the men’s ‘identity’, because identity can be naturally subjective, somewhat unstable and transient. To accept this, it might be helpful to explain identity as a process, not the “possessive property of the individual” (Anthias 2002: 495). If identities are understood as intersectional, fluctuating and somewhat unstable (Yuval-Davies et al. 2005) or as something relating to ‘becoming’ (Hall 1996: 4) a person’s identity will inevitably change and adjust when they encounter different social and personal circumstances (from Erikson in Wetherell 2010). Identity can not only be understood as relational or dialogical (Taylor 1994), but also as narrative and performative, shaped by different social values, positionings and perspectives (Yuval-Davis 2010). Because the men did not bring up their identity as an issue,
I refrain from separating identity into ‘individual’ or ‘social’ (Kidd 2002) while recognising that such an approach can be useful in certain contexts. Instead the data indicate that what is influencing the men’s sense of belonging or attachment is both their misidentification of the other (or different cultural practices) and the experience that they are misrecognised by others (devalued). I argue it is this that shapes their narratives and not the other way around. For a forced migrant, personal change and challenges around connecting and participating is part of the refugee process. They have to adopt and adjust to a new dominant culture and local habitus. By not positioning ‘identity’ at the forefront of the men’s experiences it is possible to move away from a social psychological approach and ‘identity politics’ which can, according to Fraser, lead to “repressive communitarianism” (Fraser in Fraser and Naples 2004: 1113) or a ‘fetishisation of cultural attributes” (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 529). Then we might gain further insight into the recognitive injustices (Fraser 2000) that are highlighted in the men’s narratives.

“I have thought about this, how much I belong to Australia, how much I could like Australian, but I think I could not be like an Australian” (Kamran).

To reject an ‘Australian identity’ suggests the identity (as perceived) leads to a schismogenesis. The national identity is here dialogically constituted (Taylor 1994) since when the men understand Australian to mean White or Anglo-Celtic Australians, they understand themselves as something else, hence not Australians and vice versa. The men fail to connect with what they perceive to be ‘Australian identity’ because they adopt a stereotypical (and socially constructed) understanding of what an Australian is. This was perpetuated by the fact that they have experienced different boundaries that shape who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’; they are aware of the “construction of opposites” (Said 1994: 332) or the limitations to the ‘space of commonality’ (Hage 2010) that positions them outside or on one side. In many ways, they essentialise what an Australian is, which is what Tabar et al. (2010) suggests a dialogical understanding of identity does. The suggestion here is not that the men need to reconstruct their identity, but to open up the space of commonality so that they do not think of the national identity as dialogical or dichotomising. Instead identity is understood in the way Hall suggests, ‘to become’ or ‘becoming’. It is a process the men could take part in without causing schismogenesis.

Another example of schismogenesis linked to misidentification is evident when politicians, or
the media, identify how a certain ‘identity group’ (ethnic group or religious group) is unable to integrate (Due 2008). Peter brought this up when he questioned how, in one example, the entire Sudanese-Australian community was held accountable for a crime committed by a person with a Sudanese background. Here the Sudanese-Australians were positioned as a group identified as different from the ‘mainstream’. Such action does not just essentialise people originally from Sudan as one coherent mass; it also potentially alienates those people from the mainstream since they can feel, as Peter pointed out, that media and politicians construct them as ‘the Other’.

The misrecognition experienced cannot be reduced to one aspect of the men’s narratives. Instead it is based on a combination of factors shaping their experiences and is broader than identity. For this reason an intersectional approach, which I have recognised that Yuval-Davis (2010a) is advocating when it comes to understanding belonging, is useful as it challenges essentialising ‘identity politics’ (Crenshaw 1991; Ellis et al. 2010). The position is that people with the same ethnic or gender (male) ‘identity’ or background (a refugee) might experience different challenges, and should not be viewed in a reductionist way as one group with the same traits or desires. Anthias argues that it should not be about how group identities ‘interplay’. Instead it should be seen as a process “related to practices and arrangements” (2006: 27). This is my rationale for not using the term ‘refugee men’ as such a label cannot provide insight into the phenomenological experiences each man has; instead it places that label on them. Coker (2004) pointed out that some people might not mind the ‘refugee’ label, and certainly this was the case for some in this study. For example, Kamran used it in a positive way to raise awareness, but it should not be assumed a priori. Javed wanted to be referred to ‘as everyone else’, not identified as distinct from others. It is clear that the misrecognition experienced also contributed to, and was shaped by, the misidentification of the mainstream, furthering dichotomising narratives about who belongs as ‘a neutral’ and unquestionably Australian.

**Summary of the three parts**

The findings of this research question the claims perpetuated by some “that pluralist or multicultural approaches to immigrant inclusion into society have failed and that a large part of the problem lies with immigrants themselves” (Vasta 2007: 3). The findings in this research clearly position the challenges to lie with those experiences that create
schismogenesis between the men and ‘others’ in Australia. For these men, the wish to ‘integrate’ was not in doubt, and social recognition and shared values were enablers for initial social connections. However limited agency and a low social position made the practical and structural challenges difficult, and sometimes dehumanising, to deal with, while misrecognition and misidentification shaped the perceptions the men had about ‘mainstream Australia and their place within it. To understand these links or experiences, it is not possible to use only one framework. Instead I have discussed the findings in relation to selected aspects of the frameworks developed by Yuval-Davis (2010a) and Ager and Strang (2008). The parts and the facets discussed are not discrete and contradictions were sometimes apparent, but considering the fuzzy definitions of ‘belonging’, it seemed the most suitable approach to understand the men’s stories and what it is that shapes their sense of ‘belonging’ in Australia.

In the first section of this chapter I drew on the concept of social connections from Ager and Strang’s (2008) integration framework to understand the social recognition and the shared values the men discussed, because these can be understood as part of the process of developing belonging. The recognition and appreciation of values occurred through the social connections the men made. Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2010a) also speaks of this in her framework when she discusses the ‘ethical and political values’ as shared values that enable connections to be experienced (or those that enable barriers to be established). However, Yuval-Davis’ framework is limited, these findings suggest, in taking into account the process involved in establishing social connections, which can lead to belonging, particularly for people who are new to a space.

The second aspect that emerged from the men’s narratives was concerned with their social location and limited agency. I continued to use Ager and Strang's framework (2008) to understand what was emerging in terms of how practical barriers were explained. I argued that the limitations with their framework became evident when the men’s reasons for, and results of, the structural and practical challenges were examined. The findings indicated that it was their disadvantaged social position, combined with the men experiencing limited agency, which made it more difficult for the men to deal with structural and practical challenges, such as access to resources and achieving goals they had for themselves in coming to this new country. Hence it was not just about the practical challenges outlined in Ager and Strang. It was the experiences associated with what Yuval-Davis (2006a) called
'Social location’, that shaped how they spoke about the challenges. However, it was necessary to add that even when social location was not evident, it was the men’s limited agency, which is not explicitly identified by Ager and Strang (2008) or Yuval-Davis (2006a), that contributed to frustration and disenchantment.

The third aspect explored was concerned with how schismogenesis was experienced, understood as dialogical differences between the men and ‘the mainstream’ or other migrants. Drawing from Fraser (2000), I argue that misrecognition, or status subordination, explains some of the impediments to belonging or feeling equal as the men described. When combined with the misidentification the men experienced, and also perpetuated themselves, it exposes ideological contestation that acts as an obstacle to the men feeling they belong, or even want to belong, as Australians in Australia.

Even though belonging is often discussed in relation to social cohesion and integration (McMillan and Gray (2009), the focus on belonging should move away from these somewhat contested terms. Integration is hard to define (Castle et al. 2002) and often contains negative connotations in Australia (Jakubowicz 2009). At the same time social cohesion and belonging are sometimes assumed to be the desired result of integration (Ager and Strang 2008; Spencer 2006) and sometimes belonging is understood as one important part of social cohesion (Markus and Dharmalingam 2013). The issues with the concepts are that integration can be seen as dependent upon (or the result of) the politics of belonging that excludes or includes (integrate into something), while social cohesion can be viewed as a search for similarities, that even when well-intended, can lead to a fear of differences and reinforce the dominant culture’s coherence (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005). Hamaz and Vasta, informed by Yuval-Davis et al. (2005) explain this further: “community cohesion and integration discourse... places the ‘ethnic minority’ apart from a ‘wider society’” and this “essentialises the ethnic minority as somehow more likely to belong elsewhere than over here” (Hamaz and Vasta 2009: 11-12).

For the men in the current research the barriers are not located initially within themselves, or the ‘refugee’, but within the wider society. However, once experienced, the barriers could be reinforced by the misidentification of other ‘Australians’ or migrants. The practical and structural challenges faced by the men and the ideological contestations evident in misrecognition underscored that, even though the men were ‘integrated’ (to a degree) and did not disrupt ‘social cohesion’, they experienced a social location or gradient that positioned
them with less status and limited their agency. Javed indicated that as new-comers they are not allowed to be successful and he experienced being positioned as belonging less than other groups, while Tun’s identification of all Australians as ‘white’, indicated how such misidentification leads to barriers. Combined with the challenges of finding suitable employment, a ‘hierarchy of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012) became apparent that shaped the men’s experiences and their connections to Australia. I will expand on this in the next chapter.
Chapter 7: (Re-)conceptualising belonging

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how different experiences emerging from the men’s narratives can be understood within ‘hierarchies of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012) situating the men’s experiences of social and cultural hierarchies, within belonging (or a lack thereof). This is discussed in terms of a degree of schismogenesis (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006) within Australian society that can be understood to stem from such hierarchies.

This leads to the main argument in this chapter where I (re-)conceptualise belonging as a social justice issue, where agency and status need to be understood within a socio-historical context. I propose that the findings suggest that the barriers experienced by the men should not just be understood as barriers to an emotional attachment, but barriers to being a ‘full member in society’ (Anthias 2006). Here I draw from Nancy Fraser’s (2000) work, to argue that belonging can be further conceptualised as an ‘ideal goal’ (from Caren 1999) in a democratic and just society, hence making any barriers to belonging, barriers to social justice. This allows for the ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 1959/2000) to be utilised to think about pathways forward that can enable further – what I have termed, drawing from Fraser’s normative principle ‘parity of participation’ – ‘parity of belonging’ for groups other than the dominant group within the national (imaginary) space (Anderson 2006). I argue that ‘parity of belonging’ allows for a framework to be developed that is not tied in with ‘integration’ or ‘social cohesion’, which may be policy or task oriented, ideologically fraught (as identified in Chapter 3) or ‘top-down’, one which risks a schismogenesis because it makes assumptions about the ‘Other’ that might be unfounded.

Hierarchy of belonging

Having looked at the different facets that can be understood to influence the men’s sense of belonging in Australia, this section will first clarify how a ‘hierarchy of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012) is experienced, and also how we can approach these hierarchies. I will then discuss how it is possible to conceptualise belonging as a social justice issue, that broadens the notion of belonging as primarily an ‘emotional attachment’. Many of the barriers to belonging that
the men in this research have experienced concerning belonging to Australia are not experienced equally in society. This allows me to reflect on the findings using Nancy Fraser’s normative theories, her ‘status model’ that focuses on ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000) and argue that this re-conceptualisation provides a pathway to analyse belonging that takes into account both structural challenges and recognitive challenges, avoiding ideological discourses that surround ‘integration’ or ‘social cohesion’.

A hierarchy of belonging was explained in detail by Javed – as certain ‘identity groups’ claiming governmental belonging. This has been reported in other research even though the reasons are not explored in depth. In a report focusing on people from South-Sudan in Australia, a participant explained; “sometimes you feel less Australian when you discriminated, such as when someone thinks he is more Australian than you” (STATT 2012: 33). This comment echoes Javed’s observation, or when Tun spoke about how some white support workers’ mentalities indicated a hierarchy of belonging because they acted as if they could tell the ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum seeker’ as ‘the Other’, how to act. But a hierarchy of belonging can also exist in the sense that a person’s past experience is valued less because he or she arrived as a refugee, something I have indicated was common for these men, resulting in feeling devalued or useless.

In terms of talking about their past, most men referred to their country of origin as ‘my country’. Some also said ‘my culture’ to indicate a culture different from ‘Australian culture’. This was common for all the men, and it is important to highlight that there was no contradiction in saying ‘my country’ while wishing to be included in Australia. Instead it was said as a matter of fact, and should not be understood as a problematic and dichotomising position or of competing nationalistic allegiances (Taylor 2013). The term ‘my culture’ indicates ownership (past or present), the country mentioned belongs to the individual; it is a possessive statement relating to ‘Governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998) but from a distance. It does not seem to indicate that this is a barrier to developing attachment to Australia. Instead it is what migrants share, a past before Australia, even though all might not have a ‘home land’ or a wish to ever go back. Paul said you never forget your past; it shapes who you are and how you understand things. The issue seems to be when this type of transnational link contributes to a ‘hierarchy of belonging’ (Back et al. 2012) in society, indicating that those with transnational connections are ‘outsiders’, a potential threat to the nation because of their split allegiances. All references to ‘my country’ indicated a connection to the past and
global identity. This was the case whether the men had negative or positive comments to make about their country of origin. Prins explains this; “contrary to postmodern theories about us all becoming ‘nomads’ or ‘migrants’ with minimal and fragmented selves, an attachment to one’s ‘origins’ is important to many people’s health and well-being” (2006: 288). At the same time an attachment – or belonging – to one's new place, i.e. localised connection and recognition, is also important for one’s health and wellbeing (Caxaj and Berman 2010). The global and the local connections and experiences are mutually dependent.

A naturalised and hegemonic hierarchy of belonging has been explained as a reason behind the reactions by certain Anglo-Celtic Australians during the Cronulla riots (Noble 2009). According to Hage (2009), the Other (i.e. the non-Anglo-Celtic person) acted too much like the locals (Anglo-Celtic persons); they acted as if Australia belonged to Them. The reaction was then to ‘show’ that there was in fact a hierarchy of belonging, which according to Back et al. (2012) can act as the ‘colonial racism’ of the past or to continue ‘White possession’ of the land (Moreton-Robinson 2006). Peter, in the current research, made the direct link to the past when he carefully brought up Australia's colonial history to hint that some of that racist mentality might still exist among the White population. He then linked his experiences of discrimination to Australia's socio-historical past and the ongoing challenges concerning how much non-Whites are allowed to belong to Australia.

Australia is a privileged country in many respects, but also a country that is undergoing population changes (Ho and Jakubowicz 2014). The opportunities for different groups and different people to develop ‘equal belonging’ (Taylor and Sacks 2012) in Australia are influenced by how hierarchies of belonging are maintained, both in practice and in national myths (Elder 2007). The findings indicated that such hierarchies are indeed experienced when the men in this study said ‘they do not belong’ or cannot ‘feel completely Australian’ or not ‘100% Australian’. When some of the participants use the term ‘Australians’ to speak about the majority, they exclude themselves from wider society, regarding themselves as different, less Australian. In a multicultural society, such exclusion, whether intentional or not by the men or the mainstream, can prevent certain members from experiencing being equally valued as members of that nation or society, thus perpetuating a hierarchy of belonging.

The findings do not suggest that the men who spoke about hierarchies or contestations do not
want to integrate in the sense of being a part of the ‘wider society’ or that they want to disturb social cohesion. The participants want to integrate (if we mean ‘to participate’ and be ‘an equal member’) but on their terms, using their own skills, since not all want to mimic and become a stereotypical ‘Aussie’ or just like the ‘Anglo-Celtic’ majority. They also want to maintain some of their own cultural integrity and heritage.

Using a ‘postcolonial’ lens, and going back to the observations made by Osuri and Banerjee (2004), it is clear that the White hold on power and privilege did not go away once the White Australia policy was abolished or when multiculturalism was adopted as a policy. In other words, the ‘wider Australian society’ is still aligned with the Anglo-Celtic hegemonic culture. It has been challenged and adjusted but ‘deconstruction of dualities’ – meaning here the task to end ethnic hierarchies and divisions in society – still needs to be achieved before we can really discuss integration or social cohesion in the context of the ‘refugee process’. Bhabha explained that “[T]he universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests.” (Bhabha and Rutherford 1990: 208). I argue that the findings, particularly comments from Hassan about his connections to two cultures, support the claim that for these men, the hopeful path forward is to engage in ‘enunciative practices’ which aim to “subvert[ing] the rationale of the hegemonic moment and relocate[ing] alternative, hybrid sites of cultural negotiation” (Bhabha 1994: 178).

Hassan provided insight into how a hierarchy of belonging is not always experienced. Hassan demonstrates how a comfortable sense of self, or ‘ontological security’ (Noble 2005), can exist when there is an acceptance of a hybrid sense of self, not based on schismogenesis, but more on cosmogenesis (i.e. more in harmony or recognised similarities). Even though Hassan explained he thought that he was not like other Australians (Anglo-Celtic or White) and he noted many political problems and challenges in Australia, he was ‘at ease’ with his hybrid identity and belonging (to two ‘cultures’), which should be understood as a complex mix (an ongoing process) that has created something ‘new’ (Bhabha 1994). An Australian university education, combined with Hassan’s opinions about Australian values (as good and respectful) made him experience a stronger sense of feeling at home in Australia, and this allowed him to believe he could choose how he understands what an Australian is and reject attempts by others to establish hierarchies or hegemonic identities.

However, Hassan was clearly more positive in his outlook than some of the other men
(including older Afghans who he mentions are scared of losing *their* culture), so the question remains, how can hierarchies of belonging be explored and challenged? Anthias argues that we need to question whether there are hierarchies of belonging, ask why they exist and whether we implicitly support or endorse such barriers or hierarchies (Anthias 2006). The findings in this research suggest that the six policy areas that Anthias (2006: 29-30) identifies as necessary for social engagement are important for the men if they are to believe they are ‘full members’. The six areas, explored in chapter 4, attempt to provide a path for how to challenge hierarchical belonging, and as a result are worth discussing with the current research findings in mind. The first area that Anthias suggests is important is ‘naturalisation’, the idea that we need to ‘denaturalise differences and identities’ to reduce any hierarchy of belonging. To do this we need to continue to examine how certain socially constructed categories (such as specific cultures, ethnicity, race) are naturalised as the norm in society. I have explored how this was evident in some of the men’s references to ‘Australians’ (Akbar) or ‘White people’ (Tun) as an homogenous cultural group, which in turn supported arguments that the hegemonic group maintains its own dominance (as explored in chapter 2 ‘The contested national narrative’). These ‘naturalisations’, based on stereotypes and myths, did create a schismogenesis between the men and the dominant group (the ‘Australians’), for example when Tun said he could not say he was Australian because he was Asian and not white, despite the fact Australia contains many non-white people.

Anthias’s second policy area is ‘collective attribution’ and can be understood using an intersectional approach in order to avoid trying to reduce the men to a uniform group (as ‘refugees’ for example or ‘men’), but individuals with different challenges depending on their social location within a specific field. The third area, ‘hierarchical cultures’, was evident when Tun for example said he felt his culture was not appreciated as much as what he called the ‘Australian culture’, and Akbar when he defended his Persian culture at TAFE. Tun indicated the hierarchy prevented him from feeling he had equal opportunities and abilities to practice his culture. This is not the same as cultural relativism; instead Anthias argues there needs to be a separation between subjective cultures (my culture) and human and democratic values (which the men supported). This is the link between cultures that Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) also search for. It is worth noting that Adar did not indicate he experienced hierarchical cultures, since he did not see his Kurdish culture in opposition to the ‘freedom’ he cherished in Australia.
The fourth area, which is concerned with ‘disassociating racial and ethnic categories’ in the political space, attempts to avoid group categories that essentialise and separate groups, such as institutionalising different ethnic and cultural categories. The fifth area re-enforces that people have both ‘rights and responsibilities’ towards each other, something the men indicated they were aware of, in terms of paying taxes but also in their support for other refugees and other social justice issues. However, responsibility requires equal rights and equal capacity, which the men indicated did not always exist (I discuss this in the last sections of this chapter). Lastly, policies concerned with “[m]echanisms of accountability within institutional frameworks” (Anthias 2006: 30) means that both intentional and non-intentional discrimination and social injustices need to be redressed and adjusted for hierarchies of belonging to be challenged. These include institutional and political accountability for many of the practical and structural challenges the men spoke about, but also when ideological contestations lead to schismogenesis.

