Race, Rurality & Respectability

English Villagers, Eastern European Migrants and the intersection of Whiteness and Class in Rural England

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Abstract

In this research project, which is based on 12 months of residential ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the intersection of whiteness and social class in a rural English village. Drawing on a body of literature known as ‘critical whiteness studies’ I bring attention to the presence of race in this village location, and argue that although whiteness is largely invisible to the white English village residents, it nonetheless shapes their daily lives in numerous and important ways. I analyse how village residents claim a sense of belonging in the rural Worcestershire village of ‘Mayfield’ through attachments to place, to history and to people, and how belonging is also secured by unconscious, banal and everyday performances of whiteness, Englishness and rurality. Here I adopt Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of cultural capital to argue that although the residents of Mayfield are demographically diverse, what unites them is their ‘commonsense’ understandings of how to fit in with local social networks, ‘respectable’ ways of living, and the associated decorums of whiteness.

I am particularly concerned with how white English village residents define their identity and belonging in opposition to white Eastern European migrant labourers who work on the village’s horticultural farms. I argue that in securing their position of hegemonic whiteness, villagers draw upon finely-tuned class distinctions and a racist rhetoric of difference, which positions the migrants as a different ‘shade’ of white. The migrants have white skins, but without the necessary cultural capital, they are positioned by Mayfield residents as low-status Others who cannot be integrated into village life. While the primary focus of this research is the English villagers of Mayfield, I also incorporate the migrants’ perspective. In Mayfield, Eastern European migrants are talked about but not talked-to; observed but not known. Therefore the inclusion of migrant narratives in my thesis is an attempt to address this imbalance.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In this thesis I seek to transport the reader to a village location in the English countryside to elucidate how the formation of white rural identities is entwined with social class as well as ties to people and place. My findings are based on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a village I shall refer to as ‘Mayfield’ in Worcestershire, which is situated in the West Midlands region of England.¹ Drawing on a range of sociological and anthropological literature from the field of critical whiteness studies, I draw attention to the presence and relevance of race in Mayfield, and highlight the ways in which whiteness shapes the lives of the English village residents.

I also provide an in-depth analysis of how processes of social inclusion and exclusion operate in Mayfield, and how ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status is determined. In doing so I build upon a range of anthropological studies of community (Cohen, 1982; Strathern 1981, 1982a, 1982b; Edwards, 1998) to explain how different village residents carve out a sense of belonging for themselves based on kinship ties, attachments to history and social networks. I also address the ways in which belonging is secured by unconscious, banal and everyday performances of whiteness, Englishness and rurality. Although the residents of Mayfield are internally differentiated in terms of their social class status, gender, age, political and religious persuasions, sexuality, employment, and length of residence in the village among other factors, what unites them is an unspoken understanding of how to fit into the local model of respectable rural living. In this thesis I adopt Bourdieu’s (1984)

¹ Mayfield is a pseudonym, as are all other given names and place names used throughout (with the exception of Worcestershire, which is a real county).
concept of cultural capital to argue that although the residents of Mayfield are demographically diverse, they share ‘commonsense’ understandings of how to fit in with local social networks, ‘respectable’ ways of living, and the associated decorums of whiteness.

A central focus of this thesis is how rural English whiteness is imagined, performed and understood by village residents in opposition to Eastern European migrants who, since the enlargement of the EU in 2004, have arrived in Mayfield to work on the village’s several horticultural farms. I am interested in how migrant workers are perceived by villagers, in relation to classed discourses of white English respectability, as ‘not quite white’ or ‘not white enough’ to be integrated into the social life of the village. I argue that discourses separating white villagers from white migrants are based on class-based distinctions and processes of ‘ethnicisation’, which are informed by racist rhetoric. Although the migrants have white skins, they are positioned by village residents as Other due to their lack of cultural capital.

While the primary focus of this research is the English villagers of Mayfield, I also incorporate the narratives of a small number of Eastern European migrants, which were obtained through a combination of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In Mayfield, Eastern European migrants’ presence is screened out and their experiences of living and working in the English countryside are overlooked. Therefore, the inclusion of the migrant voice in my thesis is an attempt to address this disparity. The migrants’ narratives demonstrate that whiteness is not lived and experienced in a uniform way in Mayfield, but that various groups and individuals are differently positioned in relation to whiteness and the privileges that this racial identity is assumed to ensure.
Having set out the central themes of this thesis, the remainder of this chapter will situate my work within the context of existing academic research that has addressed the issue of white hegemony and the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from rural England. I then discuss the theoretical framework that I adopt in my analysis, and explain the importance of ethnographic methods in my research. I go on to set out the key aims of my study, and conclude the chapter by giving an overview of the structure and content of the thesis.

**The English Countryside: A Contested Construct**

The discourse of the English countryside as a ‘rural idyll’ remains dominant and pervasive in the popular imagination. For example, long-running television and radio programmes such as *Last of the Summer Wine*, *The Vicar of Dibley*, and *The Archers* all contribute to the construction of the rural as predominantly (if not exclusively) white, unchanging, quaint, pastoral, and comprised of strong kinship and community ties. Even the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic games, which, according to the artistic director, represented ‘a picture of ourselves as a nation’ began with the transformation of the athletics stadium into a countryside vista entitled ‘Green and Pleasant’ featuring farmyard animals, children dancing around maypoles, ‘meadows, fields and rivers, with families taking picnics, people playing sports on the village green and farmers tilling the soil’ all set to the sound of a young boy singing ‘Jerusalem’ (BBC, 2012). In historical and contemporary context, this idyllic image of the rural has played an important symbolic role in defining and representing ‘Englishness’, and I shall explore this role in greater depth in chapter two.
As the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony also reminded us with its imagery of smoking industrial chimneys growing out of the meadows and fields, the construct of the English ‘green and pleasant land’ is held in a dichotomous relationship with English urban landscapes. Where the English countryside has come to be understood through the idiom of the idyll, English urban landscapes are characterised in opposition as synonymous with industry, change, social isolation and individualism, danger, noise, pollution, and multiculture. For this reason, immigration and racial and ethnic diversity are often perceived as being urban issues which are ‘out of place’ or irrelevant in the countryside. For example, the anti-racist policy document *Keep them in Birmingham* written by Eric Jay (1992) on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality highlighted that in the rural imagination, black and minority ethnic people are confined to towns and cities representing an ‘alien’ urban environment, while ‘the white landscape of rurality is aligned with ‘nativeness’’ (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997: 199). This reveals the tenacity of the discourse which constructs the English countryside as a landscape in which an ‘essence’ of ‘pure’ or ‘true’ white English ethnicity is distilled.

However, the popular discourse of the rural idyll has been challenged and critiqued in the academic fields of rural studies, social geography and sociology. For example, in *Rural Identities*, Sarah Neal (2009) sets out the contrasting yet parallel discourses of the English countryside as a rural idyll, and the English countryside in crisis. Neal (2009: 5) reminds us that the discourse of the rural idyll draws upon imaginings of timelessness, a sense of community, safety and security, neighbourliness, small-scale and local agricultural economies, and proximity to nature and rural traditions. By contrast but also in parallel, she argues, the discourse of the English rural in crisis cites the demise of these characteristics and constructs
the contemporary countryside in terms of constant change, the breakdown of communities, commuting, closure of shops and social amenities, lack of neighbourliness, rural re-structuring and the rise of agri-business, and ‘attacks and restrictions on rural practices and traditions’ (2009: 5).

It was these co-constitutive discourses of the rural idyll and the rural in crisis, in conjunction with the denial and invisibility of white, rural middle-class privilege that instigated this research project, and I would like to pause at this juncture to explain how the inspiration for this study came from my experience of growing up in a small rural village in South West England. One event in particular sowed questions in my mind about social class, whiteness as a taken-for-granted identity in the English countryside, and the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from rural areas.

In September 2002, when I was 21 years-old, Robin Page, former presenter of the BBC television programme One Man and His Dog and columnist for the Telegraph and the Daily Mail gave a speech at the annual country fair in the village where I lived to urge fairgoers to attend the Liberty and Livelihood march in London organised by the Countryside Alliance. In his speech to the crowd Mr Page complained that rural people and their ways of life were being ignored, marginalised and misunderstood by the then Labour government. He lamented the ban on fox hunting, which he used as an example to prove the government’s ignorance about rural livelihoods and pastimes. He claimed that the white rural population of England were recipients of governmental prejudice who are denied the rights afforded to

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2 A BBC programme that televised sheep-dog trials.
3 The Liberty and Livelihood march, held in London on September 22nd 2002, saw a crowd of 400,000 people protesting against the then Labour government’s ban on fox hunting. The Countryside Alliance is an organisation, which claims to be the ‘voice of the countryside’ and to ‘work for everyone who loves the countryside and the rural way of life’ (www.countryside-alliance.org). Its campaigns include the promotion of hunting, shooting and fishing, the prevention of fly tipping (unauthorised dumping of rubbish in public places), the repeal of the fox hunting ban, and a campaign against the closure of rural services.
minority groups. Labouring his point, Mr Page launched into a personal attack on a number of MPs and political figures as well as ethnic, racial and religious minorities, immigrants, lesbians, and the disabled. In what he has since described as a ‘light-hearted fashion’ he addressed the audience thus:

In case any of you are of a fragile disposition and easily offended, please go for a walk round the lake and come back when I have finished. If there is a black, vegetarian, Muslim, asylum-seeking, one-legged, lesbian lorry driver present then you may be offended at what I am going to say, because I want the same rights as you (The Telegraph, 2008).