Anthias is concerned with how belonging can be maintained and equally distributed between different people and different cultures living together. The six areas provide a pathway forward in terms of policy to support equal belonging among different groups in a multicultural society. It is this she argues that can contribute to diverse people, with different cultural and religious affiliations, living together in a cohesive society. Anthias suggests that if there are barriers to belonging for some groups, then a focus on identity politics, social cohesion or integration, but also on retracting to a core culture linked to Australia’s past, is misleading. She argues it is really a question about social equality and social justice, which requires a bottom-up approach to understand how hierarchies of belonging are maintained by the dominant group and experienced by those not part of the dominant groups.

Having briefly outlined Anthias’ six policy areas for engagement to enable full membership of society and linked it to the findings, I now argue that if we use a social justice framework to understand belonging, we can use our sociological imagination (Mills 1959/2000) to position the findings within a social justice framework that does not just limit belonging to a personal or emotional attachment. In terms of the findings, it might be more appropriate to understand the link between the process of being a full member of society – which, according to Anthias (2006) is essential to developing a sense of belonging – and social equity and wellbeing.
Social justice

So far I have argued that the findings can be understood within three areas that shape the men’s experiences in Australia (drawing on the work of Ager and Strang 2008 and Yuval-Davis 2006a); social recognition and shared values; social location and limited agency; and misidentification and misrecognition. Within these areas it is possible to see different factors that shape the men’s attachment to Australia and influence their ability to develop belonging and deeper emotional attachment. The findings indicate the men all had a wish to participate in Australia, to be active, and to have the same chances as others, particularly in terms of work. May (2011) argues that to belong is ‘to feel at ease’ in a place, which I argue means that the men did not need to state they ‘wanted to belong’ or that they ‘did not belong’. Instead their comments that they faced challenges, sometimes unfair treatment or discrimination, feelings of being wasted and that ‘Australians’ are a homogenous group, positioning the men as the Others, indicated that they were not at ease and experienced being prevented from being able to participate as equals in Australia. In the men’s narratives there is also a sense that they experienced a social hierarchy in Australia, and this affected most of them as it reduced their agency and their status. I have argued that this can be understood as a ‘hierarchy of belonging’.

In this section I return to the value position stated earlier in this thesis, that all citizens of Australia should be able to develop a sense of belonging to the nation (I am here drawing particularly from Anthias 2006). This does not mean everyone wants to belong within the existing national space, if, for example, that space is perceived as unequal or discriminatory. Belonging cannot uncritically be seen as a “positive thing or ideal state” (May 2011: 373) if it requires assimilation or to become ‘the same as’ the dominant other. However, I argue, in a slight shift from the claims made by May, that the capacity to experience belonging can be understood as an ideal state and if this is not possible, social and structural change might be required. This enables me to argue that we should approach the findings in this research and the above discussion around hierarchies of belonging, however they are manifest, as barriers to social justice. This might provide us with tools to conceptualise belonging, not just to develop a new heuristic or normative framework, but also to illuminate how the challenges that were brought up by the men can be explored and tackled. The findings of this research indicate that the men do not have equal opportunities to develop (i.e. part of their ongoing social process) a sense of belonging to Australia, because they experience status
subordination with limited agency. Because of this, I argue it becomes important to focus on what I call ‘parity of belonging’, as an ideal situation, and this ought to shape how we as a nation approach national narratives, publicly and institutionally maintained myths, and cultural and political hierarchies, but also the rationales behind general settlement support and discourses regarding refugees and asylum seekers. In other words, by exploring and understanding how certain groups or individuals lack ‘parity of belonging’ it might be possible to partly contribute to the answer to Anthias’ question, “under what conditions do people with different languages, cultures and ways of life fail to live in harmony?” (Anthias 2006: 17). To focus on ‘parity of belonging’, building on Fraser’s (2000) work, I do not view social justice for this group of men as “ethnic welfare” (Ho 2013: 33) since that implies the other as ‘deficient’ (ibid), something the men in this research clearly did not see themselves as. Nor do I align it to cultural relativism, since it was not about any special treatment. Instead the men’s sense of being devalued was more about not being able to utilise the skills they have and not having equal capacity or acceptance.

As previously stated, Anthias argues that to belong one needs to feel that one is “accepted or... a full member” (2006: 19), while Fraser (2000) links ‘participation’ to being a full member in society, important for the ‘integration process’ (Valtonen 2004). Hence to work towards ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000) might be a useful way to enable ‘parity of belonging’, since belonging itself is a rather elusive notion and might emerge once a person is accepted and able to participate as an equal, even though participation lacks the emotional element that makes up belonging.

In this section I take inspiration from Nancy Fraser and her theoretical social justice work. As explained earlier, Fraser developed what she calls the ‘status model’. The status model is based on normative principles to establish ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000). I argue that the findings and the discussion so far suggest that the men had to varying degrees experienced a lack of ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser 2000) because of their relatively low social status. I have already indicated that the men spoke about both recognitive injustice (racism or feeling like an outsider) and distributive injustice (not having equal access to some resources and opportunities). For Fraser misrecognition is ‘status subordination’, a conscious move to identify the limitations of identity politics and an attempt to combine misrecognition with maldistribution. This makes it easier to examine recognition in the context of this research. Questions about identity or gender were not brought up by the men as problems for
them. Instead what was brought up were issues around ‘status subordination’ and practical and structural challenges that point towards distributive injustices (socio-economic disadvantages). To overcome this requires social and cultural changes and structural and practical support; neither one will suffice alone. Using a postcolonial lens, it requires a re-think or re-enunciation, to borrow from Bhabha (1994), of what it means to be an Australian, or a citizen of Australia, but also to consider economic redistribution and the practical support necessary to enable a person to acquire agency over their lives. Status subordination, as explained by Fraser and experienced by the participants in this research, therefore can be understood as an effective barrier to the development of belonging for newcomers.

Yuval-Davis writes:

Neither citizenship nor identity can encapsulate the notion of belonging. Belonging is where the sociology of emotions interfaces with the sociology of power, where identification and participation collude, or are at least aspired to or yearned for. Like other hegemonic constructions, belonging tends to become 'naturalized' and thus invisible in hegemonic formations. It is only when one's safe and stable connection to the collectivity, the homeland, the state, becomes threatened, that it becomes articulated and reflexive rather than just performative. (Yuval-Davis 2003: 4)

This current research and previous qualitative research (Pittaway and Muli 2009) indicates that forced migrants’ belonging in their resettled nation starts from scratch and they experience a yearning, the desire to belong, a ‘longing to be’ (Prins 2006: 288) and it is part of the ongoing refugee process (Westoby 2009). Most men in this study indicate they are in some ways ‘outside belonging’ (Probyn 1996) or outside the ‘space of commonality’ (Hage 2011), i.e. not on par with the majority, or the wider Australian community. Hamaz and Vasta do not link belonging to “cultural integration or citizenship” (2009: 7), and for the men in this current research, this was the case. Mark proclaimed he was 100% Australian, but indicated he had encountered disadvantage and status reduction when trying to find suitable work, for being a person with a refugee background. Peter explained the link to belonging:

“It is hard to feel you belong here in Australia if you feel demoted you see” (Peter)

To feel demoted, or that one’s experiences are wasted (Mark) can impact a person’s sense of
equal belonging to what Calhoun calls ‘publics’ or the hegemonic ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2006). The men in this research are aware of their own challenges and their own ‘differences’ but they deal with it in different ways. Some are accepting while others are more critical. If belonging is understood as “a basic frame of reference which relates to human need, and encompasses the many ways in which people find points of recognition in their lives” (Buonfino and Thomson 2007: 6), society cannot reduce the subject to a label or a totalising identity; it is a human need to belong, whether to a family, community, religion or a nation. However, when belonging is not developed in the ‘publics’, which I have indicated is the result of both misrecognition and maldistribution, it can affect true democratic participation (Calhoun 1999) and subsequently lead to a number of health and wellbeing issues associated with social isolation and alienation (NMHP 2010). It is thus a social justice issue.

The next section continues the discussion of the link between Fraser’s normative standard regarding participatory parity and belonging.

Parity of participation

I have argued that the findings in the current study indicate that social hierarchies perpetuate hierarchies of belonging (and vice versa) and sometimes position ‘new-Australians’ (a relative term depending on context) in a low social location with limited agency, reducing their capacity to participate. I have also argued this has to do with what Fraser (2000; Fraser and Honneth 2003) calls misrecognition and maldistribution and should not be assumed to be either/or.

Here my critical focus also aligns with postcolonial and intersectional approaches, in the sense that I argue that the socio-historical and socio-political situation in Australia cannot be separated from its colonial history. Instead this history shapes the individuals’ narratives and the nations’ narratives, but also hegemonic social hierarchies (discussed in chapter 2). Here I align with critics and scholars such as Anthias (2006), Caxaj and Berman (2010), Hall (1996), Probyn (1996), Prins (2006) but also Yuval-Davis (2006a) who focus on intersectional challenges concerning belonging and identity within a postcolonial space. By doing this, they share an anti-essentialist perspective on both identity and belonging. The anti-essentialist perspective is exemplified by Prins who writes that “our stories are multilayered and contradictory; the scripts of gender, race, ethnicity and class play a
constitutive role, but never in the same way, never as mere determining factors” (Prins 2006: 281). Prins explains that belonging is “always a precarious achievement” (ibid: 288) and as such it cannot be given to a subject and never be observed from the outside. Hence I argue that Fraser’s normative framework – ‘parity of participation’ – can be a useful frame from which to look at the findings in order to understand what it is that shapes belonging for the men, but also how to consider ways to approach belonging, since parity of participation can be understood as a prerequisite for belonging in a society.

Fraser explains that ‘the remedy for injustice [is the] removal of impediments to participatory parity” (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth 2003: 73) and this, I argue, can lead to the removal of impediments to belonging. Armstrong and Thompson (2009) explain parity of participation as being able to interact as peers in society and to do this, agency is required but also a social and political environment that does not situate people in different social locations, but instead enables equal agency. The findings indicate this has been limited or difficult for the participating men.

When Tun explained that in Australia “people [‘white people’]... address people like a migrant or refugee, if they feel they are not white” (Tun) he is referring to how people who are not white are often reduced to a label and their agency (to control how they wish to be perceived) is therefore reduced or taken away. They are differentiated and made into the ‘Other’. Judith Butler writes that we ought to be “suspicious of any and all forms of national homogeneity, however internally qualified they may be” (Butler and Spivak 2010: 32) but here it is perpetuated by the person experiencing being the ‘Other’. The narratives, constructed both by Tun and by society at large, combined with the other social and institutional disadvantages (and subordination) many of the men faced, contribute to the production of a hierarchy of belonging to the nation, which challenges not just Tun in participating as an equal but anyone who experiences that they are not ‘allowed’ or ‘able’ to belong as an equal.

Fraser writes that “misrecognition constitutes a form of institutionalized subordination, and thus a serious violation of justice.” (Fraser 2000: 114). Fraser equates recognition “as a matter of justice” (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 28) and calls this “the status model of recognition” (ibid: 29), the aim of which is “to deinstitutionalize patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it” (ibid: 30).
Here Fraser supports a sociological or postcolonial focus that aims to change “institutions and social practices” (ibid: 30) and not individual behaviour, beliefs or identities. Based on Fraser’s argument, misrecognition (or what she calls ‘status subordination’) becomes a ‘social determinant of health and wellbeing’ because it can be understood to relate to being positioned low on the ‘social gradient’; which is what the World Health Organization identifies as the most significant determinant of health and wellbeing in all societies (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003).

Even though Kamran did not indicate he could not participate, he still said “I think I could not be like an Australian”. A comment not dissimilar to those of some of the other men, indicating how they perceived some cultural values and identities as values they are unable to adopt. Some of these cultural values are explored by Elder (2007) who identifies specific cultural values, myths and practices in Australia that place barriers around belonging. It is these that the men in this research experience as an exclusive Australian identity and culture, including being ‘racist’ to the ‘other’ (as explained by Akbar).

Even though I utilise the Yuval-Davis framework to make sense of belonging, it has limitations in terms of understanding belonging for the men in this research. Yuval-Davis’ (2006a, 2011a) framework attempts to ‘simplify’ belonging, while recognising that each situation and individual differs in their emotional attachment to a place and that each requires its own case study (Yuval-Davis 2011a). My view is that the above discussions, based on the findings in this research, show that an important political project is to accept that the challenges are not about “social identities”, but instead about recognising how and why people’s status is reduced and this “is of crucial emancipatory importance” (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 201) to social justice and their ability to develop a sense of belonging. This is often not included in research reports about refugees and settlement issues that identify challenges they face. Drawing from Yuval-Davis’ and Fraser’s work, it is important to discuss the ‘patterns that foster’ the status reduction, more so than identifying the way discrimination and racism is experienced.

Fraser’s model is “not committed a priori to any one type of remedy for misrecognition” (2000: 115). Instead the remedy depends on the “parties’ needs” (ibid: 115). The path forward is to focus on the ‘objective conditions’ (social and economic barriers) and ‘intersubjective conditions’, the institutional aspects that cause discrimination (Fraser and
Honneth 2003: 36). Hence the focus needs to be on both the structural and the ideological aspects that cause schismogenesis and lead to barriers to belonging. Yuval-Davis acknowledges that the social values that shape the sociology of power (politics of belonging) are intertwined with the sociology of emotions (attachment) so the emotional attachment (belonging) cannot be separated from the experienced ideological schismogenesis (racism, dichotomising identities, status reduction and so on) and the structural and practical barriers.

“I always wanted to be part of a society... [but] this society does not allow me to do that” (Javed)

From a social justice perspective, the “existence of either a class structure or a status hierarchy constitutes an obstacle to parity of participation and thus an injustice” (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth 2003: 49). Fraser explains further; “status represents an order of intersubjective subordination derived from institutionalized patterns of cultural values that constitute some members of society as less than full partners in interaction” (Ibid: 49), evident in the quote above by Javed. Mark explained the consequence of this, that a person’s failure to have their skills and experiences recognised because they are seen as ‘less than a full partner’, “destroy too many people” (Mark). Evident in the men’s narratives about their experiences, this type of discrimination or ‘intersubjective subordination’ that prevents ‘full membership’, for whatever reasons, is not a static but a social process (Anthias 2006: 27).

Social location is more than social status; it is also “an order of objective subordination derived from economic arrangements that deny some actors the means and resources they need for participatory parity” (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth 2003: 49) and because of this Fraser focuses explicitly on maldistribution, which Honneth does not (ibid). Fraser is trying to avoid reductionism, because it will devalue class and fail to separate class and status (and the remedies for maldistribution and misrecognition), and she seeks to recognise both are interconnected. For Fraser the aim is to be transformative and not affirmative. For Bhabha this notion is important because he argued for a transformative approach to the national narrative, a re-articulation or re-enunciation of national narratives because it is these, according to Bhabha, that are contributing to hierarchies. Such re-articulation is transformative and should (ideally) lead to a (new) hybrid understanding of the nation and who can (is able to) experience belonging. However, Fraser takes this further and argues that we need to “envision social arrangements that can redress both economic and status
subordination” (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 94), not just a re-imagining of the narratives.

I have attempted to demonstrate that for the men who participated in this research, certain challenges and aspects of their experiences indicate that they do not have parity of participation because of a lack in agency and their experience of being devalued. Ager and Strang (2008) identify equal rights as important for refugees in terms of seeing themselves as equal citizens. However, the men did not frame their challenges as ‘unequal rights’. Instead the challenges had more to do with ‘unequal capacity to participate’. As Javed states, this “[Australian] society does not allow” him to participate, as an active agent. Hence, it is possible to argue that the men did not argue for equal rights, as in ‘identity politics’; instead the findings indicated the men experienced, to different degrees, ‘status subordination’ or an inability to participate on par with others. This is a crucial discovery and points towards the existence of social injustice. Fraser argues that such parties “must show that current arrangements prevent them from participating on a par with others in social life” (Fraser and Honneth 2003: 38). The findings of my research show that this is so in relation to this group of men and their experiences. However, it is not enough to just show that injustices are taking place. According to Fraser, it is essential to show that the remedy advocated will lead to ‘parity of participation’ while avoiding infringing on the parity of others. This is an important point for Fraser and it has implications for social justice claims. Here it is not about ‘my rights’ but about providing evidence for how parity of participation is limited and that a ‘remedy’ would bring about parity for all those affected, without negatively effecting any.

The aim of this research was not to provide a ‘remedy’ that would enable participation and as a result, make it easier to develop a sense of belonging. Instead it was an attempt to understand how the participating men understood their own situation in Australia and how they spoke about their life now, as Australians. In the first section I have pointed out a number of challenges the men said they have faced and are facing, but also a number of benefits and advantages they identified about living in Australia. This is not a contradiction but evidence of a very complex situation that cannot be understood as either/or. The challenges can be understood as factors that can limit the men’s experience of belonging, if belonging is seen as a fuzzy term that includes, but is not limited to, how the men experience they are able to participate and experience being equals in Australian society. Because I position belonging as an ideal goal for all in a society, I have argued it can be seen as a social justice issue. In the next section I will take Fraser’s theory and extend it to national
belonging, and argue that ‘parity of belonging’ can be a normative standard when examining belonging for this cohort of men and the challenges they spoke of. Parity of belonging might also provide alternative remedies that a focus on ‘identity or masculinities’, ‘integration’ or ‘social cohesion’ fails to acknowledge, while remaining more truthful to the men’s actual experiences.

**Parity of Belonging**

I have already shown that most men used the term ‘Australians’ when they spoke about the dominant group in Australia, and that they do not position themselves within this group. The issue seems to be when this creates a social hierarchy, such as hierarchies of belonging. Moreover, some men indicated that there are hierarchies of belonging even among migrants or non-Anglo-Celtic Australians, which positions the ‘refugee’ at the bottom. To re-cap some of the findings; Javed explained he has never worked in a typical ‘Aussie’ workplace, which to him means a ‘White Australian’ workplace, not one where migrants are working. Peter and Akbar linked certain racist elements within the larger Australian society to Australia’s colonial past, while Tun said he could not belong because he was Asian and not white European. In these narratives there are suggestions that being Australian, and that Australian culture, are both seen by the men as homogenous. This homogenisation of what is Australian is similar to the colonial narratives that link Anglo-Celtic or white European people to the term ‘Australians’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006). The men have difficulties stating they can be a genuine equal part of these cultural assumptions, despite admitting that they shared some ‘core values’ with other Australians (democracy, human rights, belief in freedom and so on). The dominant national narrative, explored in Chapter 2, has shaped these men’s perspectives or ideas about what an Australian is, based on their own experiences. It is here one can detect that some of the men do not experience a strong sense of “emotional identification” (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 529) as an ‘Australian’. For the men who did not mention such hierarchies, the challenges regarding limited status became apparent once certain practical challenges were spoken about, such as the issues that both Anton and Mark spoke about concerning employment. Once identified, these challenges could be understood using Fraser’s theory, since she focuses both on misrecognition and maldistribution to explain what it is that limits parity of participation, a prerequisite for belonging. However, I argue that parity of participation fails to take into account the desired (the ideal) emotional attachment that is at the core of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006a). Because of this I claim that the findings indicate the men do not just lack ‘parity of participation’, but ‘parity of belonging’ in Australia.
When the men said that they accepted some values or interests, but not others, they indicated a resistance to the narrow understanding of what an ‘Australian’ should be, however, this also seems to exclude them from what they understood to be an homogenous Australian culture. To resist hegemonic narratives about what it means to be a particular nationality is something that Bhabha (1994) has argued people who are not part of the dominant group (subaltern, the colonized or just marginalised) must continue to do. National identity is an ongoing process, and it changes and adjusts according to those who live within it, whether or not the colonial practices or ideology is maintained by the hegemonic group who claim ownership over the nation, or ‘Governmental belonging’ (Hage 1998). It is also precisely in this challenge, when the newcomer ‘mimics’ some of the characteristics of being an Australian, while rejecting others, that a potential homogenising identity of the nation is being undermined. This was particularly evident in Hassan’s narratives when he explained how he picks the ‘best bits’ of ‘Australian culture’, but also ‘Afghan culture’. Here Hassan displayed an example of a hybrid culture’, a ‘new culture’ that contains elements of the others.

According to Bhabha it is in the creation of the hybrid identities and cultures that a person’s agency is opened up, or can potentially be opened up. It can also indicate a new understanding, or the ‘third space’ (Bhabha and Rutherford 1990), that can pave the way for a re-articulation of the national ‘narration’ that avoids hierarchies of belonging and enables parity of belonging for different people. Here the aim for the multicultural space is not ‘integration’ or ‘social cohesion’ but equal ability to develop belonging. However, despite the resistance of the men in this research to certain homogenising forces (the rejection to be just like an ‘Aussie’) or Hassan’s creation of hybrid cultural attachments, the findings indicate that parity of belonging for the men was limited because the men experienced, or had experienced, status subordination (whether this was about finding a job or experiencing discrimination) which can be seen as the result of both recognitive challenges and distributive challenges.

Hybridity can be a pathway for parity of belonging but as noted earlier, it can also indicate a transnational identity that implies an identity across borders, or cultures, and this can position ‘identity’ as something not belonging to one nation, but to a transnational space. An issue seems to be when this is used to indicate split allegiances or reinforces difference. Hassan said he did not mind being called an ‘Afghan-Australian’ but Hassan was comfortable with his hybrid understanding of himself. For Tun an ‘Asian-Australian’ identity prevented him
from experiencing equality to non-Asian ‘Australians’. Research has explored how hyphenated national identities can indicate, or insinuate, divided alliances, particularly when given or suggested by others, for example when asked ‘where you are originally from?’ (Davis and Nencel 2011). The challenge is therefore not the transnational identity or identities, but when such transnational links are used to create schismogenesis and contribute to a hierarchy of belonging that limits parity of belonging. However, the findings suggest that the concern is only if it reduces the person’s status or abilities to emotionally connect and to participate. The men in this study often mentioned ‘my country’ to refer to their past, so the challenge is to also be able to say ‘my country’ about Australia as well, and to experience parity of belonging. The findings indicated that the challenges the men spoke about limited this ability since they perceived the challenges to be linked to their low status.

One consequence of this approach to belonging is that it requires all groups to take part in nation building (Kymlica 2001) but also to find common ground and similarities, or what Hodge and O’Carroll call ‘cosmogenesis’. The ‘new’ or the ‘third space’ cannot be achieved if cultures are seen as static and well-defined (either by the men in this research, other migrants or the dominant and hegemonic group). If the third space is outside the imagination of these groups, parity of belonging might be difficult to develop.

Inspired by Fraser’s approach, by establishing parity of belonging as a normative standard in the ongoing settlement process and the ongoing nation building, the task is to demonstrate how boundaries around belonging affect and shape certain groups of people, and to search for remedies that are transformative, not affirmative. I suggest that the findings in this research indicate that the remedy for the lack of parity of belonging for this group of men lies in both a social and structural struggle (distributive justice) and in what can be understood as intersubjective struggles (recognitive justice). Each situation demands different social and structural remedies. The social struggle needs to examine how status subordination is structurally and institutionally experienced by the parties (subjectively), and also ‘objectively’ by observing the evidence from the outside. The intersubjective struggles need to examine how certain hegemonic cultural positionings (including new and old racism) support (implicitly or not) the subordination of other groups.
Concluding remark

When faced with the crises of progress or the perils of democracy, our lessons of equality and justice are best learned from those marginalized, peripheralized peoples… rather than those imperial nations and sovereign states that claim to be the seed-beds of Democracy. (Bhabha 2003: 28)

Even though the men in this research should not be assumed to be neither marginalised or on the periphery of society, they are not part of the Anglo-Celtic group in Australia that shapes (and has shaped) much of the dominant national narrative (Elder 2007). For that reason, Bhabha’s quote above can be read as a rationale for abductive research that takes a bottom-up approach aimed at understanding the experiences of those the research concerns. This is in line with scholars such as Foucault (1980), Freire (1970), Bourdieu (1999), Said (2004) and Spivak (1988) who have all argued that value needs to be placed on the stories that ‘marginalised’ people tell – or ‘subjugated’ stories, as Foucault (1980: 81) might call them – since it is these that can inform new perspectives and how society affects people not part of the hegemonic majority. It is such perspectives that Said explained can be seen as a ‘counter-will’ to the dominant social will or what the dominant group are after; their want (Said 2004: 189) and these counter-wills can resist and contest hegemonic ‘dominant discourses’ (McPherson 2010: 549).

The men in this research did not suggest that they were passive or victims, but often their experiences in Australia led them to having to change or adjust their aims and interests once they settled in Australia, and this affected how they perceived Australia and other Australians. For some, unexpected challenges caused them to accept certain work and sometimes made them feel less able to connect with what they perceived as the ‘mainstream’, or the dominant group. If a person’s aims and interests are socially incompatible with others (for example threatening others’ human rights) or just unrealistic, they clearly need to be re-developed, but the men in this study did not propose any aims and interests that were extraordinary. Instead most arrived hopeful for a better life (where they had freedom, or safety or could be who they wanted to be), hopeful to be able to participate in society, but also with a hope to be able to continue their lives as they chose (using their skills sets or just as human individuals). Often their main aims and interests were the same aims and interests that other research has pointed out is common for men from refugee backgrounds; i.e. “to
work and participate” (Correa-Velez and Gifford 2011: 39). Drawing from Alfred Schutz, Overgaard and Zahavi explain: “[my] aims and interests decide how I experience things and people around me... these interests are mainly practical rather than theoretical (Schutz 1962: 208)” (Overgaard and Zahavi 2009: 12). This certainly seems to be the case with the men in this research.

What this research identifies is that many of the men’s experiences (both positive and negative) can be understood to influence some, or many, different facets of belonging. Using a social justice framework, these challenges can then be understood as the result of both misrecognition and maldistribution, creating the social hierarchies the men indicated they experience.

If we understand belonging as a “complex social process” (Hamaz and Vasta 2009: 22) then it is not static, it is fuzzy, fluid and continuously changing, with boundaries that need reaffirmation by those who have hegemonic control over the narratives. Sometimes this reaffirmation happens because of a fear of the other, or because of those who might challenge certain boundaries. If fed by the media or specific sections in society it can lead to moral panics about the ‘Other’ (Cohen 1972; Marr 2011). This fear then threatens unity by trying to impose boundaries around belonging, or specific projects of the politics of belonging, such as putting forward claims about the need for social cohesion. Claims, for example, alluding to the outsider as that which might disrupt such coherence, or that the ‘other’ should integrate and show loyalty to the nation and assimilate. Such ‘fears’ prevent “any meaningful inclusion or attempt to provide conditions for enabling social participation and emotional identification which lie partly in social position and social experience rather than being mechanistically produced” (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 528-529). It is such meaningful inclusion, participation and identification that the findings suggest have been, and are to some extent, difficult to negotiate for the men because of their low social position and general experiences in Australia.

The findings and the discussion in this research, about a group of ‘new Australians’ who have refugee backgrounds, suggest that belonging is impeded firstly by a lack of agency, that stems from both the practical challenges but also the social positions they are situated in. Secondly, it is also impeded by homogenising forces that portray Australian culture, or the nation, as a certain collective that the men are not a natural part of, even when they shared the
same ‘core values’ such as human rights, democracy and freedom. This is a challenge that appears not to have changed much since the time when Mark and Anton arrived in Australia in the 1990s and it produces an uncanny feeling towards Australia for some of the men.

What this research indicates is that we can initially understand that belonging for this cohort of men is influenced by three facets; ‘social recognition and shared values’, ‘social location and limited agency’, and ‘misidentification and misrecognition’. In all three facets, the findings suggest that agency is required as well as social connections and equal opportunities; not reaffirmation of an identity or ‘special treatment’ because of cultural differences. However, agency is by itself not enough because of the experienced structural and institutional challenges and ideological contestations. The most important aspect of agency seems to be concerned with what Wille wrote, referring to Maja Korac, “when there is a space for agency to develop and when agency is acknowledged, people will feel respected and willing to be part of the society” (Wille 2011: 86). When people experience status subordination, which the men indicated they did, they have agency taken away from them. It is only when people feel they are part of a society, as ‘full members’ with equal access and opportunities, that they can develop belonging in that society (Anthias 2006). Drawing from Fraser I am conceptualising belonging as a social justice issue, and I suggest the work needed is transformative, but when it comes to structures (both objective and intersubjective) it “is not easy and might not provide a quick result” (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth 2003: 78).

Fraser does not proclaim to have found a solution, but she provides a theoretical framework that can be helpful if we wish to conceptualise belonging as a social justice issue and not about ‘integration’ (into something) or one aspect of ‘social cohesion’ (desired by the Government). Armstrong and Thompson ask whether the task to find a ‘status model’ that enables parity of participation is possible (2009: 112). They argue that different categories might be on par at certain intersections while not at others, or that someone’s right means another’s lack of parity. This is an important criticism and needs to be taken into account (when suggesting a remedy) but the first step, according to Bhabha cited above, is that we need to understand and ask those who are affected what they need in order to feel equal and able to participate. In relation to this study, I have shown that most men have experiences where they did not feel they were ‘on par’ with mainstream Australians, even though they might have experienced being on par in their social, local or ‘ethnic community’. The explained challenges did not always mean they were not successful or had not ‘integrated’
Kamran spoke about being aware of all the opportunities Australia has given him, but it did not stop him from talking about difficulties facing refugees settling in Australia, or to say he did not accept all ‘Australian’ social values) or that the men disrupted or challenged ‘social cohesion’, or asked for culturally relativistic treatment.

This research does not provide any final answers but it is a path to “contingent practices” (Sahgal 2006: 220) that aims to continue with the re-narration of the nation so that ideological and cultural differences do not lead to schismogenesis. There is no evidence in the findings that this requires any capitulation of what can be seen as core values in Australia, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and equality. Instead it is hierarchies or preferential treatment, or assumptions about belonging or attachments, that ought to be questioned, highlighted and transformed. This is to re-imagine the nation and expand the criteria about who is included. It does not attempt to question the nation state society, even though others have done so when discussing migration (Wimmer and Schiller 2002), because the current research focuses on the men’s experiences today and the nation state will not disappear in the near future. In fact, some argue it is required for ‘good global citizens’ to develop (Kymlicka and Walker 2012). However, it could suggest a challenge to the idea that Australia is ‘West’, since it is difficult to separate ‘West’ from European or even ‘White’ in the sense that Moreton-Robinson (2006) and others in Whiteness studies use the term. The solution seems to lie in the dismantling of different contestations, which most likely have to involve abrogating the dichotomising West and East discourses, the Developed and under-Developed, White and Black, but also any stereotypes that cause divisions. The true socially just nation ideally cannot perpetuate a hierarchy of cultural ideologies and practices. Instead it must embrace its collective makeup and shared values that should not be given a ‘cultural’ stamp. Here Australia has a history, but it is a hybrid history (and since white settlement always has been), anchored to multicultural spaces that need to be recognised.

To encourage parity of participation, which will be required for any parity of belonging, I argue that the corpus of data in the current research supports Anthias when she claims that “organisation on the basis of identities appears problematic, whilst organisation on the basis of struggles and solidarity formation appears more useful” (2006: 29). This can allow for hybrid belonging to the nation to emerge, or different cosmopolitan belonging, for social groups with different cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds. However, only if it enables ‘cosmogenesis’ to develop, not ‘schismogenesis’ (Javed spoke about cosmopolitan belonging
as something in opposition to Australian belonging). It is indeed the call Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) make in their book; to find a positive path forward that is inclusive and transformative, echoing both Fraser and Bhabha. I concur and add that the men in this research provided insight into their experiences and allowed me to take Fraser’s theoretical model and argue that a significant social justice goal should be to encourage a space that enables parity of belonging. This requires that new Australians, from refugee backgrounds, are recognised as full members of society, which means that effort needs to be focused on allowing their past to be accepted as experiences they have as new Australians and not something they had as ‘a refugee’ (that can be forgotten now they are legal Australians). Finally, participating as equals on the socio-economic field, the socio-political field and the socio-cultural field is essential. How that is best achieved is an ongoing task that must start with the assumption that the men are active agents in their own lives. The findings suggest that forced migrants, such as these men, experience low social location when they arrive, which combined with a lack of language skills and unacknowledged experiences, has to be seen as relating both to maldistribution and misrecognition. If this is tackled, it is likely to contribute to the men being able to feel more included and equal, and not as existing outside boundaries created by specific politics of belonging. The result would be the achievement of parity of belonging.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Aim and questions

The current research started with a value position that all people who are living in Australia should *ideally* be able to develop ‘a sense of’ belonging in Australia. From this, two general aims were developed. The main aim was to contribute to understanding what is influencing ‘belonging’ for a group of Australian men who have refugee backgrounds. Here I equate belonging with an emotional attachment aligned with feeling ‘at home’, being safe and to be able to participate and to feel included (Anthias 2006; Hage 2002; Hamaz and Vasta 2009; Ignatieff 1995; Taylor 2009; Yuval-Davis 2011a). The second aim, inspired by Mills’ (1959/2000) ‘the sociological imagination’, was to (re-)conceptualise how ‘belonging’ can be understood and approached for this group of men, and similar cohorts of men, since belonging is not a clearly defined concept in the migrant and refugee literature.

It is with this understanding and positioning in mind that my thesis question was developed:

What influences belonging in Australia for men from refugee backgrounds?

From this the following secondary questions emerged:

*What facets of belonging can be extrapolated from the men’s narratives about their experiences in Australia?*

*When talking about different (dis-)connections and (non-)attachments to Australia, what do men from refugee backgrounds discuss?*

*How is it possible to (re-)conceptualise and understand belonging for men from refugee backgrounds living in Australia?*

Contribution to knowledge

The results of this research have revealed several factors that shape how a group of men from refugee backgrounds understand, and experience, connections and attachments to Australia and other Australians. Many of these affect how much the men are ‘at ease’ and feel ‘at
home’ in Australia, as an Australian, but also how much they are able to participate and experience being a ‘full member’ of society. These are all experiences the literature identifies as aspects, or facets, of belonging. In terms of these experiences, the main findings show that whatever the challenges are, the most problematic aspects from the men’s points of view are associated with experiencing lack of agency and a social position with reduced status. The participating men indicated that lack of agency and status reduction are overarching factors that shape their experiences (whether practical or ideological). The lack of agency and status reduction revealed to the men the social hierarchies in Australia that make it difficult for them to achieve what they want (find a job or study for example), signifying that as men from refugee backgrounds, they are not on par with other social groups in society. In other words, I argue that these experiences prevent, or problematise, the men’s abilities to develop a ‘sense of belonging’ in Australia and to claim they are ‘Australian’. The main contribution to knowledge does not lie in the identified practical challenges (such as challenges associated with employment or language) or the experienced ideological contestations (such as racism or discrimination), since these have been identified before, but that these challenges reinforce and perpetuate the men’s limited agency and their reduced status. This shapes their disenchantment, or frustration, in trying to ‘fit in’ or to participate in Australia as one of many Australians.

What the findings indicate is that the value position underpinning this current research is not a reality; the men experience hierarchies of belonging, affecting their ability to connect with Australia and other Australians. Arguing that belonging should be understood as a social justice issue, the insights from the findings and the hierarchies experienced contribute to the (re-)conceptualisation of belonging as an ideal normative principle that I termed ‘parity of belonging’, in direct reference to Nancy Fraser’s normative principle ‘parity of participation’. Such conceptualisation does not just view belonging as socially important, but it provides a pathway for how to consider experiences regarding belonging for various cohorts of men from non-English speaking backgrounds (whether refugees or not), in a way that makes discussions concerning gender, identity, integration and social cohesion less central, as notions shaping policy or support. The arguments supporting ‘parity of belonging’ are not necessarily unique, but the idea of articulating an ideal normative principle for men from refugee backgrounds, has not previously been proposed.
Final reflections

As a normative ideal, parity of belonging can provide an indication about how to examine barriers; practical barriers, such as challenges regarding employment but also barriers linked to discrimination or racism. I argue that the findings indicate that to sense that one’s past experiences are ‘wasted’ or to experience that one is not able to use the skills one has, is not just about failing to find work. It is to be misrecognised and unable to feel like an ‘equal Australian’ or a ‘full member’ of society. In other words, to aim for ‘parity of belonging’ is to open up the space for participation, which might then encourage and enable the development of a broader sense of belonging in Australia. It is this attachment that can enable a degree of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ (Kymlicka and Walker 2012) because it allows for a strong sense of national identity but also hybrid belonging, which is shaped by a sense of equity for, and connection to, people outside the nation’s borders. Parity of belonging is also a framework that will provide tools to examine ‘civic nationalism’ (Ignatieff 1995) that fits in with the multicultural reality that is Australia. In other words, parity of belonging allows a person to feel safe, at home, and part of one society, while at the same time being able to be a concerned and caring global citizen, with transnational links, connections or obligations, which many of the men in this research indicated they had, whether or not they were ‘global breadwinners’ or with a ‘home land’ they still yearned or cared for.

Australia is a multicultural nation, with a distinct but complex history. The Indigenous heritage and the colonial history sit with this multicultural migrant history, all shaping what Australia is now. Pearson writes that this is the reality “no matter how much white Australians might want to ignore it or black Australians might want to reject it” and the “future must be one of mutual recognition” (Pearson 2014: 55). In other words, all people in Australia need to be able to sense that they belong here as much as everyone else. It is this that can establish a ‘cosmogenesis’ (Hodge and O’Carroll 2006).

According to Stuart Hall, the ongoing and unstoppable multicultural drift (Hall and Back 2009) is due to globalisation and global migration, and as a result it has become urgent to understand what Hall calls the ‘multi-cultural question’ (Hall 2000). This question asks, what is it that makes people from different places and cultures able to live together? Anthias (2006) turns this question around and asks, what is it that makes people not able to live together? By doing this she links the question more directly to what the ‘politics of
belonging’ is about; the maintenance of boundaries (Yuval-Davis 2006a). Yuval-Davis explains that often it is only when a persons’ belonging becomes threatened that it is articulated, otherwise it remains taken for granted. For Anglo-Celtic Australians belonging can be ‘natural’ in Australia and their culture is understood as the ‘norm’; it is assumed that others need to ‘fit into’ (Elder 2007). But for migrants and refugees settling in Australia, belonging is something that has to gradually grow within them, and what this research has explored is how the men experience social and cultural hierarchies, which prevent a strong sense of belonging. Hence any effort to examine this is urgent and vital, not just for social cohesion, for the social wellbeing of all people who live in the community.

The findings do not suggest it is more important to support men rather than women, or to accept a patriarchal ideology or cultural relativism, but what the findings do indicate is that men from refugee backgrounds want is equal opportunities with others in society, and that might require additional support and targeted services.

The findings in this research do not challenge claims made about Australia’s ‘world leading’ resettlement support (Pittaway and Muli 2009) but by developing a normative framework – parity of belonging – the possibility is opened up to use Fraser’s (2000) work to explore pathways that can ultimately enable ‘an emotional attachment’ to Australia. Ager and Strang (2008) explain that belonging can be understood as the ultimate benchmark for integration, and therefore parity of belonging can bring a new normative ideal into the dialogue about settlement and integration, but also about social cohesion.