It is unclear what rights black people, vegetarians, Muslims, asylum-seekers, people with disabilities, lesbians, and lorry drivers have, which would, in Robin Page’s opinion, afford them privileges which exceed those enjoyed by white, meat-eating, able-bodied, heterosexual rural dwellers who enjoy a spot of fox hunting.

I stood in disbelief as I listened to Mr Page and looked around to see the crowd applauding a man who in one short speech had positioned white (predominantly middle class) rural villagers as the most marginalised minority group in Britain. A few days later Robin Page was arrested on suspicion of inciting racial hatred following a small number of complaints from members of the public. However, after brief questioning he was released from police custody with a fine of £50. He later told the BBC that he believed that ‘country people should have the same rights and protection under the law as any other minority group in a multi-cultural society’ and he said that his arrest was an example of the way that country people had been ‘victimised’ by the establishment (BBC, 2002). Six years later in January 2008 the Daily Mail reported that Robin Page had been awarded £2000 compensation after
being ‘wrongly arrested’ after his ‘joke introduction to a pro-hunting speech’ (*Daily Mail*, 2008).

It was not just the bigoted content of Robin Page’s speech that led me to thinking about racism, minority exclusion and whiteness in the English countryside. I was also deeply discomforted by the positioning of white, middle class, pro-hunt supporters as ‘victims’ whose claims to English traditions have become peripheral and misunderstood, and by extension, the claim that white English cultural practices and ethnicity are under threat. Equally problematic for me was the construction of the white rural population as homogeneous and united against ‘prejudice’, and above all, the applause Mr Page received from a crowd of some of the most racially and socio-economically privileged people in the country. The threat to rural England perceived by Robin Page was also presented as a threat to white English culture. Thus he drew upon the co-constitutive discourses of the contemporary English countryside as a rural idyll (which should be fought-for and preserved) and the rural in crisis (*Neal, 2009*), by focusing on the then government’s ban on fox hunting as an example of the restriction of rural practices.

Since Robin Page gave his controversial speech in 2002, a small number of popular non-fiction books have contributed to this debate about the state of rural England and it’s reflection of the meaning and character of contemporary Englishness (cf. *Scruton, 2006; Kingsnorth, 2007; Askwith, 2007*). There is no doubt that rural England is undergoing processes of change and restructuring. For example, counter-urbanisation and the flow of urban to rural migrants is altering the demographic make-up of rural populations; fundamental shifts in agricultural production towards large-scale agri-business have had an important effect on rural economies; loss of agricultural employment has meant an increase in commuting behaviours; and
increases in house prices have altered the average age of rural dwellers (Neal, 2009). However, rather than nostalgically constructing these changes as symptomatic of the erosion of rural English culture and identity, we might instead view them in terms of evolution. It is within the context of these processes of rural, agricultural, economic, social, ethnic, and cultural change that this thesis is situated.

**Economic and Social Restructuring in Rural England: Agri-business and Gentrification**

Since World War Two, the English countryside has been engaged in a continuous process of social and economic restructuring. It is within this broad national context – which has witnessed the rapid rise of capitalist productivism and agri-business, increased mechanisation and technological advancements, economic and agricultural crises, diversification, and a transformation in the rural class structure – that my ethnography of Mayfield is situated. In the following section of this chapter I will chart the ways in which the rural economy (with a focus on the south of England) has changed since the middle of the twentieth century, and the impact that this has had on rural populations particularly in relation to rural gentrification.

From around 1945 to the late 1970’s, a period of productivism predominated within British agriculture. Halfacree (2007: 128) defines productivism as ‘the positioning of agriculture as an efficient production maximiser… a progressive and expanding food production-oriented industry in the typical capitalist mould’. During this post-war period the state sought to facilitate a transition from farming as a ‘way of life’ to farming as a commercial economic sector that would embrace technological modernisation and thus productivity and efficiency (Murdoch & Ward, 1997: 320).
As Commins (1990: 45-61) has highlighted, capital-intensive technologies soon began to replace human labour and raised production and productivity, and this has meant that a decline in the farm labour-force has been a universal feature of modern agricultural restructuring in rural Britain.

As a result, Marsden et al (2002: 810) have argued, since the twentieth century there has been a consequent and ‘growing severance… between ager and cultura, field from farming community, and nature from human society’. In other words, rural land is conceived of simply as a productive resource in the pursuit of profit-maximisation and agri-business ‘treats the earth as a resource to be exploited through the denial of its cultural significance’ (Marsden et al, 2002: 810). In the productivist countryside the rural landscape has no cultural, environmental, aesthetic or historic value; it is simply viewed in terms of its productive and profit-generating potential. As I shall explain in chapter five, the landscape of Mayfield and its surrounding area has been significantly shaped by the demands of productivism: dominated by acres of glasshouses and polytunnels which enable the horticultural growers to farm fruit and vegetables intensively, and to extend the growing season. The activities of the capitalist growers in Mayfield are increasingly separate from those of the village community. Before the Second World War horticulture and village were one and the same – they were inseparably entwined as almost all village residents were directly involved in the horticulture industry. And while horticulture is still central to the village’s identity, and many villagers engage in horticultural activities on a subsistence level, very few village residents are employed by the large agri-businesses who instead recruit seasonal labourers from Eastern Europe.

The intensity of the productivist era was not sustainable however. By the 1970’s many farmers (particularly those operating on a small to medium scale) found
that they could not keep up with the demands of the rapidly expanding food-production industry, and there was growing public concern over the environmental effects of such intensive agricultural activity on rural areas. As a result, Halfacree (1997: 71) argues, ‘British farmers began both to feel and, indeed, to experience an increasing sense of insecurity and uncertainty as regards their position in both agriculture and rural life generally.’ Moreover, in a time of economic recession, the general public began to criticise the monetary support that farmers were being given as ‘guardians of the countryside’ (Halfacree, 1997: 71). Consequently there emerged high levels of debt and economic insecurity among farmers, and subsequently, a growing involvement in non-food-producing activities through diversification into services such as bed and breakfast accommodation and the transformation of barns into wedding and party venues. Increasingly, rural spaces have begun to be used for non-agricultural purposes, and consumption interests have begun to predominate over production interests, with the rural viewed as a desirable space of residence, particularly for the middle classes. The ‘crisis of productivism’, Halfacree (1997: 72) argues, may indicate that ‘the hegemonic domination of rural areas and rural society by agriculture… is coming to an end’, and therefore, a new era post-productivism may signal a new way of understanding and structuring the countryside in a more fragmented, diverse, and even subversive way. Counter-urbanisation has played an important role in the production of contemporary rural space, as I shall now explain in more detail.

Economic restructuring has had an important impact on the rural social order in England. In the south of England in particular, social and economic change has been significantly affected by the growth of financial and commercial capital in London. As Cloke and Thrift (1990: 172) have highlighted, London’s:
…satellite centres and radial motorway corridors, along with the outward migration of urban industrial capital have been associated with widespread recomposition in rural society. Not only are commuter and dormitory functions increasingly being imposed on rural localities at ever greater distances from London, but also economic changes have led to the growth of a new service class that has colonised particular locations.

Murdoch et al (2003) have also documented the ways in which counter-urbanisation has led to the transformation of rural areas due to changes in the class structure, notably the rapid growth of the middle class. Furthermore, Marsden et al (2002: 823) suggest that as a result of rural restructuring and commuting behaviours:

… we can expect a growing colonisation of former agricultural holdings by ex-urban middle-class groups as a result of the regional and sectoral disparities between the housing and agricultural land markets. For this reason… more ex-urban groups are going to wish to buy a slice of rural land as a more extreme expression of the suburban lifestyle… This means that agricultural land (and especially) building prices will be kept high despite the continued fall in agricultural incomes.

The study of the migration of middle-class urbanites began in the 1960’s with Pahl’s classic study of London’s metropolitan fringe in Hertfordshire. But what of more peripheral rural localities across the country? Cloke and Thrift (1990: 172) argue that there is equally important evidence of social and economic restructuring and recomposition in such areas. The decline in manufacturing and agricultural activities, and the investment in services by both public and private sector organisations have meant that new job opportunities have been partly responsible for counter-
urbanisation and attracting new populations to rural areas. This is certainly the case in Mayfield, as I discovered when many of my interviewees cited job opportunities in the local information technology, telecommunications, energy services, pharmaceutical and health sectors (among others) as the reason for their move into the village.

There is no doubt that different areas of rural England are developing in different ways depending on the structure of their local economies, their proximity to metropolitan hubs, and the socio-economic and demographic composition of their populations. The gentrification of the countryside has been well documented, but as Murdoch et al (2003) explore through their notion of the ‘differentiated countryside’, patterns of geographical, economic and social diversity can still be found in rural areas across the country. Mayfield has not been ‘gentrified’ per se. Although many of its residents no longer work in the horticultural industry, horticulture past and present is still central to the village’s identity. Many of the villagers of Mayfield whom I met during my research described it as a ‘working village’, and I analyse this idiom in further depth in chapter five. As Murdoch and Marsden (1994: 14) explain, as local economies ‘become increasingly characterised by middle-class occupations, so there is an increased middle-class presence in proximate rural localities’, and Mayfield is no exception. However, its distance from London (just over two hours by train) has meant that it has not become a dormitory for second-home owners or wealthy commuters, and residents were keen to point this out to me.