Parity of belonging opens up the space for a future imagining. It breaks down schismogenesis associated with ‘autochthonic’ approaches (Yuval-Davis 2011c) or an enforced or implied ‘space of commonalities’ (Hage 2011). It allows for an enunciation of the future that is more inclusive and equitable. It does not, in the same way as Fraser’s ‘parity of participation’ does not, contain any remedies for non-parity or non-belonging. However, by providing a framework, it can be easier to understand what it might be that enables, or disables, parity of belonging to be experienced.

The research did not explore issues that are associated with representative justice, which Fraser explains, in relation to feminist politics, is separate from recognitive and distributive justice (Fraser 2008), because this did not come up in the discussions with the men. However,
it is something further research might be able to explore in relation to men from refugee backgrounds and other immigrants. For example, how specific groups who have resided in Australia for a longer time connect with, or claim allegiance to, their political representatives and how that might relate to, or be influenced by, transnational injustices and specific intersectional categories, such as ethnicity, religion or gender.

Finally, this research journey should end with a note about how this experience has allowed me to engage with writers and academics whose work I drew heavily from, and I can only hope that this demonstrates a sincere appreciation of their work. I also wish to state that the voices I am listening to in this research – the men’s voices – have been used with much respect and care. If any of the men read this research, I hope they would be satisfied that their participation was not in vain, and that their insights and experiences were important to developing an understanding of ‘belonging’ for ‘new’ Australians. Experiences regarding belonging are subjective, but the conditions for belonging to be experienced can be provided. To do this, this current research has outlined how both misrecognition (status subordination) and maldistribution (the economic and structural barriers) which the men spoke about, have to be identified, challenged and ultimately changed. It is then that ‘parity of belonging’ can be achieved.
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Appendices
Appendix 1: Brief historical overview

Introduction

Any brief historical overview will always fail to communicate the nuanced and sometimes contradictory realities that are behind a nation’s histories and the multiple narratives that have shaped those histories. Despite the challenges and multiple interpretations about Australia’s history I argue it is important to provide a brief historical overview, particularly for readers not familiar with Australia’s colonial past and how this is shaping ongoing contestations around Australia’s national identity.

The British Colonisers and Terra Nullius

What is modern day Australia was colonised by the British in the late eighteenth century, after the first fleet arrived in 1788. Initially Australia was used as a place to send convicts from Great Britain and Ireland. During this time, Britain, with the help of the first settlers (convicts and others), claimed ownership of Australia. Migration followed, in the modern sense of the word, to fill the vast continent with mainly Europeans and to build up a ‘settler society’ that could mirror the British society, a task not without its problems or challenges (Hughes 1988; Keneally 2007).

In 1788, Indigenous people lived all around the Australian continent, in different tribes or nations and with different languages and cultures. In that sense there was no ‘Australia’ as a country before the British; only ‘Australia’ as a landmass, a continent with many Indigenous nations. ‘Australia’, meaning the land where people walked upside down, was a creation of the British colonial powers; who viewed Australia as a new part of the British Empire.

To justify the occupation of Australia and the colonial claim to the land, Australia was portrayed as ‘terra nullius’, an unoccupied land, and a space no one owned, to be taken by those who found it. The Indigenous people had limited rights and little resources to repel the

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12 See for example Clark and Ashton (2013) edited book Australian history now which provides different angles on Australia’s history and what it means for the future.
British colonial powers. While the colonial government tried to control immigration from non-British and non-European nations, the Indigenous population were systematically denied any real recognition, as people or as Australians (which until 1901 meant being British). The culture the British (but also the Anglo-Celtic convicts) brought along are still part of what some call the ‘core culture’ of Australia (Dixon 1999) or the most hegemonic and dominant culture in the Australian nation even today (Jupp 2002).

The colonial wars that were fought by the Indigenous population against the invaders have sometimes been overlooked in terms of the national narrative and not seen as a war of defence against invading colonial powers. Instead the colonisers are represented in most history books as the first settlers, occupying a land that was not yet a coherent and modern nation. Henry Reynolds writes how the war that was fought against the invaders by Indigenous Australians is a ‘forgotten war’ (Reynolds 2013). This is a continued contested experience. For example, Australia Day is celebrated on 26 January, the day when the first fleet arrived in 1788, which for some Indigenous people can be understood as the start of the colonisation, an ‘invasion day’, and as such the day is not a celebration for all Australians.

The first migrants

The colonial Government in Australia started to develop new colonies, spread their control over the landmass, and expand the empire. Britain used convicts who could serve their sentences by working and who were later released to settle the new nation as free men and women (Hughes 1988). It was an efficient method to provide the numbers for Anglo-Celtic settlers to occupy more and more of the colonial land, however, eventually more working power was needed and many migrants from outside the British isles were allowed to come to Australia to work if they fulfilled certain criteria. It is worth noting that despite this, and the gold rushes in the late 1800s that attracted Chinese migrants, in “1939, only 2 per sent of the non-Indigenous population was not of Anglo-Celtic ancestry” (Neumann 2004: 16).

Reading the early history, the non-European migration to Australia seemed to be mostly based on commercial needs and opportunities; while a clear racial ideology was prevailing.

[In 1891] Asian and Islanders comprised around 50,000 people among a population of more than 3 million but nevertheless, by the 1890s, the overwhelmingly predominant
British population, supported by other Europeans, had engendered a national racial ideology that underpinned Australian immigration policy for the next seventy years or so. (Vrachnas et al. 2005: 9)

The British had to negotiate the challenges that they faced as a colonial power, some that Lawson argues led inevitably to violence between the British colonisers (who did not necessarily share the British Government’s approach or attitudes) and the Indigenous population, even when the initial intent might have been benign (Lawson 2014). Many of the challenges the colonisers faced are factors taken into account in modern immigration policies; such as how to deal with work shortages, family issues, decent working conditions for new and vulnerable migrants and general challenges facing new arrivals (Vrachnas et al. 2005).

Eventually, decisions made about approaches to the colony were not coming from Britain; instead they were made in the Australian colony. This paved the way for local rules and local control of who was accepted. Despite this, Jupp writes: “Australian immigration policy over the past 150 years has rested on three pillars; the maintenance of British hegemony and ‘white’ domination; the strengthening of Australia economically and militarily by selective mass migration; and the state control of these processes” (Jupp 2002: 6).

An example of how the state controlled these processes concerned Chinese immigrants. In 1861, 40,000 Chinese people lived in Australia (Vrachnas et al. 2005: 5) where a “blatant anti-Chinese sentiment” was growing (Ibid: 6). A number of different practices were put in place to control the Chinese immigration and Chinese peoples rights in Australia. In 1861 for example, the Chinese were briefly denied the right to naturalisation in NSW (Ibid: 7) and even though this changed, the Anglo-Celtic dominance has been maintained by allowing migrants from Great Britain and later New Zealand to be the largest migrant group in Australia.

Klaus Neumann argues that the resettlement of refugees was based on commercial and national needs and opportunities and not because of purely humanitarian reasons.

[The] Chifley and Menzies governments believed that Australia needed to significantly increase its population and thus its migrant intake, because the IRO [International
refugee Organisation] provided transport at a time when shipping capacities were scarce. (Neumann 2004: 105)

In other words, the acceptance of refugees were based on Australia’s needs, not the refugees’ individual needs. Neumann therefore writes that “Australians ought to be less proud of their country’s record than has generally been the case” (Ibid: 11). He does not advocate people should slander the past, but be honest and historically factual.

Immigration Restriction Act 1901 - White Australia Policy and Assimilation

The Immigration Restriction Act from 1901, when Australia had just become a Federation, was a document that explicitly set out to dictate who should and could become an Australian. It was the ‘White Australia Policy’. It was a policy that was underpinned by racial hierarchy that positioned the British culture above all others and subsequently ‘white’ people above the rest. The argument from the nationalists perspective was based on the fear that people with different cultures and appearances would not be good for the nations cohesion, and might even threaten the British cultural dominance and lead to racial conflicts. Hence the aim was to maintain British dominance and ensure that Australia remained ‘White’ (Jupp 2002).

The White Australia policy did not use explicit racial criteria; instead literacy was used to cull potential immigrants. The act identified six categories from which immigrants could be prohibited; the poor, the insane, the diseased, the criminal and immoral and those who did not pass the dictation test when asked to do one. This test required a prospective immigrant to write fifty words dictated by an officer, in a European language selected by the same officer. After 1909 no person who was asked to do the test passed. It was amended many times and remained in use until 1958.

The policy was used effectively to control immigrants from certain areas without being explicitly racist. When certain groups became dominant, or caused ‘trouble’ (for example by forming unions or demanding equal rights) and were subsequently perceived as a threat to the dominant group, the number of immigrants from that place could be curbed. For the dominant group, it was a tool in protecting a cultural cohesion and a cultural hierarchy, for as Vrachnas et al. (2005) explains the cultural ideology was inherently fragile and demanded protection from outside forces that could challenge it.
The ‘White Australia policy’ was a significant policy that could be seen as protecting Australia’s sovereignty based on the Anglo-Celtic majority sensing they had ‘Governmental Belonging’ to Australia; which Hage (1998) explains is experienced as having ownership over the nation and what the nation should look and act like. This has continued for the ‘white population’ according to Hage, despite multiculturalism. In this narrative, Indigenous Australians were allowed to exist, but the nation was not theirs. The aim with the ‘White Australia policy’ was for others to not just assimilate but also acculturate with the dominant culture, to become like the Anglo-Celtic majority and adhere to the dominant cultural values, ethics and ways of being. Hence for a newcomer, the preferred aim would be to melt in and become unnoticed; to be just like all the others. Conservative critics of multiculturalism argue that acculturation is preferable for social cohesion since it is in the interest of the majority, even though it constructs a cultural hierarchy (Collins 1991).

The assimilation goal was eventually altered and in the 1960s ‘integration’ became the official policy and new approaches started to develop. At this time, race issues were brewing in both South Africa and the United States. In 1962 the Menzies Government granted voting rights to ‘Aborigines’ (as they were referred to at the time) in the Australian Federal Election and in 1965, ‘Aborigines’ could vote in all State Elections without restrictions. It was at this time that the Holt Government, conducted a referendum in 1967, granting ‘Aborigines’ the right to be counted in the national census. In that regard Indigenous Australians were finally perceived as ‘Australians’, even though it was non-Indigenous Australians that ‘gave’ them that right. The times pushed for change and new claims argued that immigrants should not need to abandon their original culture in order to become Australian. Officially the White Australia Policy was not completely abandoned until 1973 by the new Whitlam Government. Before this date, many amendments were made, sometimes to satisfy anti-racist movements both in Australia and overseas (Vrachnas et al. 2005).

The significance of the White Australia Policy for this thesis is the argument that the ideological basis for the policy that placed British or ‘Western’ culture as the hegemonic culture of Australia remained and in many ways continued to remain after 1973 (Fitzgerald 2007). In other words, during the White Australian Policy “Australia and Australian-ness were defined as White... [and] to this day, there is a (too) common perception that Australian-ness is linked to Whiteness” (Nelson and Dunn 2013: 260). Fitzgerald makes the comment that even today ‘Chinese Australians’ see themselves as Chinese, while the whites are
‘Australians’, he explains that the “Cultural legacy of White Australia is powerful and persistent” (Fitzgerald 2004: 5). A claim supported by Hodge and O’Carroll (2006) who argue that no one is ‘just Australian’. In other words, the ideology never left. It has been identified in later writings about ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’ in Australia and criticism towards Multiculturalism as a policy that potentially threatens the Anglo-Celtic core culture. For example, Blainey (1984) argued against immigration from Asia on those grounds and Dixon (1999) argued that the Anglo-Celtic core culture should be maintained and cherished. Windschuttle (2004) defended Australia’s immigration policies on similar grounds, that they were in place to prevent a clash of contradictory cultures, in other words the policies were needed to maintain social cohesiveness. These writers perceived that there was a growing ‘black-armband’ view of history being developed, which primarily focused on all the wrongdoings of the past. Windschuttle (2002) argued that the facts underpinning this historical view were in fact ‘fabrications’. Conservative historians on the other hand have been accused by more progressive writers (or with self-proclaimed ‘black armbands’) as having ‘white blindfolds’ (Clark 2013: 157), having ‘whitewashed’ history (Manne 2003) or being the result of ‘European historiography’ (Attwood 2005). This dichotomising historical understanding underpins ‘The History Wars’ that demonstrates the contested nature of how the national narrative ‘ought to be’ told but also the polemic arguments put forward by both sides (Clark 2013; Pearson 2014).

Fitzgerald (2007) argues that the claim that restricted immigration policies was needed for social cohesion was a ‘big white lie’. Fitzgerald’s research focuses on ‘Chinese Australians’ and their experiences during the White Australia policy, and he rebuts many of Windschuttle’s claims about a clash of culture. Fitzgerald identifies how many of the ‘Chinese Australians’ during the White Australia policy period were sympathetic towards the liberal and democratic culture that existed in Australia; they were not Maoists intent on destroying the ‘White culture’. But as a group they were often excluded and missing from historical narratives. For example they are not given much prominence when historians such as Windschuttle or Blainey look back and writes about ‘Australians’ during this time and ‘Australian culture’ or ‘Australian achievements’.

Despite changes from the White Australia policy to multicultural acceptance, which has made Australia one of the most multicultural societies in the world, Jupp writes Australia is “still much more a ‘British’ society than either Canada or the United States in terms of origins... Its
social, intellectual, business and political elites are still overwhelmingly of British origin” (2002: 5-6). Whatever the exact numbers are, the point seems to be that Australia is still very much aligned to its British past, partly because of Anglo-Celtic dominance in terms of population, it is still part of the British monarchy, but also because the political and legislative system is built upon the Westminster system.

It is within this contested national space that the men in this research have settled into.
Appendix 2: Raw Data

The story using the men’s narratives

Introduction

This section tells a version of the story that emerged from the narratives and the ethnographic research. It presents the ‘raw data’, organised into themes and subthemes. Following on from Blaikie (2007) the aim is to allow the data to tell a ‘story’ and to give voice to the participant’s own focus, words and selected narratives (i.e. stories and examples they told). Because this is important I have included this entire section in this appendix. In Chapter 6 and 7, I re-visit the narratives, but through the theoretical lenses described in Chapter 4, in order to understand what influence and shape the men’s sense of belonging in Australia, and to Australia, but also how to conceptualise belonging for this group of men.

This chapter is structured around the six key themes emerging from the data; ‘the journey’, ‘support and services’, connections and participation’, disconnections and disenchantment’, ‘beliefs, values and identification’ and ‘employment’.

First, the men are introduced. The descriptions do not contain many details about their personal lives, since this was not what was asked; instead the purpose is to provide some background information that can be helpful when reading their comments. Some of the men did not talk about their journey to Australia, or whether they arrived with friends, so details about their visas or pathways to Australia did not come about. However, when the men did speak about their time in detention, I have indicated that they spent time in detention. The men’s ages are estimates, and should only be read as such. For some of the men, it is important to be aware of their ethnic identification, so when this is the case, I have indicated how they identify themselves. The men’s names have been changed and any associations, whether cultural or religious, are not intentional.
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The participating men

*Adar* is in his mid 20s. He identifies as a Kurdish person, originally from Iran. He arrived around 2007, without family and spent time in an Australian Detention Centre.

*Akbar* is in his early 40s. He is originally from Iran. He arrived in early 2000s, without family and he spent a significant time in an Australian Detention Centre.

*Anton* is in his late 60s. He identifies as an Assyrian person, originally from Iraq. He arrived with his family in the 1990s.

*Baraz* is in his mid 40s. He is originally from Iran and arrived around 2008, without family and he spent time in an Australian Detention Centre.

*Hassan* is in his early 20s. He identifies as a Hazara person, originally from Afghanistan. He arrived with family in the mid 2000’s.

*Javed* is in his mid 30s. He is originally from Iran. He arrived in the early 2000s, without family and he spent 6 months in an Australian Detention Centre.

*Kamran* is in his mid 30s. He identifies as a Hazara person, originally from Afghanistan. He arrived in the early 2000s, without family and he spent time in an Australian Detention Centre and later on a TPV (Temporary Protection Visa).

*Mark* is in his late 60s. He identifies as an Assyrian person, originally from Iraq. He arrived with his family in the 1990s.

*Paul* is in his late 60s early 70s. He identifies as an Assyrian person, originally from Iraq. He arrived with his family around 2007.

*Peter* is in his 40s. He is originally from Sudan and he arrived in the early 2000s.

*Tun* is in his early 40s. He identifies as a Karen person, originally from Burma (Myanmar). He arrived around 2006, without family.

*Zaw* is in his late 40s. He identifies as a Karen person, originally from Burma (Myanmar). He arrived with his family in the early 2000s.

**Theme 1: The journey**

This theme relates to narratives about the refugee journey (understood as a process), which includes expectations before arriving, the knowledge the men had about Australia before they came, their first experiences and first challenges.

There are two main paths the men interviewed for this project experienced coming to Australia. Eight arrived as already pre-recognised refugees, via either UNHCR run refugee camps or directly through Australian humanitarian program. The other five men arrived as ‘uninvited’ asylum seekers, or what media and many politicians have referred
to as ‘boat people’ or ‘illegals’ (Darcy and Bolzan 2006). All men were eventually considered genuine refugees and provided with a permanent visa and subsequently allowed citizenship. As explained in the methods chapter, I did not ask specific questions, such as why they left their country or origin, or how they arrived to Australia, however some men initiated this. Kamran sums up the challenge that faces anyone who leaves his or her country of origin:

*Displacement is really difficult for people, because you leave your country, your culture, everything behind to come here and everything here is different so you really start from zero... (Kamran)*

Only a couple of men spoke about the journey to Australia. Baraz was the only one who mentioned the boat trip to Australia, however, from previous conversations I knew three of the other participating men had taken a similar journey but did not take this up during the interview. Baraz said the journey took him 12 days and he laughed when he explained that despite the fact he had been a soldier in Iran, the boat journey was much more dangerous. Instead of providing an account of the journey, Kamran indicated it is not a journey someone embarks upon without a reason, he just stated; ‘it wasn’t really easy to come to Australia in the first place’ (Kamran). Often the men spoke about the fact refugees have few opportunities and their lives are often in danger.

**In search of a safer place and opportunities**

A refugee by definition is someone who has limited choice and is forced to migrate because of a genuine fear of persecution or harm. Among this cohort the definition of a refugee was explained in different ways but it was ultimately about a lack of choice, whether the men were poor, escaping war or for other reasons (a few men did not tell me their reasons):

*A real refugee, very poor people, the live in camp, they die in camp, they can’t get out... no one going to help them... (Zaw)*

*A refugee is not just because they bomb somewhere or there is, you know, a war going on... (Javed)*

*We just need to understand, a refugee actually is someone who maybe forcibly left his country of origin to reasons of, which can be like related to war for example,
related to insecurity…. So sometimes we need to look at refugees does not have choice sometimes like a migrant (Peter)

The following quotes are examples of five different experiences that ultimately led to the men becoming refugees. They all have the similar aim of finding a place that is safe:

I was an engineer in telecommunications... So when there was Gulf War... we fled, because I have two kids with me... So I don’t like anything happening to them, I have only two kids, so I took my wife, we fled to Turkey. (Anton)

I lived there on Thai side, small town... My family staying there. Only me going into jungle... Very tough, very dangerous. Any time you can die... But after the Burmese Government troops come to our headquarters they take my pass so I am illegal in Thailand... (Zaw)

Long time wars... We want peace... everything being destroyed in war. War is bad, you know, so... we became refugee... (Mark)

I went to jail many times... I went to jail for two years when I was walking with my girlfriend... this is Haraam. When I free, of jail, I went home and I said to my father; I can’t live in Iran, my situation is different (Adar)

If I was in Iran, kill me.... After tomorrow, memory for my brother, 19 years ago they killed him, Police, Government killed him.... Big problem in Iran... I love Iran.... But I can’t live there. I can’t go back to Iran (Baraz)

The first three quotes are by men who arrived in Australia with their families as humanitarian refugees. The last two quotes are by two men who arrived on boats as asylum seekers. Both men arrived without their families and were later accepted as refugees and given permanent visas.