One further point to note is that although rural areas have witnessed an increase in middle-class populations due to a decline in employment in manufacturing and agriculture, and increase in employment in the service sectors, and a subsequent increase in counter-urbanisation, these middle-class ‘gentrifiers’ have been
predominantly white. So while the economic and social restructuring of the post war English countryside has had a significant impact on the class structure of rural areas, there has not been such a marked adjustment in the ethnic and racial composition of rural populations.

I am particularly interested in the impact that shifts in the agricultural and horticultural industries towards intensive farming practices, mass production, and capitalist agri-business models are having on rural areas, especially in relation to the sourcing of cheap and plentiful labour from outside Britain. Since 2004, when the ‘Accession 8’ countries including Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia joined the EU, large numbers of Eastern European migrants have found employment in the British agricultural and horticultural sectors, working long hours in rural locations, often for substandard wages. Needless to say, the arrival of Eastern European migrants in rural areas of England does not sit neatly with the romantic concept of the ‘rural idyll’. In contrast to the ‘picture postcard’ images discussed earlier which portray rural areas as unchanging, epitomising a quaint Englishness frozen in time, tens of thousands of Eastern European migrant workers are arriving in the English countryside each year to work in the multimillion pound fruit and vegetable growing, processing, and distribution industries. Large-scale, intensive growers are replacing small market gardening businesses to meet the demands of supermarkets and consumers nationwide.

Rural employers’ reliance on an Eastern European labour force has begun to be addressed in the popular media (for example, the BBC’s documentary entitled ‘The Day the Immigrants Left’ set in Cambridgeshire and broadcast on 24th October 2010). However, the social implications for both the settled population and migrants
in villages like Mayfield have not yet been explored. To date, the British sociological and ethnographic literature on social cohesion between majority and minority populations and multi-ethnic ‘communities’ has largely focused on urban locations (cf. Back, 1996; Fortier, 2007; Reay, 2007, 2008). Since the enlargement of the EU in 2004, significant academic attention has been paid to the experiences of Eastern European migrants in urban areas of the UK, particularly Polish migrants in London (cf. Eade et al, 2007; Garapich & Eade, 2009; Ryan et al, 2008; 2009). However, far less attention has been paid to Eastern European migrants’ lives in rural areas of the UK where increasing numbers are arriving to conduct low-paid, unskilled work in horticulture and agriculture, food processing and packaging, hospitality, and care work. In general there is a shortage of academic research on issues of ethnicity, migration and multiculturalism in the English countryside and my research seeks to address this gap in the literature.

**Situating my Research**

The following section of this chapter situates my research in relation to existing literature about the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from rural areas. In particular I explore the parallels and differences between my research and that of Sarah Neal & Sue Walters (2008), Neal (2009) and Katharine Tyler (2003, 2006, 2012a, 2012b). In doing so, I also highlight the unique contribution that this thesis makes to the field, specifically in relation to my use of ethnographic methods, my concern with the exclusion of white Eastern European migrants rather than postcolonial minorities from a rural setting, my inclusion of the voices of rurally excluded Eastern European migrants as well as rurally included English village
residents, and finally, my use of critical whiteness studies as an analytical framework.

I begin with a brief overview of the existing research that has been conducted on the subject of rural racism, which I shall expand upon in chapter two.

A small but significant body of research from rural studies, social geography, sociology and social policy has addressed the exclusion of minority groups from rural areas across Britain. For example, Robinson and Gardner (2004) have highlighted the experiences of black and minority ethnic people in rural Wales, Connolly (2006) has investigated racism in rural Northern Ireland, de Lima (2006) has explored the experiences of rural minority ethnic households in Scotland, and several studies have revealed the extent of minority exclusion from the English countryside (Neal & Agyeman, 2006; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004; Cloke & Little, 1997; Milbourne, 1997). In addition, the public policy documents *Not in Norfolk: Tackling the Invisibility of Racism* (Derbyshire, 1994), and the aforementioned *Keep them in Birmingham* (Jay, 1992) have exposed the widespread evasion of issues related to race, racism and ethnicity in rural England.

The recognition of ethnic minority exclusion from rural areas and the exposure of the racism which exists in many areas of the English countryside has inspired much academic debate and has had some important policy implications. However, Murdoch and Pratt (1994) suggest that to tackle the root of the problem, rural studies scholars must shift their focus from the rurally excluded to the rural excluders. They pose the question ‘should we not attempt to reveal the ways of the powerful, exploring the means by which they make and sustain their domination?’ (cited in Neal, 2009: 7).

With this in mind, one of the key aims of this thesis is to uncover the processes through which hegemonic whiteness operates in a rural Worcestershire village to perpetrate and perpetuate the social exclusion of minority groups. The main focus of
this project, therefore, is upon the ‘rurally included’ who Sarah Neal has succinctly described as ‘those rural populations who can appear to make a confident, dominant, and seemingly uncontested claim to rural belonging’ (2009: 7).

Tyler (2003, 2006, 2012a, 2012b), Neal and Walters (2008) and Neal (2009) have also conducted studies of the ‘rurally included’ and there are some key similarities and differences between their work and my own. Tyler has ethnographically explored the intersection of whiteness and social class in the suburban village of ‘Greenville’ in Leicestershire, where her research revealed the ways in which villagers construct their white middle-class identities in relation to middle-class British Asian residents. In her own words, Tyler draws upon the critical whiteness studies literature to explore ‘the complex cultural politics of white ethnic identities in everyday English settings’ (2012a: 1). Therefore, there are some important methodological and analytical parallels between our explorations of the formation of white identities in village contexts. However, there are also some key differences. For example, I extend the ethnographic approach to the study of whiteness and class to a more typical rural location whose local economy has traditionally been dominated by the horticulture and agriculture industries, and whose population is almost exclusively white.

In addition, Tyler’s (2003, 2006, 2012b) study of suburban villagers in Leicestershire focuses upon the construction of white, middle-class identities in relation to the affluent Asian Other. By contrast, I am interested in the ways in which rural English villagers secure a sense of identity and belonging in opposition to a new Other in rural Worcestershire – white Eastern European migrant workers – who since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, have found employment in the local agriculture and horticulture sectors in large numbers. While the main focus of my
ethnography is the white English villagers of Mayfield, I also capture the counter-narratives of a small number of Eastern European migrants in my thesis. By presenting their views alongside those of the villagers, I create a space to listen to migrants’ experiences of living and working in rural England. Crucially, their narratives also provide an important alternative perspective on processes of social inclusion and exclusion in the Worcestershire countryside.

Although the exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities from rural areas has received a substantial amount of academic attention, few studies have taken such a dialogical approach, addressing the narratives of the rurally included as well as the rurally excluded. For example, the Asian residents’ narratives of life in the suburban village of Greenville were absent from Tyler’s (2003, 2006, 2012a, 2012b) study because she was primarily concerned with the formation of white middle-class identities in opposition to the British Asian Other. Even fewer studies have examined the specific experiences of Eastern European migrants in the English countryside. This may be explained by the fact that large-scale Eastern European migration to the English countryside is a relatively recent phenomenon, which certainly warrants further investigation.

As well as building upon and extending some of the central themes of Tyler’s research, I have also been heavily influenced by the work of Neal and Agyeman (2006), Neal and Walters (2008) and Neal (2009). As Neal (2009: 2) explains, she and Agyeman (2006) have challenged the ways in which ‘rural landscapes have become whitened geographical territories sustaining particular fantasies of the nation’. In doing so, she has drawn attention to the practices of the rurally included, particularly in relation to processes of community making, the relationship between the rural and Englishness, and the connection between ethnicity, the social and the natural. Unlike
Tyler, Neal and Walters (2008) and Neal (2009) have conducted their research in more typical rural environments. For example, their recent research, which draws upon the focus-group narratives of members of the Women’s Institute (WI) and members of the National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (NFYFC), was conducted in rural Hertfordshire, North Devon and Northumberland. However, whilst my work is similar to Neal’s in this respect, our studies differ in methodological terms. In contrast to Neal’s focus-group based research with the WI and the NFYFC, my study is an ethnographic exploration of the lives and discourses of the rurally included, and the daily, routine, and largely unnoticed ways in which their ethnic, class, and social privilege is secured in Mayfield. The findings presented in this thesis are based on 12 months of residential ethnographic fieldwork where I conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews with English village residents and focus groups with Eastern European migrant workers who live and work at large horticultural nurseries in and around Mayfield. Therefore, my research is distinct from that of Neal, due to my inclusion of the narratives of the rurally excluded as well as the included, my methodological approach, and also my use of the critical whiteness studies literature both to inform and interpret my fieldwork.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this thesis I explore the construction of white racial identities, their connection with social class and place, and the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from the rural English village of Mayfield through the lens of critical whiteness studies. I have found this body of literature to be particularly useful for thinking through these issues because of its role in developing ‘a critical language to render visible the local,
national and global power and privilege that shapes white ethnicities in Western societies’ (Tyler, 2012a: 1). In her influential book *White Women, Race Matters*, Frankenberg (1993) argues that too often white people consider themselves to be racially unmarked and culturally ‘empty’, only assuming identity in relation of racial and ethnic Others. One of the key challenges for critical whiteness studies therefore, is to contest the normative status of whiteness.

In order to challenge white people’s blindness to their own racial status, and their situation in local, national, and global racist hierarchies, attention must be paid to the construction of ‘white experience’ in social contexts where the hierarchical racial order is normalised and rationalised. As Hartigan (1999) argues, analysing the connections between white daily lives and dominant discourses may help to make visible the processes by which the stability of whiteness as a location of privilege, a standpoint, and a culturally normative space, is secured and reproduced. In doing so, he asserts that researchers should resist the urge to draw abstract conclusions about whiteness and blackness, and instead, gain insights into the ‘daily processes by which people make sense of racial matters in particular locales’ (Hartigan, 1999: 4). So following Hartigan, we can understand the social construction of race as an inherently local matter whereby racial identities are projected onto social space as a means of identifying individuals as ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, and thus positing their connection to collective social orders. Therefore, I focus in this thesis on the local setting of the village of Mayfield in rural Worcestershire to gain a deeper understanding of how white English village residents actually construct and live their lives in relation to race.

I attempt to deepen the theoretical insights of critical whiteness studies by providing a detailed analysis of the white cultural practices which the villagers of
Mayfield routinely perform in their daily rural lives. In doing so, I incorporate Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘cultural capital’ into my analysis to demonstrate how Mayfield residents are able to develop a sense of belonging in the village through their unconscious and common sense cultural knowledges of how to embody and perform respectable white English rurality. By contrast, Eastern European migrant horticultural workers who live and work on the village farms do not share this ‘cultural capital’. This means that they are marked as cultural and ethnic Others who do not conform to the local ‘decorums’ of English whiteness, and they are consequently perceived by villagers as ‘not quite white’.

The Village of Mayfield: A Brief Portrait

To the best of my knowledge, there is no existing sociological or ethnographic research on the social relations between different ethnic and racial groups in rural Worcestershire, perhaps due to the popular opinion that race and ethnicity are not pertinent issues in the county. Data collected by the county council however, acknowledges that Worcestershire is home to people from a broad range of ethnic, racial and national backgrounds. Whilst it is predominantly populated by white British citizens (92%), data suggests that there is a small but significant Polish, Dutch, Bengali, Punjabi, Romany and Portuguese presence in addition to many smaller groups. In 2011 Worcestershire county council estimated that ‘white Other’ was the largest minority group in county (1.5%) which is likely to comprise an increasing number of migrants from Eastern Europe (www.worcestershire.gov.uk).

The village of Mayfield, where my ethnography is based, is interesting because of its historical connection with the horticulture and agricultural industries,
which have significantly evolved in character over the last century. Prior to the
Second World War almost all village families would have been involved in
horticulture and agriculture, either at the level of subsistence farming to provide for
the family, or working self-employed or for a local landowner for commercial
purposes. The village’s history of growing fruit, vegetable, and arable crops is visible
throughout the village today; from the 16\textsuperscript{th} century black and white thatched cottages
which would once have been home to farm labourers and the selection of 16\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th}
century farmhouses in the village (some still functioning as farmhouses, some simply
residential), to the ‘antique’ glasshouses introduced by Dutch migrants in the 1940’s
and the annual maypole dancing on May Day to mark the beginning of the fine
summer weather and the growing season. Today the horticultural industry in
Mayfield is thriving thanks to the use of cutting-edge technologies. Glasshouses are
temperature-controlled, p.h.-balanced, designed to maximise light and minimise
shade, and plants are fed and watered via complex hydroponic and irrigation systems.
However, the planting, tending, and picking of fruits, vegetables and salad plants
continues to be done by hand. Traditionally this work would have been conducted by
village residents, but for reasons including low pay and anti-social hours, horticultural
labour is now largely considered undesirable by local people. This has meant that
horticultural growers have had to look further afield for their labour force, and today
most of their employees are recruited via agencies in Eastern European countries
including Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland.

Many people I met in Mayfield describe it as a ‘working village’, and this
conceptualisation of village identity has an important impact upon the way in which
Eastern European migrant horticultural labourers are perceived by village residents.
The notion of the working village not only reflects the village’s horticultural past and
present, but it also says something about its class composition and the number of small businesses that exist there, such as a carpenter, a plumber, a sign-writer, a hairdresser, a thatcher, and farm and construction machinery hire among others. In addition, the ‘place image’ (Watt, 2006) of the village as ‘working’ is a way of defining Mayfield in opposition to the numerous ‘picture postcard’ villages in the neighbouring Cotswolds, which have become gentrified and increasingly popular with commuters, second-homeowners and tourists. Village residents view Mayfield as the ‘real’ countryside: a place where people live and work. The horticulture industry is central to the notion of the working village, despite the fact that few local residents wish to work in the sector. Therefore, as I highlight in chapters five and six, many villagers recognise and accept that migrant labour plays an essential role in keeping the village’s horticultural industry afloat, and because they are working in this particular industry their presence fits in appropriately with Mayfield’s ‘working village’ identity.

In high season (April through September) there are approximately 300 Eastern European migrant workers living and working on the horticultural farms in Mayfield, and an increasing number are settling long-term in the nearby town of ‘Elmbridge’. In essence, I am concerned with the relationships between the white English majority and the white Eastern European minority in Mayfield, and the ways in which they are shaped by race and social class.

The Importance of Ethnography

Relatively early on in my PhD studies I decided that residential ethnographic fieldwork would be the most appropriate methodological approach for tackling questions of rural belonging and exclusion in Mayfield, the role of whiteness in
shaping villagers’ lives, and the processes through which Eastern European migrants are Othered by village residents. Rather than basing my analysis solely on interview data, it was important for me to develop a first-hand sense of place through participant observation, which added a deeper dimension to my data and my analysis. Residential ethnography allowed me to build up a fine-grained picture of village life, the social networks that exist in Mayfield, and the different ways in which different groups of residents claim a sense of belonging in the village. Understanding the latter was particularly useful for contextualising villagers’ perceptions of Eastern European migrant workers as I came to understand the conditions and terms of belonging and exclusion in the village. I also witnessed the weekly, monthly, and annual rhythms of village life and became aware of the day-to-day occurrences in Mayfield. Furthermore, taking part in social networks, clubs and events allowed me to gain a greater sense of what village life is like (rather than relying solely on interview testimonies), and crucially to make sense of the narratives and worldviews expressed by my interviewees in the interview setting.

As I shall explain in further detail in chapter four, I joined several clubs and societies in the village, attended and helped-out at various village social events, got to know my landlady’s friends and neighbours, visited the two village pubs and regularly used the village bus service, post office and shop. In short, I took part in the social life of the village. I found that forming relationships with village residents was an important part of the process of arranging interviews, and I was continually engaged in building relationships of trust, friendship, and reciprocity throughout the twelve months of fieldwork. In order to meet village residents, and also as a way of expressing my thanks and ‘returning the favour’ to my interviewees, I volunteered at several village social events and committees, and offered my babysitting, pet-sitting,
dog-walking, cake-baking, wine-tasting and charity stall-holding services among others.

The residents of Mayfield were aware that I was an ‘outsider’ who had come to conduct research in their village. Several times I was asked what my connection was to Mayfield, to which I replied ‘none, except that I had come to know the area through a good friend who lived in the neighbouring village’. As an outsider moving into Mayfield I personally learned a lot about negotiating access to social networks and the social structure of the village. For all of these reasons – and more, which I shall explore further in chapter four – conducting a residential ethnography played a vital role in achieving the aims of my research project.

**Research Aims**

The key aims of this thesis are as follows:

1. To explore how processes of inclusion and exclusion operate in Mayfield, and the role of whiteness and social class in these processes.
2. To understand how white English village residents affirm a sense of identity and belonging in Mayfield in opposition to Eastern European migrant workers.
3. To understand the ways in which Eastern European migrant workers are constructed as Other, and subsequently excluded from village life.
4. To gain a sense of the degree and nature of interaction between English village residents and Eastern European migrant workers.
5. To gain an understanding of the migrant workers’ experiences of living and working in rural Worcestershire.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review of some of the key literature from rural studies, sociology, and social geography on whiteness as a taken-for-granted identity in rural England, ethnic minority exclusion from rural areas, and the challenges associated with studying whiteness in the English countryside. I argue that ‘white people’ are not an homogenous group, and that white identity is fluid, multi-dimensional, and always overlaps and intersects with other axes of social division such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, historical and geographical context, and social class which complicate the study of whiteness. Drawing on literature from sociology and anthropology in British and American context, I also explore the intersection of social class and whiteness and the theory that different ‘shades’ of whiteness may exist whereby some whites are considered to be ‘more white’ than others due to variations in the possession of social, economic, and cultural capital. I then conclude chapter 2 with a discussion in support of Hartigan’s (1999) suggestion that social researchers turn their attention to local settings in order to gain a deeper understanding of how people construct apparently ‘commonsense’ discourses and live their daily lives in relation to race and ethnicity.