Expectations and previous knowledge about Australia

I asked the men to tell me something they knew about Australia before they arrived and what their first impressions where. Sometimes the refugee journey is not planned long in advance and some made it clear they never expected to ever find themselves in Australia:
I never thought that one day I would be living in Australia... it’s just something that happened (Javed)

Someone said if you like you can go to Australia. He said to me Australia is a good country, you can’t see any racism in Australia (Adar)

Some of the men had very limited knowledge about Australia before they arrived.

I did not know about Australia, I just knew danger for me in Iran. (Baraz)

I did not know anything about Australia, I just wanted to leave Iran... (Adar)

Javed, who spent time in an Australian Detention Centre, said he was like a representative of people of the same age from his country of origin:

I am sure a lot of people would agree with me they have no idea about Australia (Javed)

Even Hassan, whose father had arrived five years earlier, explained that he did not know much:

I did not know much about Australia. Only at school we used to study a subject called geography... I did not know anything about the political system or the many culture (Hassan)

I was aware that Hassan’s father had been working on an Australian farm while on a TPV (Temporary Protection Visa) so I asked what he told Hassan about Australia before he arrived. Hassan said his father mainly told them about the different fruits and food in Australia. He did not mix with many Australians and he did not see much of the country since he worked hard to make any money he could, in case he was rejected and had to leave Australia.

Peter, who was born in Sudan, but worked as a UN professional in Egypt at the time when he applied to come to Australia as a Humanitarian Entrant, explained:

Although we know about Australian geography... I did not deeply understand the challenges that where here before, the indigenous people and how the British
developed the first settler... their perception of other people and developing their policies (Peter)

It was only once he was settled that Peter became conscious of Australia’s past. The comment indicates a lack of previous knowledge or any extensive preparation in terms of arriving to Australia. No one spoke about any information they received or the benefits of such information; instead Australia was seen as a safer place.

Paul, one of the older participants from Iraq, arrived in Australia when he was 55. He applied for a humanitarian visa in Italy. He had many members of his family in Australia already at this time and he told me, “I am the last one” to arrive. Paul therefore had some knowledge of Australia before he arrived:

First Experiences

For two of the men, Zaw and Hassan, who received their visas before they arrived, it was a culture shock to arrive. Zaw who lived for a year and a half in a UNHCR safe camp on the Thai / Burma border arrived to find a place very different from his previous life:

*Everything changes when we come here... different culture, different speak, language (Zaw)*

For all men, the challenges were the same in terms of learning a language, negotiating a new culture, and learning how Australia works. This can prevent a person from feeling they are ‘at home’. Hassan explains how he experienced this difference:

*When we arrived we did not feel like we are at home. Like I say, everything was different. We no feeling comfortable and that was a big problem (Hassan)*

For Hassan, the difference was between his previous country, Afghanistan and Australia, but for others it is their preconceived ideas about Australia that is challenging. Javed who said he did not know much about Australia arrived to find a place very different than the one he imagined:

*I was shocked kind of. I mean… I had a totally different image... To come here... I have been living in Malaysia and it was totally different cities from where I were growing up. With a bit more modern, with tall buildings, so I was thinking, okay, if*
that is Malaysia... Okay Australia must be more modern, but coming here and seeing single story building and very old kind of building... It was no fancy kind of city... (Javed)

For Anton the first experiences were of the challenge to negotiate the desire (and expectations) to learn new things with the need to make money and survive:

_I tried very hard, I did too many courses here.... I give it up, I say to myself, I am staying here, it is not the end of the world, I think of another way. It is not my field but I am trying another way to keep my self happy and to keep my family happy_ (Anton)

One major difference between the men who arrived with a humanitarian visa and the men who spent time in detention is that the men who spent time in detention spoke about detention as a very negative first experience. These experiences are included below.

**Experiences from Detention Centres and Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)**

The five men who arrived in Australia as asylum seekers and therefore had to apply for refugee status in Australia, spent different amount of times in a Detention Centre, ranging from years to six months. This was an experience that they indicated was extra challenging and it continues to be something they speak very negatively about. For all the men in this research who had been in detention, this experience exposed them to a process they still found very unfair and unjust. Javed who arrived 14 years ago spoke vividly about his removal to detention:

_Imagine when I came to Perth airport, somebody just put the belt on me, like a round belt, like a dog, kind of arrested me to take me to the detention centre and in that time my English was not that good. I was with another person and that person say... I am a person which on a good level, you know, of education and understanding in a civilised society, maybe not as civilised as you are... but in some aspects I think we are even more... But that was a terrible thing to happen..._ (Javed)

Similarly, Adar questioned the inconsistency around detention:

_I leave Iran with some of my friends. We had the same case.... But he leaved the_
detention centre after two months... He got a visa... And me stay in detention centre for two years (Adar)

After two years, one day immigration called me and said come to interview.... You got permanent visa. I said to her, I don’t want this visa, I want to stay in detention; I had depression... (Adar)

The inconsistency of the selection process corresponds with many other accounts. :

Detention centre like jail. I think jail better. If I am guilty I go to jail. I am not guilty. I am just a refugee. I am a refugee for a security reasons…. (Baraz)

Baraz application for a visa was rejected once, before another caseworker said his case was very strong and provided him with the visa.

My case officer, they don’t know their work. They don’t know what is this case. What is that case, you know? They don’t know what happened, they don’t know what happen Afghan, they don’t know what happen Iran. I had three shop, I had two cars, yeah? I don’t come here for money for shop or car... I come to Australia just for freedom (Baraz)

Baraz also experience mental health issues:

I came to Australia I have big problem.... I don’t know this country, of Christmas Island; a specialist tells me that you have depression, big depression (Baraz)

There is also a sense that the Detention Centres are run like businesses:

You know, 8 – 9 months in the Detention Centre, very, very bad. I know... It is a business. Not help. Just business. Immigration gives them money, I know (Baraz)

Akbar saw this as institutional injustice:

The Government.... They know how to cheat on people by the law... (Akbar)

Javed pointed out that by detaining people, the Government is causing people to view the Government and Australia in a negative way:
...keeping them for so long, making them a person with so much hatred in society and then when the visa come say – ‘go’ and then... they start protesting and hating, and using the system because they have to (Javed)

Javed was particularly clear about how the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees could not be separated from how they viewed Australia. In one comment he questions the hate that is created when people are being mistreated, or experience injustice. He used the analogy of a hateful marriage:

...you are married to Australia, you are living together, so what would be our child if we hate each other, we are just creating a lot of hatred with each other (Javed)

He questions the tactic of detaining people, since it creates mistrust or ‘hateful’ emotions, but he does not advocate an ‘open door’ policy:

...the capacity of migration is not that they all can come, but still, if that few come, try to assist them, try to understand them and their potential rather than putting them all in one jail I would say (Javed)

One man spoke at length about his experience in the detention centre. He spoke about a number of different incidents that took place and how he had many ‘problems’ there. He mentioned a number of suicides (including that of “a good friend”) and the frustration he felt when no one seemed to help them. He mentioned ‘racist officers’ and the names of some workers from Serco – the company in charge of the detention centre he lived in – and how they tried to cover up certain incidents and failed to provide the support he asked for. He talked about how he and his fellow detained friends suffered from depression and that they often were very confused about what was going on, and how this sometimes led to violence and conflicts. Now he said he is ‘free’ and happy, but this experience he says, is something he will never forget.

One man tells the story about how he spent several years in detention and acquired a large number of supporters from the outside, but when he left he was suddenly on his own. The people who supported him while he was detained vanished and for him it is further evidence society as a whole has failed him and people do not really care:

I had heaps of friends when I was released from detention, but now no one wants to contact me anymore, that is society, putting me down again.... They got sympathy,
they lost it... I am not complaining, poor me, nobody come, because I just accept what happens. But this is not right (Akbar)

Even after leaving detention, the men who had been a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) said the frustration continued since they could not work or study. In one of the pilot conversations, one man who was in his late 20s spoke at length about how the years he spent on a TPV were the worst in his life because he was unable to continue his ambition to study and do something with his life. He was now studying and trying to catch up on this lost time and he did not want to think about the years he spent waiting for his permanent visa. He was very eager to move on with his life and be a ‘normal’ person, not a ‘refugee’ (from research diary).

Kamran was on a TPV and experienced something similar:

*When I arrived I had a temporary protection visa, I couldn’t study, I could not afford the fee so then I was lucky to get that scholarship* (Kamran)

These narratives speak about the sense of injustice that being detained leads to, because the men eventually were accepted, they had a case, but were forced to wait and linger in the unknown. They all had a negative experience about detention, but some of the men still expressed gratitude towards Australia and said they were now happy (“I am happy now” Adar said after describing his experience). In that regard these men were able to differentiate between the harsh border policies they witnessed and the Australia they now experience.

**Theme 2: Support and Services**

This section brings together the narratives around support and services. It covers both the support the men received themselves and their experiences of services to other refugees and asylum seekers. It also takes a look at challenges around language, which is an important part of the refugee support that the Government provides to new arrivals in Australia.

**Initial Support**

The initial support was often described as good. A number of men mentioned Centrelink and the support the Government provides to refugees who settle in Australia as good and the opportunities the children have as excellent.
Very good. I got caseworker. Went with me to Centrelink for the first time. To the bank. I started to believe myself. Before [while in detention] I forget myself. Yes, I am here. Yes, I am human. I feel good. (Baraz)

You see like sometimes, even though they are not always making things easy for refugees, sometimes they are quiet nice to the people... The Government was welcoming us and the people, everything, like they really caring about us. We went to Centrelink and they were inviting us to meetings and other stuff. They were instructing us how to live and basic things you know... It was quiet positive... (Hassan)

Government provided us with everything (Zaw)

As long as you feel you are a human being, have rights, you got security, the Government is supplying house, everything, facilities. I mean the kid’s school and all the possibilities they have (Paul)

Paul mentioned he also received support from his family already in Australia and the positive benefits that had on his experience:

I got support from them [his family already in Australia] first when we arrived here... it made it easier. Everything was prepared for us here... (Paul)

Paul emphasises the fact that his children where able to attend school when they arrived, and this was a positive thing for him and his family. The support was linked to the type of visa you were given, current bridging visas are seen as problematic. For example Baraz explains how:

Two years ago, very good. Now not good. If you get a short visa, bridging visa, Government does not pay money for them, no home, very hard (Baraz)

This is further explained by Hassan, who now works with many asylum seekers:

I see the clients saying, it is true that we are now free to move around the country, but we have nothing to do, we can’t study, we don’t have money... we don’t have work rights, we stay home all day. So I see this as a kind of torture (Hassan)
But even for men who have been here a while and who did receive initial support, it eventually stops and they are on their own:

...but now [we] have to survive our own, went to work, it is okay, I don’t mind work... I do afternoon cleaner... I don’t mind to work (Zaw)

The initial support was seen as very important, because it enabled negotiating of the new space (find a bank, house etc.) and to develop the capacity to engage with the broader community:

Assistance if the best practice that can be done because they label us one thing, but why not find the different potentials, some people might even be ready for, you know, physical work

It is like migration, they assess you on your skills and education. Try to have a program like this, that don’t separate them from the system, this is a migrant and this is a refugee… (Javed)

Language challenges and support

According to the participants in this study, language presented the most difficult challenge they initially faced and some continue to face:

The first thing... the most important thing we noticed was the language barrier (Hassan)

When we start arrive, we couldn’t speak too much English, so how to go shopping little bit you know... little bit difficult (Zaw)

Hassan attended a local college and said after one year he was ‘fine’. Hassan now speaks English very confidently. He has completed a degree in Australia and does not consider language a continued challenge. This was also the case with many of the younger men I met in the two photography workshops I ran and at different cultural events (research field-notes and research diary). For the older participants, both those interviewed and the one who participated in one photography workshop, it continues to provide them with challenges:
Even now we not talking too much you know, it is very hard you know. When we arrived here you know, we were 40 years old (Mark)

I wish, if my English good, I go to Parliament, I think that. I wish I am 20 years old coming here [laughs] (Baraz)

After many years in Australia, Mark, Antony, Paul and Zaw spoke broken English and all four apologised for their lack of English when I spoke to them. They did not say many negative things about not being fluent in English. All four struggled to gain employment in their field and socialise mainly with people who speak the same language. This provides a strong social group, but limited their capacity to learn more English.

Tun, who arrived in his mid 30s, also mentioned the pressure to learn English, which is compounded by many other challenges:

You want to learn my language? You know how hard, just one language challenge like that, another thing, involve day to day. You come to here you have to go to Centrelink, you have to go to Doctor, a letter from School, you don’t know how to read (Tun)

Tun works with many people who do not know how to read, so teaching them English is very challenging. In one of my workshops I had two men from Burma, who had been in Australia for two years and spoke very basic English, often apologising for this. One man who was in his early 50s laughed when he told me he was not very employable because he could not speak English and because of his age. Instead he was working in a cooperative, selling vegetables. The other man was in his 30s, he also apologised for not being able to speak English very well but was hopeful of getting work after he completed a cleaning course, organised via a migrant resource centre. Because of limited language skills, Tun explained many men can be very shy and intimidated when they try to speak English because they feel stupid. They are not able to control how they are perceived and they feel inadequate:

Because wherever they go; ‘ah you can’t speak English’, due to the language barrier, so many challenges, put them back, they are useless... (Tun)

This is contrasted with Hassan who said he did not feel targeted because he could not speak perfect English or was different:
So no one tells you that you are an Afghan, you speak a different language, you are not welcome... Everyone understands you, like you have been through many bad events in your country. I think this is a good thing, a good part... (Hassan)

Hassan arrived when he was in his late teens and started to study straight away, while many of the men Tun spoke about were older, had limited education, but they were not as he pointed out ‘stupid’ (Tun). Kamran explains language is the reason why many refugees, both young and old, settle in certain suburbs. However, it is also this that contributes to certain challenges in those areas and the difficulty in learning English:

People who come from Iraq tend to live mostly in Fairfield, and Afghanistan Auburn and people actually want to come to this area because they know somebody in the community and someone can help them out... I think it is easier for them to settle in these areas, with people who can speak their language (Kamran)

They want to be close to others who speak their language and they can more easily get support by people who they understand and who understand them.

But on the other hand... this area... services are stretched, no jobs around here, not many jobs, so this is a negative side... I actually support people to have a wider contact, with the mainstream society and that really helps them to learn the language, to be able to network, learn new things (Kamran)

Challenges are not confined to just learning the language, but also in having the time to learn it. For the men who arrived with their families, it was not always a priority to learn the language:

At that time, actually, I need money you know, money more important than study... Because I had to pay for the furniture, for the kids... I had three kids at that time... (Mark)

For others language school was not always a positive experience. Javed tried to attend university but was told by his teacher he needed to attend English classes. However, he found the quality of the classes was very uneven:

I guess, what they have on paper, to act on that more, to make it reasonable
practice, as I said, for example, we provide English classes, but I told you, it is just a useless environment that you don’t want to be in (Javed)

Javed took a long time to learn fluent English, partly because he was very “shy”, scared of making a mistake and being seen as “stupid” and that he socialised mainly with other Persian speaking people. For some of the men the opportunity of learning the new language became a personal quest and a way to ‘break’ from their past:

I came here when I was 20 years old, I thought I could break, you know, from my culture and language (Kamran)

Kamran immersed himself in English, study and participating in the mainstream society, as a student and as a young person. Now, in his 30s, he describes the ambivalence he feels about this decision:

K: Though I was quite good in my own language, I read quite widely, and I was, you know, very fluent, in terms of reading and writing, but I put it away for sometime and I focused on English and I think I maybe regretting that.
T: You regret it?
K: Yes... it is not that my own language is bad, that I cant read or write, but the sort of fluency that I had in my own language, I think was quite a strength. Even to have that strong connection by reading and writing. And I think that sometimes it is very difficult to [keep your own language], because if you living in an English speaking country, especially Australia, you are taught in English, you read the news in English, you chat to people in English... (Kamran)

Kamran raises the challenges facing people from non-English speaking background, how to maintain and develop your mother tongue while attempting to improve your English. He recognises that language fluency is ‘a strength’, something he is struggling with when it comes to the English language, despite having a university degree from Australia.

Support workers limitations

Peter, Hassan, Tun and Kamran work currently in varying roles to provide support to asylum seekers and refugees. They all had comments about the current services to support new Australians. Issues brought up included funding challenges, changing Governments, and lack of consistency creating a tension:
It is a bit complex, you are connected to those people, but you also connected to the Government. So I think I am helpless, I can’t help them, so I just do whatever the Government says... In terms of my work, everyone is trying to do their best to help asylum seekers... everyone is trying to make points for the Government, they have to improve their services to the refugees and asylum seekers... So that is what I can do... (Hassan)

One specific challenge identified was to work with the limited funding to create ways by which men could support themselves, find work and establish social contacts. For example to establish specific men’s projects or,

men’s groups... give them new skills in life, this is the sort of thing we try to do... (Peter)

The men working in these support roles argued refugee’s need assistance with whatever they think is important to gain control in their own lives:

You don’t want me to explain policy, or the law, because you come here you just want to get assistance, because some other factor impact you, so if I explain the Australian parliament or stuff... you will look at the watch. So if they change like that I respect that, because I put myself into their position, I don’t want to come and listen to me, I don’t care, I want to get some assistance from you (Tun)

I don’t want to waste their time, I don’t want to change someone, you have to work, you have to do training, as long as you come here. I see myself as experience that a lot... They don’t care about how you learn the language or your situation or level of depression or whatever. What [other support workers] say it is their job (Tun)

He points out that some other service providers might lack this attitude and the ability to understand asylum seekers and people from a refugee background and are therefore limited in what they understand as support:

Because a lot of people, I would say, honestly, even service providers, they try to work in their ethical boundaries, but the reality is, not purely 100% what they say. ...They say they support... but the reality is that they are not really support [laughs]. You know what I mean? They apply for funding, they take a photo, a BBQ, that’s it and I personally don’t like that style (Tun)
Tun spoke about this a great deal, that many people do not genuinely care or support refugees in the community; they just perfume a job. He made it clear that he did not agree with a lot of research that tried to explain the refugee experience and then prescribe what is required for that particular group. He said it is only one-way and that the service providers and the Government often do not want to understand what others have experienced and what they know. He said he does not care about long reports outlining what to do:

*I don’t care about that. I care about people. What I look for, wherever you come from, I look on the inside (Tun)*

*Because they [The Government] say people who live here, between one to five years have to become self-reliant. Oh my God, how do you do that? ... How many pressure there? You put yourself in their position, what would you feel... But Government say one to five years, you have to fit in (Tun)*

Tun’s personal and work experience provides him with an insight by which he rejected the idea that a person can just be assumed to ‘fit in’ within a specific timeframe. This lacked an understanding about how difficult it is for many people.

The men who work with asylum seekers and refugees acknowledged that they have particular insight and that they can understand the situation people are coming from:

*As an Afghan refugee, who is working with Afghan refugees, I see their troubles and I notice the issues with asylum seekers and the Government policies (Hassan)*

*We are trying our best to do the best we can do but sometimes things are not in our hands (Peter)*

The men indicate they are interested in providing good support and to change what is not working, but they also recognise they are very limited in their capacity. Another important theme relates to connections and participation, as explore in the next section.

**Theme 3: Connections and participation**

The theme of connection and participation includes interpersonal connections but also ethical and political connections that the men spoke about or highlighted. Akbar spoke at
length about how international students come to Australia, pay large sums to study at universities, and this leads to the commercialisation of education, which in turn will make it harder for Australians to study:

_They don’t care about Australia... They don’t care that our kids, in the future... What will happen to Australia? (Akbar)_

What seems significant here is that this was the only times that the word ‘our’ was used by any of the participants, to talk about Australians. Here Akbar positions himself as an Australian, sharing other Australians’ struggles. At other times Australia and Australians were often expressed in a non possessive way, as the other. However, loyalty to Australia, was also expressed by Paul in the advice he would give to a man who arrives to Australia today:

_I advise him to be loyal to this country [tapping fingers on a table] and work, always try to be honest and legally work and always be helpful for everyone... (Paul)_

Otherwise, the connections to Australia as a nation was mostly evident in the positive things the men said about Australia, that they in fact were very happy to live in Australia and they were aware that Australia is a country that enables many opportunities.