Chapter 3, a second literature-review chapter, draws together and evaluates a range of literature that has been written about community inclusion and exclusion, and the relationships between ethnicity, migration and community-formation. The chapter identifies some key themes and questions which have served to guide and
inform the trajectory of my research project related to the link between place and community, the idea of ‘ethnic communities’, multiculture, and community cohesion. Whilst the literature reviewed here on ethnicity, migration and community predominantly focuses on urban contexts, the key themes of community networks and social ties, social class and social capital, integration, identification with place, and social inclusion and exclusion are relevant to contemporary rural England and are pertinent to the research questions that I explore in Mayfield.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed outline of the methodological approach I took to researching questions of whiteness, social class, and community in Mayfield. As well as describing the ethnographic research process I also explain the way in which I analysed the data collected from participant observation, interviews, and focus groups held with the English villagers of Mayfield and Eastern European migrant horticultural workers. I explain why I selected the village of Mayfield for my twelve months of residential ethnographic research, why I felt that residential fieldwork was necessary, and sketch the geographic, economic, and demographic details of the village. I go on to discuss how I made contact with my interviewees, convey a sense of the interview process, and discuss some of the ethical issues associated with ethnographic fieldwork. I conclude the chapter with an explanation of, and justification for, how I present my ethnographic, interview and focus group data in the subsequent chapters of my thesis.

In Chapter 5, the first of four ethnography chapters, I use data collected through field notes, participant observation and semi-structured interviews to present a detailed portrait of the village of Mayfield and the people who live there. The chapter focuses upon the social structure of the village in terms of its demographics and the social networks which exist in the village. I also analyse the classification of
the village population (by the village population themselves) into three main groups: ‘Old Mayfield people’, ‘Village People’, and ‘Incomers’, the different ways that members of these groups carve out a sense of belonging in Mayfield, and the classed construct of ‘community’. Finally, this chapter sets the context for the two subsequent chapters analysing villagers’ perceptions of white Eastern European ‘Others’ who live and work on the village farms and nurseries.

Chapter 6 outlines the ways in which the white English villagers of Mayfield draw upon classed markers of difference such as clothing and hairstyles, language, labour, and perceived poverty to position Eastern European migrants as ‘not quite white’ enough to fully integrate or assimilate into English rural life. In other words, while Eastern European migrants are white-skinned, they do not have the necessary cultural knowledge to perform ‘whiteness’ in the routine ways which English rural dwellers often take for granted. I argue that English rural dwellers are able to recognise different ‘shades’ of whiteness, which serve to reinforce a social distance between themselves and Eastern European migrant workers and according to which inclusion or exclusion is determined. I describe how the villagers share an unspoken cultural understanding of how to fit into the local model of respectable rural living – a cultural knowledge encompassed by Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘cultural capital’. In this chapter I adopt Bourdieu’s distinctive understanding of social class as rooted in and exhibited through nuanced social and cultural practices as well as economic resources in order to examine English village life. Processes of socialisation in Mayfield inculcate in the villagers a distinctive class ‘habitus’, that is, a ‘system of durable dispositions of being and acting that represent the internalized embodiment of social norms and established patterns of behaviour’ (Watt, 2006:777). The villagers’ shared dispositions equip them with the necessary social and cultural knowledge to
embody and be accepted into village life. However, the migrants’ lack of such knowledge marks them out as cultural and ethnic Others.

While chapter 6 examines villagers’ judgements and perceptions of Eastern European migrant workers formed at a distance and based on chance passings in the street, observations from the car window and local rumour, gossip and anecdotes, the focus of chapter 7 is the limited social spaces where migrants and villagers come into contact and interact with one another. Such social spaces include the supermarkets, the nightclub, and the Polish restaurant in the local town of ‘Elmbridge’, places of work within and outside of Mayfield, and landlord/tenant relationships. This chapter reveals that a number of villagers and migrants do interact at a variety of levels and in a range of spheres, but that there remains an inherent power dynamic between the two groups where a boundary or social dichotomy is erected between villager/insider/self and migrant/outsider/other. This dichotomous relationship subsequently informs local discourse regarding the appropriateness of villagers’ interactions and relationships with migrants. Consequently, different degrees of intimacy between English villagers and Eastern European migrants are deemed acceptable and even encouraged, or unacceptable and feared. While cross-ethnic interactions between villagers and migrants appear to be increasing, the boundary between village ‘us’ and migrant ‘them’ remains.

Chapter 8 presents a shift in focus and concentrates on the narratives of Eastern European migrants themselves in order to understand of their experiences of living in rural England in greater depth. The data presented in this chapter is based on material collected in three focus groups conducted at three horticultural nurseries situated just outside of Mayfield (but situated in its immediate surroundings), and two in-depth interviews with two Polish migrants. The chapter raises numerous complex
and interlocking themes related to migrants’ experiences of migration to the UK and their lives in rural England. In this chapter I argue that contrary to village residents’ perceptions of Eastern European migrant workers as lower-class, low-status Others who are not respectable and thus ‘not quite white’, I observed those migrants who took part in my study to be ambitious, conscientious and socially mobile young people. Chapter 9 provides a discussion of my findings and concludes my thesis. The chapter draws together the key themes of the thesis, reflects upon my research questions and findings, and outlines the contribution that this research project contributes to the field of race and ethnicity studies and rural sociology.
Chapter 2
Studying Whiteness in the English Countryside

Introduction

In this chapter I review and critique a range of literature related to the critical study of whiteness in British and American context, and more specifically, I explore the implications of this literature for studying whiteness in the English countryside. I begin the chapter with a discussion of the difficulties and challenges associated with studying whiteness, and the risk of fixing ‘white’ as a homogenous and static racial position. In an attempt to avoid reifying the hegemonic status of whiteness, I stress the need to examine how whiteness operates at local level and how its power is mediated through its intersection with social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, local and national political discourses and historical context. Here I reflect on Hartigan’s (1999, 2003) theory of ‘shades of whiteness’ – a concept which has significantly influenced my analysis of the ways in which English and Eastern European whiteness are lived in the rural village of Mayfield, Worcestershire. I go on to explore the ways in which discourses employed by majority whites that exclude minority whites from rural England can be racialised as well as based on judgements about class, nationality and ethnicity.

In this chapter I also address the popular construction of the rural as a symbol of Englishness and whiteness, and continue with a review of the small but significant body of research on rural racism and the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from rural England. I then go on to discuss the importance of studying whiteness in the English countryside as well as the ways in which hegemonic whiteness operates
to exclude Others from rural areas – not only postcolonial Others but also white minority ethnic groups.

**The Study of Whiteness: A Complex Task**

The first question one encounters when proposing a study of ‘whiteness’ is the degree to which whiteness is a ‘thing’ or a ‘fact’ with a consensual meaning which can be investigated and analysed. Similarly, to what extent are ‘white people’ a homogenous group with generic ‘white’ experiences, identities and worldviews who can be ‘pinned down’ and studied? Recent research on whiteness in both British and American context has worked hard to tackle these questions. Sociologists such as Frankenberg (1993, 2001), Rasmussen et al (2001), and Byrne (2006), and anthropologists including Hartigan (1999) have each argued that the meaning of whiteness is fluid, dynamic, and can be experienced differently over time and across space. Whiteness is socially, historically, and politically constructed, therefore, definitions of whiteness will always be context-specific. As Frankenberg (1993: 236) suggests, whiteness is a complexly constructed product of local, regional, national, and global relations, past and present. Thus, the range of possible ways of living whiteness, in a particular time and place, is determined by the relations of race and racism at that moment and in that location. Further, if whiteness varies spatially and temporally, it is also a relational concept; one that is ‘co-constructed with a range of other racial and cultural categories, [and] with class and gender’ (Frankenberg, 1993: 236).

The fluid and multidimensional nature of whiteness has been widely recognised in anthropology and sociology. Increasingly, it has been acknowledged
that white people as a group are internally differentiated. As Hartigan (1999), Bonnett (1998, 2008), Garner (2007) and Rasmussen et al (2001) explain, the same white skin which has facilitated the integration, assimilation, and privilege of some does not guarantee that others – such as poor whites and migrant whites – might not also experience stigmatisation, deprivation, and subjugation. This raises an important question however: Does this conceptualisation of whiteness as changeable and adaptable negate the structural privilege of whiteness in global and historical power hierarchies? Hartigan (1999: 14) argues that this is not the case, as paying attention to the time-specificity and localness of whiteness still requires attending to all of its critical structural dimensions: economic, social, and historical. He argues that this neither negates nor denies analyses of ‘race’ that operate at national or global level, but stresses that racial identities are produced and experienced in distinct ways in different locations which are also shaped by wider structural dynamics (1999: 14). In other words, we can recognise the historically, politically, and socio-economically privileged position of hegemonic whiteness, whilst also accepting that ‘white’ individuals are differently positioned in relation to the privileges that whiteness is assumed to ensure.

A serious concern for many researchers in the field of critical whiteness studies is that to study ‘whiteness’ is to give ‘credence to racists who think that ‘white’ really is a ‘race’ with an essential cultural core and collective destiny’ (Garner, 2007: 2). To combat this potential risk, whiteness scholars such as Frankenberg (1993) and Byrne (2006) have made explicit their understanding of whiteness as a social construct rather than a biological given. While ‘whiteness’ as a ‘race’ is not ‘real’ in any biological sense, Frankenberg argues that it is ‘real’ in the sense that it has tangible, though ever-changing effects in society, and complex and
substantial impacts upon individuals’ sense of self, experiences and life chances (1993: 11). In asserting that race and racial difference are socially constructed, Frankenberg does not minimise their social or political reality, but rather insists that their reality is precisely social and political rather than inherent or static. In a later publication, Frankenberg places emphasis on understanding ‘race’ as a process rather than a ‘thing’, and she states that a key challenge in the critical examination of whiteness is to ‘hold on to the unreality of race while adhering tenaciously to the recognition of its all-too-real effects’ (2001: 73).

**White Culture?**

In *White Women, Race Matters*, Frankenberg (1993) argues that whiteness can be conceptualised in three main ways. First, she suggests that whiteness is a location of structural privilege; second, that whiteness is a standpoint – ‘a place from which white people look at themselves, at others and society’; and third, that whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that often go unmarked and unnamed (1993: 1). The ‘invisibility’ of white culture, Frankenberg (1993) and Garner (2007) suggest, is achieved through white discourses which construct white culture as ‘empty’ or as a kind of absence. For example, the respondent in Frankenberg’s book who feels that white Americanness ‘only takes shape in relation to other people’ (1993: 191) epitomises this discourse. Similarly, Bridget Byrne explains that a common response to her study of whiteness in South London was that ‘the really interesting whiteness’ was ‘out there, somewhere else, far away’, and therefore, not ‘here’ (2006: 1). This exemplifies the theory that whites have difficulty naming their whiteness and describing white culture – a theory that is woven throughout my thesis.
The above quotes from Frankenberg and Byrne indicate that whites in America and Britain are often blind to their own whiteness as a racial or cultural position. However, I would argue that ‘race’ does not equate ‘culture’. Neither ‘blackness’ nor ‘whiteness’ has any inherent cultural identity or meaning *per se*. These ‘racial’ labels tell us nothing about an individual or group’s culture or cultural practices on their own. Instead, the intersection of class, gender, sexuality, age ethnicity, nationality and geography with whiteness create a variety of ‘white cultures’. ‘White culture’ is not a homogenous set of practices that can easily be identified or fixed. In fact, whiteness has different cultural meanings in different places at different times. Frankenberg (1993: 233) uses the terms ‘white culture’ and ‘white cultural practice’ as descriptors of the ‘things people do or the ways white people understand themselves’ – therefore, not be taken to mean that any practice or activity engaged in by white people is ‘white’ in any inherent or timeless sense.

For Stuart Hall, ‘culture’ refers to the ‘actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific... society’ as well as the ‘contradictory forms of ‘common sense’ which have taken root in, and helped to shape popular life’ (cited in Frankenberg, 1993: 194). Thus, the ‘white cultural practice’ that Frankenberg (1993: 194) refers to should be conceptualised as dynamic, enacted, and interwoven with other spheres of life and identity when attempting to critically examine whiteness as an unmarked cultural and racial position. In British and American historical context, whiteness has had the power to generate norms, ways of understanding history, and ways of thinking about the Self and Other. However, in order to avoid abstract and generalised ideas about whiteness and ‘white culture’, I believe that the study of whiteness needs to be localised. Not only is whiteness lived and understood differently across national borders, but also regionally
and locally (as Hartigan’s (1999) study of three areas of Detroit confirms). In order to understand white culture, white lives, white power and white discourses, we need to study how they operate at local level.

In chapters five, six and seven I provide a detailed analysis of the white cultural practices which the villagers of Mayfield routinely perform in their daily rural lives. These cultural practices, which take a variety of different forms, such as adherence to codes and norms of behaviour, engagement in village social networks and events, the demonstration of aesthetic and cultural tastes, and the performance of respectability, often go unnoticed because they are ingrained as ‘common sense’ elements of everyday life which are rarely reflected upon by the villagers themselves. These apparently common sense white cultural practices intersect with equally taken-for-granted discourses about social class, gender, age, sexuality, language, Englishness and rurality, which are also unmarked and rendered invisible through their apparent normalcy. In chapters six and seven I build upon Frankenberg (1993), Garner (2007) and Byrne’s (2006) observations that white people often have difficulty naming their own whiteness and naming white culture by incorporating Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘cultural capital’ into my analysis. Here I demonstrate how Mayfield residents are able to develop a sense of belonging in the village through their ‘tacit cultural knowledge of how to fit in to desirable and respectable rural ways of living’, which cuts across class locations (Tyler, 2003: 396). The villagers’ shared dispositions equip them with the necessary social and cultural knowledge to perform and be accepted into village life. However, Eastern European migrant horticultural workers who live and work on the village farms do not share this cultural capital. This means that they are marked as cultural and ethnic Others.
who do not conform to the local ‘decorums’ of English whiteness, and they are consequently perceived by villagers as a different ‘shade’ of white.

‘Shades of Whiteness’: The intersection of Race, Ethnicity and Class

In Britain, a significant body of work on whiteness and its intersection with social class has emerged in the last ten to fifteen years. In particular, considerable attention has been paid to the ways in which working class whites have been constructed by middle class whites as ‘not quite white’, or a different (and undesirable) ‘shade’ of white. For example, in their research on whiteness, the middle classes, and multi-ethnic inner-city schooling, Reay et al (2007) interviewed approximately 100 London-based families who had actively chosen ethnically diverse comprehensive schools for their children: schools which, the authors argue, most white middle class families would avoid (2007: 1042). The study evaluates the families’ motivations in choosing such schools, and concludes that despite their political and moral sentiments and emphasis on ‘shared values’, the white middle class families in their sample remain situated in a position of white privilege. Lying beneath their inclusive multicultural attitudes, Reay et al suggest, are more instrumental impulses. They explain that white middle class families are engaged in processes of ‘extracting value’ from multi-ethnic Others who attend inner-city comprehensive schools (ibid).

Reay et al (2007: 1051) suggest that threaded through the discourse of valuing diversity is a powerful theme of gaining value from ethnic or cultural difference, opening up a tension between ‘value’ and ‘use’. For Gibbons (2002, cited in Reay et al, 2007: 1051), diversity for the middle classes is ‘primarily about the acquisition of valuable multicultural global capital’. In fact, Reay et al surmise, black and minority
ethnic children are often used symbolically by middle class whites to put greater
distance between themselves and their other Other: the white working class (2007:
1047). The white middle class families in their study present themselves as a ‘darker
shade of pale’ through their acquisition of valuable multicultural capital, and in this
process, the white working classes are perceived to be ‘excessively pale’, and ‘too
white’ to possess global cultural capital. Attending multi-ethnic urban
comprehensives becomes a vehicle for ‘resourcing the middle class self’, and in the
process of gaining multicultural capital, the white working class are residual: ‘having
and being of no value’ (Reay et al, 2007: 1049). Working class whites thus become
what Warren and Twine (1997: 210) call ‘very white... naked, pasty, underdone:
white white’, embodying a whiteness that is somehow excessive and
incommensurably Other.

Bonnett (1998) draws a similar conclusion in his study of how the British
working class ‘became white’. He argues that in nineteenth century Britain, the
working class were marginal to white identity. Drawing on published sources written
for and by middle- and upper-class Victorians, Bonnett suggests that depictions of
racial whiteness were employed as a new paradigm of class hierarchy: a paradigm
imported into Britain from colonial and settler societies (1998: 318). He explains how
‘whiteness was fetishized and idealised as an ‘extra-ordinary’, almost super-human
identity; an identity developed, in the main by [and for] the bourgeoisie’ (ibid).
Racialised language subsequently began to be used by the bourgeoisie to describe
white working class people, and to mark them as Other. For example, in 1864 the
Saturday Review provided the following account of the urban poor: ‘The Bethnal
Green poor... are a caste apart, a race of whom we know nothing, whose lives are of
quite different complexion from ours’ (cited in Bonnett, 1998: 324). Thus the
bourgeoisie were constructed as the ‘most white’ whilst the poor were defined as the
darker, swarthy Other of upper class whiteness.

Similarly, Haylett (2001) examines the use of the white working class poor as
symbols of a generalised ‘backwardness’ and more specifically, a ‘culturally
burdensome whiteness’ in contemporary British context. Haylett addresses the
racialisation of the white working class poor, and questions political discourses about
the ‘quality’ of their whiteness and their class, and how this fits with the dominant
vision of modern British nationhood. She focuses on political discourses surrounding
poor whites who have become dependent on welfare in the UK, for whom the receipt
of subsistence-level social benefits is deemed to have become a ‘way of life’ (Haylett,
2001: 352). These whites, Haylett argues, are constructed as an underclass ‘beyond
the bounds of “ordinary” national citizenship’, and are seen to have ‘let down
themselves, their children, their community, their class, their country, and ultimately,
their race’ (Haylett, 2001: 358). According to Haylett, where ‘blackness’ was the
original signifier of wretchedness and disorder in British political discourse, the
‘whiteness’ embodied by a ‘degenerate underclass’ of Others has come to share the
same symbolic register. A poor white underclass can be seen as dangerous to the
symbolic order of British nationhood, where hierarchies of national belonging and
privilege are still naturalised by skin colour. Furthermore, poor whites reveal a
contradiction that threatens to unsettle dominant social systems of class-based and
race-based privilege. They show that ‘whiteness’ does not necessarily predispose
people to social privilege and success. When large numbers of people are identified as
poor and white, the normative order begins to break down: it seems less natural and
less justified. As Haylett (2001) suggests, poor whites thus come to reveal the
‘worked-at’, socially-constructed order of things; that whiteness is not necessarily a synonym for uncontested privilege.