‘I am very happy’

For Hassan it was clear that all things became better once he was more settled into Australia:

_...but as I say, after a while so we feeling like yeah, this is going to be our new home (Hassan)_

The men who spent time in detention said that as ‘free’ men they are happy or at least appreciative of Australia and the opportunities in Australia:

_I am so happy, but sometimes I am worried about my family (Adar)_

_This is my life, I am very happy... We don’t know the English language, but better than my country (Baraz)_
I have been here now 12 years, in Australia and I appreciate, in terms of safety, security and opportunities. There are a lot of opportunities but they don’t come to you unless you try to... get to them... (Kamran)

Adar explains further how despite his two years in a Detention Centre and what he said was a difficult time, he cherishes his new freedom and the opportunity to have things he previously have been unable to have:

I just want the best, the freedom.... I just wanted freedom you know. I wanted to work. I wanted to buy car. In Iran I had nothing, no car or motorbike. Here I am so happy, I have a full license, I have a car, I have a good home. I have a good friend. I have a good Australian friend. I am looking for work. I am so happy (Adar)

Others spoke about how they appreciated Australia, Australian law and how they feel safe, happy and free:

I am very happy here. I like this country. It is good law, I like their law. Everything is okay here (Anton)

What I like Australia is the freedom, in particular freedom of speech.... I love that, because in my own country it is not always possible (Tun)

My society is much less [equal], you are either here or there, you have nothing in common with the other... (Javed)

You see, comparing with back home, I am from Iraq, this country for us is a paradise, you know... (Paul)

Personally I have no experienced anything bad about Australia, so far everything has been fine, I have loved everything, apart as I say, about the Government, the politics, apart from that... (Hassan)

We did not have a good memory for centuries, so being in Australia for many Hazara they feel they live in a very adequate place... the children are going to school, they can work, they don’t get discriminated because they belong to an ethnic group... They appreciate living here (Kamran)
Friendships and changing attitude

Friends can also influence how a person perceives their surroundings, shaping attitudes and experiences, for example:

*He explained that to me... have you ever think about, not thinking about making money... thinking about giving a service to society... thinking about share your ability, whatever they are and... that was the inception of it... so everything changed, okay, now I got a different view of being in society (Javed)*

*I thought, why not be a part of a service, which can give a good service to people. If you are part of the society, if you like the society, why not given them a good service (Javed)*

This change in Javed’s attitude and understanding of himself in society gave him an insight into how to take control of his own destiny by changing his own attitude and personality:

*I am just starting to working on it, to be a very productive and to just participate... in society... it be my mental attitude... (Javed)*

Adar, who had a difficult time in detention, mentioned that he now has friends and this is one aspect that contributes to him feeling happy. His friends are migrants and former asylum seekers, but these connections have made it easier for him to feel that Sydney is his new home:

*I really love Sydney.... I like my friends, I love Parramatta, the people, some I knew when I was in detention centre. One month ago I wanted to go to Thailand, but I couldn’t go... Because I miss Australia... (Adar)*

For Hassan, once at college he was able to make contacts outside his ethnic group, which was a positive experience:

*At the collage we met more people from other countries, so we got friends, so life was much better... (Hassan)*

*It was good, I liked it. It was welcoming, the university. I did not feel lonely, I had*
friends, so yeah, everything was interesting, everything was new, new things (Hassan)

Connections with other asylum seekers or refugees

The desire to socialise with people from your own ethnic group was not uncommon and it seems to be a natural way to make friends and connections:

I would rather go to a Persian restaurant or Persian friends sitting somewhere we could talk (Javed)

For Hassan, the presence of other Afghans meant less isolation and contributed to a more positive experience:

The first days we arrived in Australia there were not many Afghans... so it was a little bit of shock for us... There was no one around to talk with... But after a month of so, many people from our village they came to Australia.... And we found our way around the city. We got to know more people from Afghanistan, at the college, so that was much better, more friends (Hassan)

Javed recognizes that his own personality prevented him from making contacts with the ‘mainstream’ society. He explains how some people can connect without language, a skill he admires but did not posses himself:

I mean, I have seen people... With no English skills at all and just with their hands and you know, face, they could make thousands friends in a week. They are good and everybody understands them... it is just amazing (Javed)

Akbar felt refugees are not treated the same as other members of society. Thus they may feel more connected to other refugees:

Refugees have connection to refugee most often. They not like connect to anybody else, because society push them to their own (Akbar)

For other men the connections to other refugees or asylum seekers were evident in the distress they experienced when seeing their old friends still in detention:
It makes me upset... But when I see something like this I get upset. Sometimes I go to detention centre to visit them, but it is not good for me, when I go to detention centre I am crying, they are my friends... (Adar)

Baraz, Hassan, Kamran and Tun who are all now very active in supporting asylum seekers and refugees spoke about the connections they feel with other asylum seekers and refugees and how it affects them:

I saw this picture in the TV and I cry [shows me the newspaper]. This boat crash. One week I could not sleep. They are not my family, just same problem, refugee (Baraz)

I was Darwin [detention centre] I saw too many kids, four years, two years, everybody tell me ‘freedom’, ‘freedom’. One week I couldn’t sleep. One week cry, on this balcony, all night my friend, I cry for everyone refugee (Baraz)

This is not our country, this is different country, we must help us, must help myself, each other... (Baraz)

I am helping young people of refugee background... and it is a rewarding experience to help people who came the same journey as I did.... (Kamran)

For our people, coming from Afghanistan, I know the situation, the situation is worse, and it is getting worse... Many suicide attacks, genocide and everything... So when I see people coming here, they put their life in danger, getting into a boat and who knows if they reaches Australia or not, but still they are coming. The Government is like taking them into detention... sending them to Nauru. So it makes me feel sorry for the Government, I mean I am sorry about the policies, what they are doing to other people (Hassan)

Paul, who is part of a supportive church group explained:

You see, when someone new arrive not only has their family support, but you always got the friends, we always support the first arrivals, to help out (Paul)

All the men who spent time in detention or on a TPV expressed strong sympathy towards others in that situation and often this lead to criticism of the Governments approach.
I understand that Australia has given me a lot of opportunities... but... there are some aspects of Australian politics that needs to be worked a lot and I consider that to be refugee issues (Kamran)

Like Baraz, Kamran does not separate this from his own experience:

The way the debate is going about refugee issues in Australia, politically, is actually affecting me as being a former refugee, because I came myself as a refugee, I go through those journeys that the people go through, and then the politicians are talking negatively about, or the media is doing something negative, about refugees, I see myself in their picture. It is something that does influence me (Kamran)

Connections with Indigenous Australians

Some men saw a connection between Indigenous Australians’ struggles and asylum seekers and refugees in Australia:

I saw the demonstration with the Aboriginals, I just went with them, because I know what happened a couple of years ago and how the Government treat them. I read the history of them, I have lived with them in prison, and I know the Government look ugly at them and people still looking ugly at them (Akbar)

For Baraz this means he now says he has compassion for all other people who struggle something he believe a refugee activist group in Australia taught him. Their support for him led to him realising the importance of supporting others who are equally being treated in a negative way, such as other minorities or disadvantaged groups, and here he identifies specifically a connection with Aboriginal people:

Aboriginal people, I say they are my brothers; they need help (Baraz)

Likewise, other comments connected “mainstream” Australia with racism towards Indigenous Australians:

Maybe the racist history is still embedded in some of the wider community of Australia... (Peter)
I have never read about this type of mistreatment by other colonisers, why did those who settled here start to treat the indigenous people badly compared to those that colonized Africa for example… So this makes you question a little bit about Australia, although it is more peaceful now, more open now… (Peter)

And now NSW, corruption with the police… it has happened in Queensland, killing of Aboriginals, same thing, but what they say it is an accident, you know. What you talking about, underlying racism (Akbar)

Connections in a multicultural area

Multiculturalism is generally spoken about in a positive way and the fact there are many different cultures meant it is easier to connect with others and not to feel isolated:

We find every different people, but this good, it is… everywhere if we go to work, we go to buy something in shops, different people… We can find some Asian grocery, Indian shop for our cooking style… (Zaw)

That’s the good thing in Australia, the multiculturalism, when you go to the shop they serve you, they are not from here… (Javed)

And being multicultural, is another good thing about Australia, it helps you not to feel isolated… So you can see everyone is like, everyone is coming from everywhere, somewhere in the world, different places… (Hassan)

All men interviewed, apart from Zaw, live in areas that are very culturally and ethnically diverse and this was never raised as problematic, it only seemed to be a positive thing that contributed to the men having a sense of connection to the place. One man did acknowledge that it might be different if he lived in a very Anglo-Australian area, indicating a mono-cultural area would be potentially more alienating.

Connections to the physical environment

For one man, the physical connection to the environment was important. He moved away from the area most populated with his ethnic community and settled in an area that at the time had very few migrants. I asked him about this decision, and he exclaimed:

I like it! In my life I hope I come back only one time for live so I looking for the,
somewhere I want to live so I found out this place. Close to the sea, little bit quiet, nature, in Sydney, too much people, busy, no fresh air... (Zaw)

This connection was also evident with Akbar, who expressed a connection to Australian nature. His knowledge about the Australian ‘bush’ and the wildlife is extensive and he said he loves to go for bush walks and to be within nature. He showed me pictures of himself and another man from a refugee background and how they were taken on different bush walks with an Australian couple. Something he clearly appreciated and he spoke most passionately about the Australian landscape and the wildlife in Australia.

**Participation and community support**

Some of the men spoke of what they give to their new home. Paul helps out in the church, when new refugees arrive or when there is a funeral or if financial assistance is needed:

*As an Australian I do my best to service this country because they have afforded me a lot of chance for my, for my kids, for my family (Paul)*

*Australia is a democracy, you know, so people work together and Government is trying to help all people and so this is good... I work for my community; I just contribute where I can. That's it (Paul)*

*I like to help anybody, it does not matter about his religion, because it is a human being like me, so if I can help, I never stop, I help anyone.... This is my life here; that is why I am telling you I am happy here (Anton)*

Zaw commented on his contribution in terms of his particular talents:

*I play at art gallery NSW, I play percussion... When they do something they invite us, for the memory [of the Burma uprising], for some celebration, they ask us, we go (Zaw)*

*I live a long way, a little bit far from my community, but sometimes they need me, I go in.... (Zaw)*

After meeting a young man during a refugee awareness event I was invited to a specific sport event that exposed me to a different type of support. I spoke with two coaches of a
team of predominantly with men from a specific African nation in it. The aim, as explained to me, was to provide a space and activity for the young men, so they would “stay out of trouble” and keep fit. They said they did not just teach sports; they are acting as role models. Now and then the coaches walked through an urban centre to engage with those who did not wish to play sport and instead they hung around the shopping area and the train station. I was told while walking around this area with two of the older leaders that there were challenges for some of the young people but it also important to explain that that they needed to act responsibly. It was explained to me that some young men feel targeted by the police and there are often confrontations, something the older men tried to diffuse by proving support and alternative ways to deal with the police. Apparently it did have some effects and they said they have calmed some situations down with their presence. But it was also clear there was a frustration from the older men that it is hard work and often challenging (from research diary). For the men who were active, it was also evident that this work provided them with a purpose and sense of belonging in that space since they spoke about it as ‘their’ area where they lived.

Tax was mentioned as a different way to express participation and community support. Baraz says most people who arrive as refugees want to work and if they are informed about the system, they will also want to pay tax, since that is to help others.

Centerlink good, but after that they must teach people for tax... Some people get cash then they go to Centrelink, why? Because they don’t know about tax. Tax is better for them. Government must teach them that. This is my idea.... Teach them, if good teach, then they will pay tax... Government teach us everything, they be loyal... (Baraz)

Tun, also brings up tax as something he does to help disadvantaged people:

Whenever we work, we pay tax to other disadvantage people (Tun)

Activism

Akbar, Kamran and Baraz are very engaged and support many refugees and asylum seekers, both in the community and those who are in detention. For these men this is very important. Akbar plays in a band and he says he tries to do what he can to support causes he thinks are important while Kamran and Baraz are very active and often participates and speaks at different pro-refugee demonstrations.
At least be the voice, tell and other people listen... Standing for right society... I still think we can change it... (Akbar)

I am a refugee advocate as well... I have been speaking about refugee issues a long time, before 2003, I spoke to rallies, so I put my stories out there, for people to know that I came as a refugee (Kamran)

What I have tried in my own self-capacity is to build a refugee narrative and I think that is missing in the public and political discourse.... So I try to speak about refugee stories, to change perspective, for people who might not have heard about refugee issues (Kamran)

My English no good because I go to all the protest, every city, like Darwin, I was there. All Iranian refugee, all Afghan refugee, all the refugee in the Detention Centre call me. I help them. Because I understand their problem.... I help everyone.... (Baraz)

In just one year 16 people in jail, Silver Water jail, Parramatta Jail, I am going everywhere. I went everywhere to visit them, because they don’t have family here. They don’t have family here so I think it is my family (Baraz)

Volunteering, for my heart... I help them you know... (Baraz)

Akbar spoke about supporting others who he sees as oppressed or in need of support:

I have been at demonstration for Julian Assange, suddenly Police came and attack us, we did not do anything wrong... What happen in media is they did not say police make the violence, ‘violent people support Assange’. Turn upside down. We should not stand for that, we are human being, we have to think about where we come from... (Akbar)

**Theme 4: Disconnections and disenchantment**

Disconnection from the mainstream society was a prominent theme within the narratives. Javed explains how his, and other’s personalities might be the reason for them finding it difficult to connect for the first years:
They might be clever enough to find a way [to Australia] in the first place, but then what happened to me, their personality... a bit shy or they don’t get into the society because they are kind of a perfectionist, they don’t want to have any mistakes, they just want to make sure they are right to get into the society. They just wasted so many years of life (Javed)

Disconnections were also evident during different parts of the interviews and linked to certain aspects of the men’s experiences or Australian society.

Political debates about refugees

The political situation in Australia was spoken about in different ways. Anton said he is not interested in Politics, not in Australia, nor “back home”. He thinks it leads to troubles so he only focuses on his religion. However, for other men in this research politics is something they had clear views on. Both Kamran and Akbar explained how they are affected by the political debate:

The political debate affects everyone who comes as a refugee... Because I came myself as a refugee, I go through those journeys that the people go through... (Kamran)

A refugee or migrant you feel that you are not, you don’t feel you belong much the way the political debate is going, because you belong to that group that they talk about, talk negative about... (Akbar)

Some men explained how refugees are often misrepresented or shown in a prejudicial light:

I think a way to discredit the stories [refugee stories] is to question if they are genuine refugees, but we who came here, we are accepted as refugees, we are part of the Australian community and citizens and contribute in different ways... I don’t know why politicians have to sort of have to refute those stories... (Kamran)

The problem is how the Government and the media introduce us to the people, the problem is not good knowledge... they don’t know and when they show refugee they show this picture, hunger and something like that... (Akbar)

This Government telling people about the terrible refugees... I think they should be
out of it, not accepting refugees because they are not capable of it... The people are not ready yet, the Government is not ready yet. They signed the convention but I don’t know why... (Javed)

The men understand that politicians use certain language for their own benefits:

In a democratic society like Australia, political parties can work with refugees and support them... Supporting the refugees and the settlement has been accepted by other parties but also not accepted by others and then they are using it, especially during election time, to get votes, so this is a bit of a sensitive issue at times (Peter)

I think now it is pure politics... It is not about Australian values and I am pretty sure Australian values they care about refugees, they care about human being... (Hassan)

Akbar has been active within the refugee support organisations and he explained how society has changed over the last few years:

Change is not going to happen over one night, it is going to take a long time. Before we could do demonstration in front of Villawood, no problem, recently people come with a flag of Australia, against us. At demonstrations, saying ‘send them back’, ‘send them back’. Never seen that at Howard time, see it now. That what I am telling you, society is going very bad direction (Akbar)

Media and stories about refugees

Media can be a source for positive or negative portrayals of asylum seekers and refugees and even though the participants in this study are Australian citizens, discussions in the media about refugees and asylum seekers affect them.

Media can either promote or destroy the image of the refugees... (Peter)

It is one of the things that affect the settlement of refugees in Australia, it is one that controls the opinion of the “mainstream” to accept refugees or not accept refugees... (Peter)

For myself, I have been witnessing a lot of media coverage of some more negative
things instead of giving out some positive. I know that media always look negative thing just to get the audience (Peter)

... Media is covering it [up] good, but it is happening [racism] (Javed)

I don’t watch Australian TV, I go to the internet and watch some news. ABC not good [laughs] I think SBS better. ABC you know, for the Government, not free... (Baraz)

In the same way as the political discourse put forward by the politicians, stories in the media can affect the men:

...or the media is doing something negative about refugees, I see myself in their picture, it is something that does influence me... (Kamran)

A boy from the Sudanese community can commit a crime for example, and instead of media focusing on that person as an individual, and the police take the cause of law of an individual, the media will position it as a community issue all together... (Peter)

This was also raised during the photography workshops when we had a discussion about what to think about when taking photos of people you do not know. One man said that he felt frustrated when he saw photos taken in his home country (a country in Africa). He argued they often misrepresent the people and what is going on. Furthermore, the group agreed that many tourists are often very insensitive towards how they take photos of poor local people. There was general criticism towards the media and their focus on the wrong things, not supporting the people on the ground or promoting social justice issue (from research diary).

Access to media is an issue:

Refugees are not sometimes accessible to the media, who are locked up in detention centre, or they are fearful of being able to put their stories out there because of bad experience they have had with immigration (Akbar)

Stories are seen focusing on negatives instead of positive contributions:
Less has been the positive contribution of people from a refugee background. So if you look at the media, less contributions... Now if you go now in Fairfield, there are a lot of businesses there owned by refugee who come from Iraq for example... So media is also suppose to look at what contribution are these people contributing.... They are suppose to be putting these to the public so they get to know and accept the refugees that they can contribute and build the country Australia (Peter)

There is a sense of frustration here that these voices are left out and the positive stories are not heard around Australia. This is why some of the men make a conscious effort to challenge the dominant stories:

What I have tried in my own self-capacity is to build a refugee narrative and I think that is missing in the public and political discourse (Kamran)

However, Hassan also points out that media does do some good:

...But Australian media mostly are like have a positive feeling, I mean they are trying to tell the people, most of the time they are trying to tell people what is going on... (Hassan)

The media, the programs they have, I think, they are not trying to hide something you know, they are trying to make some points.... (Hassan)

I have seen some of their programs, they have been to detention centres, four or five years ago and now they ask them how they were treated, so they are trying to make points and push the Government... I think that because of that, they put pressure on the Government... (Hassan)

Even though media was often perceived as negative, Javed explained he was not affected by it:

I don’t care what is written in the papers in this society... (Javed)

However, later on Javed mentioned some violent demonstrations that had taken place in Sydney the previous weekend and how he, as a ‘Middle Eastern looking man’ could not escape being seen as belonging to the group the media was writing negatively about,
whether or not he agreed with the particular incident.