The intersection of race and class, processes of ‘becoming’ white, and the theory that ‘shades’ of whiteness exist as variants of hegemonic whiteness have also been widely explored by American scholars (cf. Roediger, 2005; Ignatiev, 2008; Murguia & Forman, 2003; Guglielmo & Salerno, 2003; Twine, 1996). However, it is the work of American anthropologist John Hartigan (1999, 2003) whose work has most influenced my analysis of the interplay between race and class in rural Worcestershire.

Hartigan’s (2003) study of ‘white trash’, ‘rednecks’ and ‘hillbillies’ analyses the social class contours that shape the lives of lower-class whites in the American south. He explains that what counts as ‘white’ in many social situations and local contexts depends on class identity, and that the terms of racial belonging and difference are importantly inflected by the markings of class. In his (1999) study of ‘class predicaments of whiteness’ in Detroit, Hartigan proposes the idea that ‘shades’ of whiteness exist in American society. He argues that lower-class whites occupy a social status far removed from the privileges and power of hegemonic whiteness – and it is this intersection of social class and whiteness which I explore in relation to Eastern European migrants in the English countryside. I contend that the theory of ‘shades of whiteness’ can be put to work in this context to explore the role which race and class play in the construction of white Eastern European identities in Mayfield, and how Eastern European migrants in rural England are marginalised and excluded despite the fact that they are white-skinned.

As cited earlier, Bonnett’s (1998) study of working class whites in nineteenth and twentieth century England traces the processes by which working class whites
finally came to be recognised as ‘white’. Shifts in the relationship between class and whiteness were enabled by new forms of capitalist socio-economic organisation, and newly available jobs in the industrial sector meant that working class British whites had new-found access to capital. For the first time, they became consumers of goods which previously had been the preserve of elites and the middle classes. Therefore, whiteness became a popularist identity connoting superiority (particularly in relation to imperialism and colonialism), but also ordinariness and British nationality (Bonnett, 1998: 318). The idea that ‘money whitens’ is one which I explore in further detail in chapter six with specific reference to ‘Anita’, a British Asian woman who lives with her children and her white British partner in Mayfield. The ‘money whitens’ argument is also supported by Garner (2007: 108) who suggests that to an important extent, whiteness is about conforming to cultural and economic norms. In his discussion of Jewish immigrants to Britain in the nineteenth century, he explains that some Jews were seen as ‘whiter than others’ on account of their material and economic affluence, attire, and proficiency in the English language (ibid).

Twine (1996) reveals similar findings in her article Brown-Skinned White Girls, an analysis of class, culture and the construction of white identity in suburban California. Her study illustrates that for some mixed-race adolescent girls of African descent living in wealthy suburban California, white identity is available to them through access to the same material privileges and socio-economic advantages as their white suburban peers. For the young women interviewed in her study, a claim to white identity was inextricably linked to a middle-class economic position (Twine, 1996: 212). For example, one interviewee described being raised to see her class position and her position as a consumer as more important than her ‘racial’ heritage.
Twine traces the way in which her respondents’ blindness to their African heritage was challenged when they left school and began to attend university. Before university, one young woman described how she had not thought of herself as racially visible during her suburban childhood and adolescence. However, upon leaving the suburbs, ‘boundary events’ (Barth, 1969) such as inter-racial dating, inter-racial friendships, and meeting groups and individuals with a more heightened sense of racial consciousness, the girls’ racial neutrality came to be questioned by themselves and others. Thus the limits of their claims to white identity were exposed as well as the social construction of racial categories and the pathways to their enforcement. The university experience challenged the young women’s ideologies regarding the acquisition of whiteness through consumerism and class. Not only does this study show that in certain places, and at certain times, ‘whiteness’ can be attained, constructed, and performed if certain cultural and economic norms are assimilated, but also, that the same racial and class identity can be lived differently in different places and at different times. In the Californian suburbs these girls self-identified as white due to good academic achievement, consumer power, and middle class status. However, in the university context where difference was acknowledged, politicised, and often celebrated, these young women became ‘less white’, or indeed, ‘not-white’ in a different location.

Processes of Racialising Other Whites

In the context of rural England, which is predominantly inhabited by white people, one might reasonably question the extent to which the Othering of white minority groups by the white majority is related to race, and whether the processes and discourses through which
white English villagers mark white Eastern European migrants as Other are racialised. Garner (2009: 48) provides a thought-provoking explanation of how minority whites such as Eastern European migrants can be racialised in majority white landscapes such as the English countryside. He argues:

...race is not only to do with colour, but with tying culture to bodies in a hierarchical way... A neat line between ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ is not an accurate reflection of how people always talk or behave. Groups that are ostensibly ‘white’ can therefore also be racialised in majority white countries. In the British context this has historically included Jews, the Irish Catholics and other Eastern European migrants.

This statement reflects the arguments of Bonnett (1998), Warren and Twine (1997), Ignatiev (2008), and Roediger (2005) that poor, working-class, Irish, and immigrant whites have been – and continue to be – engaged in processes of ‘becoming white’, and are the objects of racialised discourses, moving in and out of whiteness across time and space.

Hartigan (1999) acknowledges that there are copious distinctions between the ways that, in general, whites and blacks are racialised, and that the social and political ramifications are hugely different. But, he argues, by examining how whites are racialised – ‘always unevenly, always following the contours of class distinctions’ – we can think more clearly about the way white lives are lived differently in different social and geographical locations, and in relation to hegemonic forms of whiteness (1999: 13).

A number of studies have documented the marginalisation of the white Other in British and American context including Bhopal’s (2006) research on traveller children in rural English schools, Hetherington (2006) and Davis’ (1997) studies of
new age travellers in rural Britain, Roediger’s (2005) study of European migrants in America, and Hartigan’s research on ‘white trash’, ‘rednecks’ and ‘hillbillies’ in Detroit (2003, 2005). What these marginal groups share is that they are perceived by dominant whites as ‘not quite white’ enough to fit in with respectable mainstream society.

The groups studied in the research cited above and the Eastern European population in Mayfield are whites who make the arbitrariness of ‘the colour line’ (Hartigan, 2003: 106) apparent by the way their presence undermines white racial conventions. In other words, as Cloke and Little (1997) have suggested, a ‘third space’ is opened up to new categories of Otherness which fall between the conventional axes of black versus white. As my thesis will go on to illustrate, distinctions made between different ‘shades’ of white in the English countryside are more nuanced: language, culture, physical appearance, perceived ‘traits’ or ‘qualities’, and poverty are also markers of difference. Therefore, in chapter six, I explore the extent to which boundaries between the white English village Self and the white Eastern European migrant Other are founded on subtle and complex processes of racialisation, or whether constructions of Self and Other or insider and outsider are instead founded upon class- and ethnicity- based distinctions. In a context such as Mayfield where whiteness is largely invisible to village residents and is not talked about, I question the role of race in the Othering of Eastern European migrants.

The Importance of Critical Whiteness Studies: Paths to Anti-Racism

The critical study of whiteness is well positioned to make an important contribution to anti-racist scholarship. However, not all researchers working in the field of race, ethnicity, and whiteness agree on how best to combat racism (cf. O’Brien, 2001).
Bridget Byrne, in her (2006) study of middle-class white mothers in London advises that it is important to heed Sara Ahmed’s (2004) warning that merely marking whiteness (which is itself only an act which is new to white people) does not achieve anti-racist aims alone. Ahmed argues that future work on whiteness should be about ‘attending to forms of white racism and white privilege that are not undone, and may even be repeated and intensified through declarations of whiteness, or through the recognition of privilege as privilege (2004: 58). Nonetheless, as Byrne (2006) contends, to mark what is frequently (at least to white eyes) unmarked – the racialised nature of white experience – is part of a process of decentring whiteness and questioning the basis of its power. The intention is not to reify, re-centre, or essentialise this ‘thing’ called ‘whiteness’, but to show how the practices, worldviews, and identities of people constructed and positioned as ‘white’ are racialised.

Too often, as Frankenberg (1993) has argued, white people consider themselves to be racially unmarked and culturally ‘empty’, only assuming identity in relation of racial and ethnic Others. One of the key challenges of critical whiteness studies then, is to contest the normative status of whiteness. Rather than seeing white culture as ‘no culture’, critical whiteness scholars need to analyse the social and political contexts in which white privilege and white cultural practices mark out a normative space and set of identities, which those who inhabit them can rarely see or name (Frankenberg, 1993: 192). Highlighting white people’s situatedness in the hierarchies of race and power relations is a crucial counter to racism, or at the very least, a condition for understanding its perpetuation.