Experience being powerless

A few of the men gave long explanations about the powerlessness that they experienced or witnessed:

So some men say, after they arrive here, they are useless, you know, because loss of power... Things have changed, so they can’t accept, so they become more depressed, or more conflict between whole family, or with the society.... You can’t say everyone who come to Australia lost power, but some of them, as I tell you, depend on their perspective, depend on what they come to Australia for, but many challenges occur in the transition to fit into this country (Tun)

In a way what I want to say is that I am 14 years old in Australia, I am not 34 years old. My ability in this country is like a 14 year old person... so from a 14 year old person, how much can you expect? (Javed)

In society... the refugee does not have any position, because everyone looking ugly at them... The Australians call us ‘reffo’, you know that... Society puts us very much down... (Akbar)

Tun provided a few personal stories about his own challenges:

You have to all the time reminding, all the time, okay, now another step, another level, another layer, something like that, don’t give up. But at the same time, the other force you, you know, you have to do job or whatever, okay, even I don’t agree with you, you report me to Centrelink, cut my payment, I sometimes am tied in my body, or something like that, I have it, it is not a free country for me. But I take it, because I don’t want to get a bad record, I don’t want to become... a bad person (Tun)

Tun provided one example from when he worked in a warehouse and the affect this had on him:

Now I have been working one month already, they did not pay me yet, when I ask my boss, always tomorrow... but I have to pay rent... How can you help me;
‘impossible’ they told me. I wanted to kill [laughs]. You understand how I feel?

They said do your job, I also know, but you [the boss] lie. You don’t know what I feel now. Then I go to the Ombudsman, I complained about it and I got the money. But not everyone can do that. Sad story, sad experience. I can’t forget about it, never ever… So you remind yourself all the time. I try to focus… I like challenges, the challenges forces me to become stronger and stronger, but on the other hand I am tired, you know, on the other hand I feel tired… I am sometimes tied in my body… I hate it... (Tun)

Javed said first while having a casual conversation and then again when I interviewed him was that once he was released from detention, he entered a society in which he still felt he could not be free:

[I went] from one detention to another detention (Javed)

Javed spoke of his position on the social ladder:

I always wanted to be part of a society, you know, being free in that society and I would say this society does not allow me to do that (Javed)

You were in the middle or top level of society and then come here to start at the bottom of the, the lowest level of society, which is how society sees refugees, they have nothing... (Javed)

The ‘detention’ he experienced outside of detention was worse in some ways, he explains:

It was worse because in the other detention you had hope... something gonna happen. Someone is looking at something, like your case, at least, they give ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but this one nothing happening... it is up to you to do something and you are not able to... It was like, you just want to lift 200 kg of weight and you are unable to do it. You can’t. Hopeless kind of (Javed)

Again, the lack of capacity to do ‘something’ is experienced as a debilitating emotion.

How can you fit into that environment? It is really hard for migrant men, refugees,
For others, the powerlessness was more related to their children and how they would be able to negotiate this new society. This fear is the result of another type of powerless situation; you have to deal with what happens, it is out of your control. Anton explains how he now thanks Jesus for helping them and to make sure his sons managed to pass the ‘dangerous’ teenage stage when they were suddenly exposed to new challenges. Anton says his sons are now on the ‘safe side’ but he was worried about them before since he did not have any control about all the new influences:

*You know it is a different culture here, too many friends they have, some friends they took them to drink alcohol, some cigarettes, anything else…* (Anton)

Gender roles and loss of power

A few of the men noted or indicated that the gender roles in Australia contributed to certain challenges for them.

Peter who works with many men from a refugee background and who himself experienced some of these cultural challenges, explains a specific gender challenge many men face:

*When they come here, to Australia, it is a peaceful country, everything is good, but still frustration start coming in because changes of roles sometimes, changes of man’s role. Instead of being breadwinner, with the respect from your family members, your wife, and your children… it is going a bit diluted, due to other factors…* (Peter)

Both Anton and Mark, who both arrived with their wives and their children, were worried about providing for their children, even though they did not provide a gendered reason for this, they did not challenge the idea they were the providers whose responsibility it is to make money or to make sure their children do not ‘fail’. Peter explains how many men might blame themselves if their children get into trouble or if they are not able to succeed for some reason:

*They start to blame themselves, they are not taking good care of their families, children just hanging out without a proper future… I can give you an example, like*
back overseas, if you and your wife are working well, you have a good income, the possibility of your children being successful is very high, but in Australia, if children are in high school they might start to dropping out, then you are starting to losing that... the better future for the kids, you start to feel like you do not have a good control, you are not supporting your family to achieve... (Peter)

During the workshops, one man explained that it is important to remember that the men did not leave their country of origin with their families because they could not take care of their children; they left because of other issues. But once in Australia, they might be told they are treating their children or their wife the wrong way, they can’t do certain things. It was explained to me that people try to tell them what to do, which can be seen as both disrespecting and alienating (research diary). This contributes further to some of the challenges:

Some of the men told me when they are here, even they are poor or whatever, medium class or whatever, they still got power, within the family, friends groups or within their society... they are proud of themselves in that area, so for example, no one can come and... educate you, you don’t know the right, you can’t hit your child or whatever, your wife... when they live there they have a power, they think it is their own family, they have a responsibility, I can do whatever, but here it is different (Tun)

Tun does not condone such violence but highlights that it is important to not forget the different backgrounds many refugees have and not to assume they are “stupid” (Tun). For Peter the gender role challenges had to do with practical aspects, that he is actively involved in trying to support men to deal with. For example, he said “some cultural beliefs or thinking that some things are not man’s duties”, such as cooking (Peter)

Both Tun and Peter spoke about how the different gender roles can contribute to the different challenges that face men when they try to settle in Australia but Peter added that despite these it is an issue he thinks is not too important for belonging:

I know there are a lot of changes of family roles for men in Australia... still it is not a major issue for belonging (Peter)

Instead Peter highlighted how practical challenges and social attitudes towards refugees were more likely to influence belonging.
Disconnection from the dominant group

Javed talked about how he was not able to participate in society, he felt trapped on the outside, unable to penetrate the walls that were erected both by him and by others.

In the first years I was so into my community... I was just working for company, which was, all the employers were Iranian. Myself talking just Persian, not a word of English, and that actually was the worse time of my life in Sydney, in Australia (Javed)

I was missing something, I was not connected to society. I did not even feel good to sit in a café like this and have a chat (Javed)

I think I was so disconnected for the first four or five years... when I say disconnected I say 90 percent I was not in the society (Javed)

Javed explained that even though he previously said he was very shy initially, he also thought that:

It [Sydney] was not that warm society... I did not find the people friendly here for the first few years and after that it just started to little bit change... not much... still to the last few years I was this kind of disconnected... (Javed)

For example, I came here when I was 21, I just realised life when I was 28 you know, so who am I in this society? Because that I was just a useless person in society, I was disconnected from society, you know, individually I did not enjoy, and I am sure society did not enjoy my being as well, because I was not part of it. If society is created by relationship it was nothing so I would see myself as a useless element in that society, which did nothing to society rather than just some physical work. If society wants people for just that, I am so sorry for that society (Javed)

Javed spoke a lot about the difference between him and “mainstream” Australians, people he does not really identify with but paints in a more generalised way. He mentions how “Australians are very hard to change, they don’t want to” and “People like themselves very much” (Javed) and he stated that “they never been welcoming and inviting actually” (Javed).
Tun were more specific and said he cannot connect with the “White Australians”, because he feels they look at him differently and it is not his culture. Tun provides insight into how he struggles with these challenges. In some ways he feels the ‘Australian’ culture, which is for him ‘White’ culture, is imposing itself on him, even though he feels he should be able to have his own culture. His culture, Karen culture, is according to him equally as nice and beautiful but sometimes this culture and the ‘Australian culture’ collide over certain things, there is a disparity, and this pose challenges for him. Sometimes he blames himself for not being able to be more accepting:

*I am not saying Australian people bad, but I have also my own feeling to fit in, because white people told me you are here, you are in Australia, okay, Australian people open mind, I love that, because open mind more learning, more opportunity, so I would personally love to open mine as well, but sometimes I can’t open my mind... (Tun)*

Tun mentioned challenges around certain cultural habits, like eating bread, which he says he cannot do because it makes him sick. He also mentions he struggles with accepting the open display of affection in Australia. He says he would love to be able to accept this but it is hard, since it is not something that you would see in Burma in the same way:

*I want to be open mind and fit in this society as well but sometimes really hard to change, hard to force yourself. Why they can do, you can’t do, but my reputation I have to maintain myself... (Tun)*

*Here you can change your body language, but that is not your culture, for example, ‘hi blah blah’ you kiss or not [laughs]. It is really hard to do... (Tun)*

Other times he explained it was not just his fault. Tun explains that he does not think all cultures are valued equally in Australia and since he says, “I feel I belonging more to my culture” (Tun) he senses that he is undervalued by the dominant group:

*When I think of multiculturalism I see a colourful rainbow, with beautiful colours, not individual colours. So for me, I think, in Australia many do not fit into this, I mean real multiculturalism they say they do, but not real multiculturalism, that is my personal... [laughs] (Tun)*

For Hassan, Kamran, Akbar but also Javed it is less about a challenge to ‘fit in’ but more
about a conscious decision not to become like the “mainstream”. They regard some parts of the dominant Australian culture as something they do not want to embrace:

\[
I \text{ have thought about this, how much I belong to Australia, how much I could be like Australian, but I think I could not be like an Australian (Kamran)}
\]

Kamran gave an example, when he lived with a few other men, in a shared accommodation:

\[
I \text{ was living with other students... from different countries... and an aussie boy said... because he was watching rugby... because I did not watch it, I do not like it, so he said ‘how are you Australian when you don’t like Rugby?’ I said I don’t really like rugby, it is not really something I need to like...}
\]

So even though he feels he has adopted many of the Australian ways, he even drinks beer and wine, which he explains not that many Afghans do, he still uses this example to show how there is a sense that some things are seen as ‘Australian’ and if you do not do those you are not really Australian. Hassan who said multiculturalism is a good thing also highlights that this does not mean he sees himself as a 100 percent Australian since he speaks about them as a separate group:

\[
\text{Still I think I am not living like Australians live, it is a bit different, but still, at least we got more people from our own community and we understand the way Australians live but that does not mean like we adopted that way... the way others live... (Hassan)}
\]

Hassan provides a few examples of differences, one is the fact most Afghans do not go out to clubs and pubs, but socialize at home or in a restaurant, and if you need something from your neighbour, you can knock on their door at 10pm and they will give it to you, no need to give it back, in fact Hassan says it is rude to give something back. This is an important aspect, the connection to your neighbours, and he says in Afghanistan you know the name of your neighbours, what they do and their family. In Australia it is not always easy to do this.

Akbar says the ‘society’ looks down upon newcomers, and this contributes to different groups creating their own communities:
People go to their own, because they understand each other, because society does not want to listen to them. You look at society, that is why Leichhardt came up, Vietnamese town, society did not want them, pushed them, they go to their own society…. (Akbar)

Experienced racism

Most men mentioned racism as something they have experienced:

*I tell you my view of Australians, a majority, more than 90 percent, 95 percent, racist. But they not going to show them, they are being polite to you, they cover it. It is clear they are racist, it is very clear… That is my view of Australia* (Akbar)

*I have seen the worse, but the best people I have seen, human wise, have been Australian too… but if I see 10 people, quality wise, I see one person who cares and 10 who don’t…* (Javed)

The passive acceptance of certain policies further indicated for Akbar that people generally were implicitly racist:

*If society does not want to, they could complain, but they don’t, that means society is happy with what the Government is doing now, even open Manus Island you know, Nauru…* (Akbar)

But it is not only about Australia and its past but also about selective groups settling in Australia and their values:

*The other thing, when you see the downfall of apartheid in South Africa, people who were a bit radical, who wanted to maintain that system, some of them even migrated to Australia… the rich part of Sydney, many of them come from South Africa, so they were thinking maybe that Australia is a little bit more supportive of their [laughs] ideas… so this just linking together…* (Peter)

Javed explained how it is different for different migrants; some look like Australians while other do not, and hence to be Australian means to have a particular look, i.e. Anglo-looking:
If you [referring to researcher] don’t tell people you aren’t from here you look like an Australian… even if you say you are European it is different than if you are a Middle Eastern person… We see more of it [racism]. (Javed)

Javed explained he is implicitly connected to ‘his’ culture or religion. He refers to some recent violent demonstrations by Muslims in Sydney, to explain that even though the event has nothing to do with him, he is linked to it by default because he is a ‘Muslim looking person’ from the Middle East:

What happened last Saturday... After hearing this morning about it on radio... I am already a part of it, because of my religion, my appearance... (Javed)

Some men gave specific examples of when they had encountered racism:

We had a racist teacher; he was totally different with Australian people to black people... (Javed)

He came to us and said to everyone ‘this is not your country, go back to our country, you are not Australian, I hit you’ and something like this. I fought with him many times, many times... (Adar)

Police I saw, talk to some friends... in the shopping centre, fucking go back to your country... (Baraz)

The teacher was racist and some of the students, very racist... (Akbar)

Peter identified what racism can mean for new Australians when it leads to discrimination:

People from refugee background have it very difficult even to get a place to rent because of the limited income, or issues of discrimination (Peter)

Some employers have that mentality that refugees or coloured people sometimes that they cannot offer you employment, even afraid. This is affecting your settlement, your belonging to the country, which you feel you are part of it... (Peter)
Hassan explained that sometimes racism and discrimination might not be intentional:

*Just an example, you are born here, you think that asylum seekers thing the way you think you know and they live the way you live, for example, you might put one boy and one girl to an accommodation, you think it is normal... but if you have previous information about asylum seekers and their countries, it is not good, you can’t put a boy and a girl in the same accommodation. Some of them might think they are trying to be nice, but some might think they did that on purpose, so it is a big problem...* (Hassan)

Other times, Hassan explained, the perceived treatment is an assumption of underlying racism:

*Some of them they are saying that they are discriminated against us. They are saying they are from a refugee background, don’t speak English very well or whatever, that is why they don’t get us into the job, and some of them are saying the managers or, they don’t like Muslims, that is why they don’t get into the industry, or the job... But I don’t really know the reality...* (Hassan)

Hassan went on to say that he had seen some of his friend’s CV’s and he claims they were not very well written. He questioned if it their lack of writing skills most likely caused them to loose out on the jobs, not the fact the HR person was racist.

Tun stated on a number of occasions that White people need to try to understand the situation refugees are in; “White people go to Asian country, you put yourself in our position” (Tun). He explained that the experience in a refugee camp exposes some refugees, particularly those with some education, to a system that is flawed:

*A lot of NGO, White people, they go to overseas, they give them a lot of money, 50 million, but they rarely go to refugee camp, 23 dollar per each, per month, I say how could that be?* (Tun)

*People who are educated a little bit, maybe be aware of what you saying is the truth or not the truth, you know? So that is why I say, when people come here and say refugee lack of trust in authority, that’s it, they experience it in the past, so really hard to recover from that...* (Tun)
For Zaw racism is a ‘fact of life’ but he dismissed it as “rubbish” (Zaw). He explained he does not mind facing racism since he “had to jump out from the death hole, I already dead” so for him racism, or racist people, do not stop him from doing something or change how he views things or where he goes. He continued and said (while laughing); “I don’t mind to die in Australia” (Zaw).

When I asked Paul if he had experienced any discrimination as a more mature male arriving in Australia he stated:

*No, no... I told you from the beginning, the first thing that we have are feeling we are human beings, we have rights.... I can talk to whomever I want, I feel it is my right... I can talk without being afraid... So no, it is very good here, freedom you know...* (Paul)

Similarly:

*For many Hazara they feel they live in a very adequate place, you know, the children are going to school, they can work, they don't get discriminated because they belong to an ethnic group* (Kamran)

‘Not belonging’ here or there

Despite Javed feeling he is connecting more with society, he is still not “100% secure in this society”:

*I mean I do not feel I belong anywhere, but I do feel more connected to society, it is a start of melting the ice, it is not just water, the melting has started. If you say belonging is water as part of the sea, not at all yet, start melting, part of me, a very small part of me is in here but not the rest of it...* (Javed)

For Akbar, it is the injustices and apathy that he argues exists in Australia prevents him from wanting to be ‘Australian’:

*That is why I am never going to feel completely Australian, but human rights, to stand for society; this is my belief in everything...* (Akbar)

Tun speaks about how the fact he is not white has contributed to him not feeling he can
say he is Australian. It has contributed to him feeling different and this has led to him not sensing he belongs in Australia:

*They say ‘why, you been in Australia, why you not like Australian people, why you not change the way you think, the way you believe, why you not change it? If you can’t change it, why you come here?’ They say like that, I say no, because you have to understand, you don’t understand my situation is, sometimes people like me hold two cultures at the same time, so it is really hard to clear what I suppose to be... or maybe I confused a little bit, because I have two cultures, to fit in, not easy I mean... (Tun)*

*That’s what I feel, so if you ask me if I belong to Australia, I say no... (Tun)*

The ignorance by others, of the country or culture the men came from, was seen as problematic:

*A guy I met, he said, do you have clean water in your country? I said, what? I said have you ever heard the history, he said no, I tell him, very easy, just put down Persia and search it! (Akbar)*

*I was in England, my nationalism was at top there... these people there, they think they are much better than the people around the world... [therefore] in England I was trying to find in my culture, what is the value... if they say something, I could say no, we got this... we had 2500 years of kingdom... (Javed)*

*You can say you come to Australia you have to follow the Australian law, rule, or regulation, or the way of their nature or, but if you say like that we also have a wonderful nature, in our own, in our own culture, in our own history (Tun)*

Javed felt the need to defend his past culture was a sign that other people, other migrants, felt they had a right to question him because “they feel more belonging”:

*I had been working in an Australian company, in which a lot of Greeks and Italian, all my break was spent talking about nationalism, they were asking me ‘how can in your country a 9 year old get married to a man?’ (Javed)*

*They had a good relation with Aussie people, so I saying, even while not Australian, other migrants, Greek, Italian, European, which have stayed here long,*
they feel more belonging and judging other people like Middle Eastern people (Javed)

Uneducated people, they had that... I came here one day before you so I got more belonging to here that you. I got the right to ask you why did you come to Australia... (Javed)

Here Javed talks about ‘Australians’ as a group and ‘migrants’ as another group, even though they might have been in Australia a very long time. He even clarifies this later and says, “I have never worked in a really Aussie environment... Never been part of an Aussie workplace”.

**Theme 5: Beliefs, values and identification**

Some men spoke about how their values and attitudes have changed since they arrived in Australia. For some it has been a positive change, for others it has been more of a struggle. Both Javed and Baraz talk about a complete change, mainly to the positive:

*I have amazingly changed from I would say 180 degrees... with values... on the surface...* (Javed)

*I was a totally different person, with different values and that what I am sitting here right now in front of you...* (Javed)

*Before I was in Iran I just love Iranian people, racist you know. After that I come to Australia I saw somebody, I love every people... I am not racist, this is good, learn from Australia...* (Baraz)

*I have had the opportunity to think about the philosophy, and this society has let me do that... Which I think that in my country I did not have the chance to do that... So I have always appreciated this time in this society, this country, this environment...* (Javed)

**Religion**

Not many men spoke about religion. But for the men who did it shaped not just them but also their social life, their political understanding and their attitude to life:
I am a positive person plus I am religious person... Since I was 7 years I am looking at religion more than anything else, more than nationality or anything...
(Anton)

For Anton, Mark and Paul who are all members of a church group for seniors, religion provides them with a space to feel connected. I attended a number of these meetings before I spoke to the men separately. One member of the congregation said to me they were happy in Australia, because as Christians in Iraq, they suffered a lot when there were wars, however, they did not understand why so many Muslims came to Australia, since Australia is a “Christian Country” (research diary).

Religion provides a direction:

I go to all groups, you know, but I don’t like politics. I never think about politics. I am too far from politics. I am looking after my religion, I am reading the Bible at home, all the time, especially at night, before going to sleep (Anton)

I think this is the secret, because as Jesus, always looking for peace, so I look at the peace....
When there is any problem, come together, we going to pray to Jesus, to solve our problems (Anton)

Mark is president of the Church group. Mark equates extremism to bad education. For Mark it was these values that separated Iraq from Australia. He said the “human being” in Iraq is “not qualified” (Mark):

Too many people still live for religion, extremism. Hit themselves... explosions...
Because education there is not high, people are not educated there very good, when educated very good, they will not do the wrong thing you know... (Mark)

Adar who had fled Iran because as a Kurd was targeted by the Iranian police for, among other things, failing to adhere to a Muslim dress code, reflects on Islam:

You know when I was in Iran, my father and mother was Muslim. I don’t believe in religion, because you know why, because I have seen Islam. I don’t hate Islam, you know, but I don’t like Islam, I just believe God, you know (Adar)
For some men religion was assumed because of their appearance. Javed spoke about how he had to explain and answer many questions, often personal, about Islam despite knowing little about it.

Reflections on Australia

The men knew that the research concerned how they experienced Australia and that I was interested in hearing their opinions and stories.

Mark said Australia represented the best of things. He views Australia as a very advanced country, a first world country, with democracy and excellence, in both education and production of things. For Mark these traits are what make a country and nation good. He now lives in Australia and takes pride in these traits; he connects with them, as an educated man himself.

*Everything you buy Australian made, it is good quality because the Government look after the production. Any Australian production is very good; you buy from China, its rubbish, buy from Taiwan, rubbish (Mark)*

Mark has adopted a strong sense of pride in his new country and he said he shares the values he sees are at the core here. He is proud to have worked for Australian companies, which he sees as the best.

Hassan believed that the Australian people are good and caring, despite what the politicians are doing and saying:

*The Australian Government cannot represent Australian values, they are two different things... (Hassan)*

For Hassan this is important. He is critical of some aspects of Australian politics and how asylum seekers are treated, but he differentiated between how other countries operated:

*The Australian people, the way they live, they care about everyone in the community, I have heard in other countries, that as an Afghan... living in Iran, in Pakistan, so even though we speak the same language, even though the religion and everything is the same, they don’t care about refugees... (Hassan)*
Akbar has a very different view of Australia. He sees Australia as a country “without a philosophy” (research diary, from an unrecorded conversation). He later elaborated on this and spoke not just about “mainstream Australia” but also how migrants came to Australia and adopted this particular attitude of not caring about others and being only focused on making money:

_They came for money, good job and these people did not care, some of them did care, good people, and you can see the result, but most, the majority, did not care. Many coming these days too, similar... I can get the mortgage, I can buy the house, good car, I am happy, that’s Australia ‘mate’, that’s Australia... In the afternoon, beer o’clock, that’s Australia..._ (Akbar)

Akbar’s reflections on Australia were of a socio-political nature:

_We talking about multiculturalism, but the people who came here, they forgot, which land they came to, who was the owner... what happen to them, because they listen to the moderate story from the White people and not only that, here they came they want to get a good job, good money, don’t care anything else, if they destroy hundred people somewhere in Africa by this job...He does not care..._ (Akbar)

_The Government do their own talk, the media do their own history, and they are proud of that and the people living here never listen to the real stories here, people living here, you listen to radio 2US, 2GB, Alan Jones, you just listen to it, they are poisoning the mind..._ (Akbar)

Tun provides a different perspective when he explained how Australians believe that They are better, Their education and experiences are better, more valuable.

_They [Australians] are sometimes so proud of themselves, sometimes over proud..._ (Tun)

Even when the men are critical of Australia, they countered by saying some parts are very good, it is safe and there is democracy and they have opportunities. Peter believes that Australia does not have a long history of accepting different cultures and times are changing:
We also have to remember that Australia does not have that long history of migrants from different cultural background... Up until the 70s Australia had that... White Australia policy... When you look at those people who came in the 70s from Vietnam, Lebanon... they had difficulties the first years of settlement, due to discrimination, due to people pointing at them as refugees... But I know that after time this changes... (Peter)

I think we are lucky because Australia is a peaceful country... I can also admit that Australia is... a signatory of the refugee convention and it is doing its best... (Peter)

Colonial Past

Australia is seen as a country with a colonial past, it was identified a few times by Peter when discussing racism:

Yes, these people [Australians] are trying to find their identity, in this society, these people, like I was saying before, these people are proud of themselves.... When I say I am proud to be Persian, then Persian needs to be problem something is missing. These people think we have a good country... but there is the label that says they are convicts of the British of that time, you can still hear people saying they still have the chains around their legs and that is pressuring the society... They are trying to become first class, a better class... (Javed)

Akbar explained to me he has argued with ‘Australian’ people about Australia’s history and how the indigenous population was treated:

They [The British] took their land, they came and took their land, and someone said, white people came here and gave them [the Aboriginal people] education, I said what are you talking about? Kill them, took the land... What the fuck [laughs]! (Akbar)

This build up by the English Culture, how many countries did they destroy by cheating, same thing here happening (Akbar)

Akbar sees in these encounters a failure to understand the past:
What I think, the main issue for this land, the main issue, the people forget, they don’t want to listen to the past histories, the people forgot the history of this land and they try to make their own history and it came from White people, that is the problem (Akbar)

Peter’s perspective of Australia’s past and the colonial perspective was somewhat different:

My country was actually colonized by the British and if you see the attitude of the British themselves, these colonisers at that time, it is totally different that some of the system that has been developed in Australia… So maybe Australia came up with their own system of how to accept other people or not… (Peter)

Identification

Men spoke of ‘home’ to talk about either their past home or their new home. Feelings around one’s former and current country were complex:

I love Iran, I love, I love my country, I love my culture, but I can’t live there, I can’t come back to Iran… (Baraz)

I don’t miss my country, I don’t miss it, I talk to my friends, every night I call my mom, my dad… (Baraz)

‘Australia is my second country’

In response to a question about whether the men saw themselves as Australians only Mark explicitly stated he felt 100% Australian:

When I got my citizenship here... I said from now on I am Australian 100 percent. I never thinking about my background, because I wasn’t happy there.... I like this country too much… (Mark)

Mark still talks about ‘my country’ when he refers to Iraq:

Listen here, in my country [Iraq], if you finish education, the Government will employ you... Before the war... we are living like kings you know, nice house, very good life... (Mark)
Kamran mentioned how Hazara people view their past differently because they are a persecuted minority in Afghanistan and Pakistan:

For many of the Hazara I researched, they are more inclined to live here and they don’t have a sense of nostalgia back home… (Kamran)

When the men were asked to say something about how they viewed themselves, they did not express any confusion instead they said they live in Australia but they have a unique background:

Yeah, now I live in Australia, yeah Aussie, but background we can’t forget, whatever we are through we have to see… (Zaw)

Yeah yeah, well, you can’t ignore your original identity… [Australia] is my home now… (Paul)

I see myself as Afghan-Australian, but I don’t know if it really matters if you say you are Australian-Afghan… (Hassan)

I feel Australia is home, does not matter where I live, Sydney or Adelaide or whatever… (Hassan)

Zaw has a number of siblings still in Burma and he can now call them, something he was unable to do while he lived in the jungle as a guerrilla soldier. But when his mother died in 2010 he was unable to go back and visit, he is still on a black list he says. His wife is also from Burma and he has Burmese art in his Australian home. He laughed and said he should also get some Australian flags to put up. When I took a photo of him, he asked if I wanted him to wear traditional costume? I said it is up to him and he ended up putting on a traditional outfit that his brother had made for him to wear on special occasions. In the photo he stands in front of a portrait he painted of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Even though Adar had a tough time in a detention centre, he now embraces the place where he lives:

I think that Australia is my second country… I feel here is my country, I can live here, I really love Sydney…. (Adar)
Adar spoke about the fact that he had to endure racism and discrimination in Iran, people told him to ‘fuck off to your country’ because he was Kurdish so he is suggesting that the fact he now can claim Australia is ‘his’ is important and was repeated by him several times in the interview.

I visited a number of Afghan cultural events and I noticed the joy with which the mostly male crowd embraced the Afghan music with and the particular style of dancing. Hassan explains that these cultural events, even though very ‘cultural’ are in fact important aspects for his connectedness to Afghan culture and to establish a sense of belonging in Australia:

*Okay, so lets say there is an Afghan event, a concert or cultural event, when you go there you see that it is Australia, it is not Afghanistan, but you have your own thing. There are some people speaking your language, playing your own music, and you see they are not only Afghans, there are other people from other cultures, from Australia or from other countries, so you feel if you look on the inside, you will think that you will remember that you are an Afghan, you know... If you go outside, it is Australia, so it means like, Australia is your home, but still inside there is another home, your own country. So it is like a mixture, it give you the feeling that even though you are not in Afghanistan you still belong to Afghanistan and still belong to Australia... (Hassan)*

A generational challenge was described by Hassan who spoke about how he embraced the cultural differences:

*They [older Afghan people] say: ‘they don’t care about us, the culture, their religion, and everything, that is why they try to be like Australians’. But it is true when you go to a new country, you loose something and you gain something. So it is normal and I think in my perspective it is a good thing. It is impossible if you come to Australia and you keep everything from your country and you don’t get anything new from this country, it is not good, it is impossible (Hassan)*

For Hassan it is normal to mix and match, and it is not a threat to his own sense of self or his understanding of his past. Hassan is still very proud to be an Afghan man, he explains how he likes Australia but he also adds that this does not mean he wants to be just like other Australians:
So there are many good things in Australia and we can capture these things, take the good things and leave the bad things. I myself have tried that, I am trying to capture good things. Still I believe in my own culture, whatever I got from Afghanistan, I am trying to keep good things from Afghanistan and get the new good things from Australian culture (Hassan)

Hassan, who had been to university, had many different friends and spoke English fluently, felt he could pick and choose what cultural aspects he wanted to keep from Afghanistan and which he wanted to discard. He also expressed a very positive but nuanced view on ‘Australian people’ and the Australian values he thinks exist among most Australians. He does not have a problem with saying he is an Afghan-Australian and he has embraced Australia as his new country, his new home.

Challenges around identification

Questions about identification, however, are not always that straight forward and some men spoke about who they are in different ways and that being Australian meant different things:

*I don’t know what you mean by identity, it is, because I believe people have two or even more than two... (Javed)*

*You can’t tell yes or no, for many points I see myself as Australian, but from many points I can’t see myself as Australian (Akbar)*

*I am not sure there is standard by which people should adhere to if they are Australian, I think Australia is a multicultural society and the make up of this country is of 200 nationalities and we are living very harmoniously, even in Fairfield, were I work... Very diverse area with people from different backgrounds... it is very different than living in some maybe Anglo dominated area.... (Kamran)*

Both Akbar and Kamran clarified that questions about being Australian are complex since society is complex. Akbar was particular clear about what this challenge was:

*When you come to Australia, very difficult to say yes or no [to whether or not you are an Australian], because Australia has good people, bad people... (Akbar)*
For something, like human rights, I stand behind Australia, yes, Australian people, but for the racism I never see myself as Australian… (Akbar)

Even though Akbar is very clear that there are certain elements in Australia he does not identify with he never says he feels Australian, because the term is too loaded, he still recognises Australia is home:

It is home, family now here, and I tell you, I don’t have an option to choose, only option I have… I have to accept here is my home… (Akbar)

To identify with Australia can also be a more evident challenge for some:

Me personally really hard to say I am Australian because wherever I go, this is white people, this is Asian people, I don’t want to, how to say, identify myself I am Australian or I belong to Australia because I agree I live in Australia, I follow some of the Australian culture, but sometimes very hard for me to miss, or forget Burma, my own culture, or fit into the Australian society, with the Australian culture… (Tun)

I am not saying Australia bad, I just feel I have really hard fit into that society…. If I say I am Australian white people, quiet funny for me, you know what I mean. That is why I realize myself, okay, I am Karen, but I live in here. Because everywhere Australian people also they address people like a migrant or refugee… If they feel they are not white, they say you are a migrant, you are migrant or refugee people… (Tun)

For Javed this issue has been pertinent. When I asked him to talk about how he identified himself now, he explained:

On the surface I would say a refugee who came to Australia 14 years ago… it is just a label… and sometimes you don’t like those labels… (Javed)

The tip of the ice berg, I mean an ordinary person, a student, which is trying to get a better job, better life, in the society, that is who I am. But if you want to go to the bottom of the iceberg, which is a lot of, it is 90 percent of me… a very sensitive person…. I am not a fighter… I am not an achiever in that sense… I would call myself an observer… (Javed)
The above comment shows the complexities about identity and the many levels it can be understood. Javed does not mention any deeper alliance towards Australia or anywhere else. His identity is not nationalistic, ethnic, religious, nor occupational:

*I don’t see any borders, it is just another part of the earth, I just happen to live here... And I accept it... I might be in Africa in 20 years tome, I don’t know...* (Javed)

*I do not feel like belonging, not even here or anywhere, or in my country, I lost that sense. Belonging is gone.... On the surface it is just what I have... the keyboard at home... the car...* (Javed)

**Theme 6: Employment**

The men in all interviews and discussions spoke of employment.

_Employment is one of the major fields that most of the men are lacking, they are not employed and this give them a little bit more negative life in Australia and settlement (Peter)_

For most men, it was not possible to get the same work as the work they had done before coming to Australia; they lacked ‘Australian experience’:

_They have done many jobs, in Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan or somewhere else, they have real experience, but when they arrive here they find it hard finding a job, so they switch to another thing (Hassan)_

_When I knock on every door, telling them I work for you as a volunteer, I don’t need any money only to get one letter from you that I have experience with you, for six months for example. I can’t find anyone to help me (Anton)_

_The thing I didn’t like, when I say I have certificate, I am an engineer, but no one give me job for that (Anton)_

_I work another job... It is not my job but I did it... 180 degrees different between my job and this job you know (Anton)_
Mark who had been a Principal at a school in Iraq and who was a trained teacher, did have his degree recognized but he could not get any job because he also lacked Australian experience:

*I had to start a job, I find a job, I start working, I working, I worked a couple of years in a printing company* (Mark)

Mark and Anton are now very positive and with an active social life, engaged with the seniors church group, they feel they have supported their families and they live without fear:

*I can work anything, while I go to bed at night; there is not headache*... (Anton)

*No thinking about tomorrow, maybe someone standing at my door, to tell me something bad and take me to prison* (Anton)

*Here is freedom and anyone look to you as a human being*... (Anton)

*Be positive, all the time and keep yourself happy*... (Anton)

However, for many the challenges around finding the right job can be very difficult to deal with:

*You see how it affects your identity as a person, you just want to do something, but the job is not what you planned to do when you came to Australia, you just have to take these, what you call it, low jobs just to keep life going. I can feel it is affecting their personality*... (Peter)

*I never thought that I would one day working as a mechanic or technician, but I just learnt it and then I was doing it, to keep working, but it was not my area of work, it was just the only thing I can do... It was a little bit of demotion so in that case you are not really feeling you are in your right place... so this for me, but happening to many* (Peter)

*‘Demoted’ and ‘wasted’*

The issue is not always that no work is available, it is more that the work available, or
offered, is different from what they have done before. All the men recognised that men from a refugee background were in some ways demoted when they came to Australia:

>You have to support your family working in, for example, a factory.... But that is not you, you see back in my country, I was working with NGO’s... so I little bit demoted myself. It is hard to feel you belong here in Australia if you feel demoted you see (Peter)

>Many people say, when I was in my country, I was an engineer, I was a doctor, but when you came here, you lose it, everything, or something lost (Tun)

>A lot of highly professionals coming as refugees but they Government... is not planning well to utilize these skills... Maybe get them into the workforce instead of getting more newly skilled migrants... (Peter)

>You see sometimes people who have been a professional in their country, you see medical doctor or professor in the university, currently right now there is nothing they can do they are just working maybe as interpreters, some of them can go as far as working as security guards or Taxi drivers... (Akbar)

>Their potential has not been fulfilled; they are just trying to find a better place... (Javed)

For Peter, who has not just experienced the sense he was demoted, he has also worked with many men from different countries sees this as a serious challenge and it causes men to doubt themselves, particularly if they had been ‘successful’ in their country of origin. They judge themselves harshly:

>Highly qualified [as in educated] can have starting their own judgment on their successfulness in Australia (Peter)

Zaw who has been working as a cleaner for over 10 years in Australia told me about his previous experiences and responsibilities:

>[In the factory] It is all illegal worker from the Burma side, Karen people, 400 people. After the boss, me, I up on manager, work manager under me. I have to look after all the work. I did the drawings and every, eh, process you know so I
have to look around, something wrong I have to fix, I have to teach for that (Zaw)

Since arriving in Australia, Zaw studied for 5 years at TAFE. He has been unable to utilise his previous skills or the skills acquired while at TAFE:

Almost 10 years, the same school. Before, I worked in different school... I want to be full time artist... I grow up to paint, but here I can’t do my right job (Zaw)

The difficulty in finding work because of a lack of Australia experience was a major obstacle:

Waste of talent... If I worked as a teacher I be very good, for in my country I did 20 years... I do very good job, I was the principal of a school (Mark)

Very common problem, because they looking for Australian experiences... destroy too many people coming to this country... refugees... (Mark)

I am [an example] a doctor in my country for 25 years, when I come here, even when I have a lot of experience, I have to study again. My hair already grey (Tun)

Some of them are much more wiser and cleverer than the people living in society and holding a position. I have seen them, very intelligent people come here because of the situation in their countries and they go back into their own detention because of that drop down. (Javed)

Javed explains how debilitating this experience can be for some men:

It is like jumping from a ten-story building, you are going to sit there because your legs hurt, you are not going to run around and say okay, where is the good restaurant... And these periods are often two three years of their life time and they are not young people they are just people ready to go into society. (Javed)

The men spoke of their willingness to change and adjust, in order to make money for their families:

It is not my field but I am trying another way to keep my self happy and to keep my family happy (Anton)
Peter highlights the danger when a person is not able to gain employment:

_The person who has not ability to getting into the workforce, they get a lot of negativity about settlement in Australia because if you just stay at home, do nothing, depending on these social security, sometime not enough, you have to pay your bills, some men end up with this mental issue, frustration with life, they can’t get a job. They might have too much alcohol, become alcoholic, the mental issues. We have many clients who have that situation actually (Peter)_

**Practical Support and Challenges**

Tun and Peter help out by providing different courses, so the men can get started in the workforce but also to become more independent:

_We organize cleaning courses, actually very marginal type of job sometimes, because there is nothing we can do but linking with this type of marginal type of job training so they can get something to do (Peter)_

_I try to open their eyes and the door... But everything depend on you right... Gain some experience and then after that you can apply for other job (Tun)_

When he talks about the Government agencies that are meant to support people with employment, Peter says:

_There is actually a complaint that they don’t do much, especially for people from a refugee background (Peter)_

_The disadvantaged are always the losers, if there is a lack of employment... people form a refugee background with less English, no qualifications, they will always be left out... (Peter)_

Peter talks about his own experience and how he worked in manual work, despite having been a professional back in his country. For Peter this demonstrates the capabilities many men do have, if given an opportunity. He also explains how he was asked to get someone to help him, so he got an asylum seeker to help out, a technician. Others spoke about the importance of a social network to help you out with employment:
Yes, to apply for jobs, normally online applications for, we never get. What we have to find ourselves, if your friend works somewhere, if they have vacancy, tell me to their supervisor... recommendations like that, very easy to find job, but not online application (Zaw)

I know some friends, they have been welders... good welders... worked for five, six, seven years but when they arrive here they find it very hard to find a job as a welder so they switch to tiling.... The problem is they don’t speak English, this is the main barrier, so they can’t get into contact with companies or other people who are working as welders.... Instead many Afghan tillers and painters...
(Hassan)

For those who arrive and study in Australia, there are other challenges. Hassan talks about some of these challenges and the difficulty finding a job when you graduate. Some of his friends have said they do think they are sometimes discriminated against, but Hassan puts forward a different perspective:

Sometimes they are... applying for a job, I see they don’t really, when they apply, they don’t care about how they apply, I mean sometimes I see their resumes or cover letter, if I was the manager I would say ‘ah no, it is not good’... So I think it is not about discrimination, maybe there are some... For example, if you are doing an engineering course, there is not much writing in engineering... you still need to... get someone to help out you (Hassan)