The problem of whites’ blindness to their own racialisation and their situation in local, national, and global racist hierarchies is an issue which whiteness studies
continue to address. Frankenberg (1993) urges a move towards what she calls ‘race
cognizance’ whereby whites are able to recognise race difference without being
accused of making racist distinctions. This can be achieved, she argues, by
understanding racial difference in historical, political, social and cultural terms rather
than essentialist ones (1993: 160). In order for this to happen, attention must be paid
to the construction of ‘white experience’ in social contexts where the hierarchical
racial order is normalised and rationalised. Therefore, as Hartigan (1999) argues,
analysing the connections between white daily lives and dominant discourses may
help to make visible the processes by which the stability of whiteness as a location of
privilege, a standpoint, and a culturally normative space, is secured and reproduced.

Critical whiteness scholars have criticised academic discourse on race which
depicts whiteness and blackness as static, bounded cultural orders, with one dominant and
the other subordinate (cf. Hartigan, 1999: 3). Social researchers grappling with the
enduring effects of racism in Western society have relied heavily on the figures of ‘whites’
and ‘blacks’ as homogenous and dichotomous groups to convey the discrepant life chances
that distinguish racial populations. At the same time, however, social researchers argue that
‘races’ are mere social constructs: that they do not exist in any ‘real’ sense. But by viewing
social life through a lens of ‘black and white’, are we simply relying upon and reproducing
the same rigid categories in our analysis of the way that race matters in society? In his
study of the intersection of class and race in Detroit, Hartigan (1999) argues that social
researchers need to pay more attention to differences within racial groups rather than
between them, and look more closely at the local settings in which racial identities are
articulated, reproduced and contested. Therefore, in this thesis I focus on the local setting
of the village of Mayfield in rural Worcestershire to gain a deeper understanding of how
white English village residents construct and live their daily lives in relation to race.
Ethnicity and the English Countryside: The Rural as a Symbol of Englishness and Whiteness

England’s national identity relies heavily on the discursive construct of the rural idyll. Accordingly, the countryside is frequently evoked as a harmonious and traditional space: a refuge from the problems associated with the overcrowding, noise, pollution, cultural heterogeneity, transience and flux of urban life. As I previously noted in chapter one, this image of the rural is repeatedly found in popular media representations of the rural where village life is nostalgically portrayed as frozen in a time of village fêtes, farming the land, afternoon tea, and strong community and kinship ties. Sarah Neal (2009: 61) reminds us that this portrait of the rural has been called to the fore of English consciousness for comfort and reassurance at times of anxiety, insecurity, and danger particularly when boundaries of the nation have come under threat. During World War 2 for example, quaint pastoral and agricultural images of England were used in propaganda posters urging citizens to ‘Dig for Victory’ or to mobilise in the name of ‘Your Britain: Fight for it Now’. These rural visions of England worked ‘as a powerful antithesis to the geography and war horrors of Flanders... and were selected to instil fortitude in the population and act as a visual reminder of the nation’ (Neal, 2009: 26). As Milbourne (1997) explains, England’s ‘green and pleasant land’ thus becomes something to be defended, and evokes powerful feelings about nationalism, patriotism, and English ‘traditions’. A model of rural England as unchanging and timeless is constructed, and an essence of ‘pure’ Englishness is distilled.

This discourse of the rural, Chakraborti & Garland (2004) suggest, sees notions of national identity correlated with a mono-cultural, nostalgic, and
supposedly ‘comforting’ representation of rurality, while more complex and multidimensional images are suppressed. In her article The Need for A Bit of History Edwards (1998) concurs that this kind of nostalgia filters out impurities and leaves us with a sanitised version of the past. Consequently the countryside becomes imbued with a sense of an ‘old England’ which John Major (British Prime Minister 1990-1997), drawing upon George Orwell, famously described as comprising ‘County grounds, warm beer ...and old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist’ (Major, 1993, cited in Chakraborti & Garland, 2004). However, the reality of rural and village life in the 21st century is more complex. The countryside has become a site where disputes over who and what ‘belongs’ in England are staged. The rural landscape is not merely an aesthetic background to life in the Britain; rather ‘it is a setting that both expresses and conditions cultural attitudes and activities’ (Neal & Agyeman, 2006), and as such, the landscape becomes a social and cultural product – a set of beliefs projected onto the land.

The English countryside is popularly perceived as a homogeneously white landscape inhabited exclusively by white people. However, this perception masks the small but increasing presence of people from different ethnic, racial and national backgrounds in rural areas. Agyeman & Spooner argue that for the majority of white rural dwellers, the concept of ‘ethnicity’ is considered irrelevant or ‘out of place’ in the countryside (1997: 199). For example, in March 2011 Brian True-May, producer of the long-running ITV mystery drama Midsomer Murders (set in the fictional rural English county of Midsomer) famously contributed to this discourse. When asked by the Radio Times why the characters in the programme have always been exclusively white he replied:
We just don't have ethnic minorities involved because it wouldn't be the English village with them. It just wouldn't work. Suddenly we might be in Slough... I mean if you went into Slough you wouldn’t see a white face amongst anybody... We're the last bastion of Englishness and I want to keep it that way (Radio Times, 2011).

This short statement epitomises the popular belief that people from ethnic minorities do not live in rural villages – fictional or otherwise – and also repeats the apparently commonsense formula that rural = English = white. In response to True-May’s comments, Guardian columnist and chairman of the National Trust, Simon Jenkins supported this view. Speaking to Radio 4’s Today programme he said:

It’s about a very English setting – we know what that word means... The definition of old-fashioned English village simply doesn’t include multi-ethnicity (BBC, 2011).

A consequence of this ‘whitewashing’ of the English countryside is that rural dwellers from ethnic minorities have fallen victim to racism, exclusion, marginalisation, and are repeatedly and routinely invisibilised. What the ‘de-racialisation’ of rural spaces has been most effective at doing, Neal (2009: 24-25) argues, is:

... producing a potent and reiterative narrative in which a purified spatialisation of ethnicity and multiculture occurs – ethnicity and multiculture ‘belong to’ and ‘are of’ urban environments and do not ‘belong to’ and are ‘not of’ rural environments.
While there have been attempts to disrupt this narrative, including the body of empirical research which I now turn to, this image of rural England persists in popular and political discourse.

The important anti-racist policy documents produced in the 1990’s by Jay (1992) and Derbyshire (1994) documented the widespread opinion that there was ‘no problem here’ in relation to racism and exclusion in South West England and rural Norfolk respectively. However, the rationale that there are no ethnic and racial minorities living in the countryside, and therefore there can be no racism or prejudice is an inadequate one. Too often the English countryside is regarded as being free from issues of race and ethnicity due to its perceived whiteness – which remains invisible and unquestioned. Others who are potentially threatening to the integrity of the discourse of the English countryside as a white space are excluded, and so ‘the rural’ becomes a culturally contested landscape; a battleground where disputes over the meaning of Englishness, rurality and belonging are fought.

Jay (1992) and Derbyshire (1994) inspired increased academic inquiry into rural racism. Subsequent research relating to the experiences of ethnic minority groups in rural areas includes analyses of the relationship between ethnic minorities and the rural environment (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997; Kinsman, 1997), the relationship between place and racism (Robinson & Gardner, 2004), ethnic minorities’ use of rural spaces for leisure pursuits (Crouch, 1997), and the exclusion of ethnic minorities from village/rural communities (Neal, 2002, 2009; Tyler, 2003, 2006, 2012a, 2012b; Chakraborti & Garland, 2004). However, less academic attention has been paid to the role of whiteness in perpetuating exclusion in the countryside and the social structures which allow English whiteness to remain a position of power and dominance. Concluding their chapter Ethnicity and the Rural Environment, Agyeman
& Spooner (1997: 212) suggest that studies of ethnicity in the countryside should turn to ‘constructions of whiteness and how it is related to questions of power and exclusion as well as exposing whitewashing as simplistic and false’. The construction, or rather, the deconstruction of whiteness is central to my research project.

**Studying Whiteness in Rural English Context**

To study race and ethnicity in the English countryside where the vast majority of residents are white requires a recognition of the ways in which whiteness is performed and ingrained in contexts where they are not explicitly felt to be present (I reflect on the methodological challenges associated with this issue in chapter four). The idea that whites do not recognise or acknowledge their unearned racial privileges has become one of the most cited claims of critical whiteness studies. Rasmussen et al (2001) and Frankenberg (1993, 2001) remind us that whiteness operates by being ‘invisible’; so ubiquitous and entrenched as to appear natural and normative. In rural England, whiteness operates as the unmarked norm against which other identities are judged, marked and racialised. As Pollard (2004) has demonstrated in her photography series *Pastoral Interludes*, whiteness continues to be invisible to white rural residents, but is hyper-visible to people who are not white and who are therefore excluded from the countryside as visitors and dwellers.

In her study of how race shapes white women’s lives, Frankenberg (1993) advocates the idea that her interviewees’ race and more specifically, their whiteness was unrecognisable to them. However, she has since re-evaluated this idea, and has more recently stated that ‘the more one scrutinises [the idea that whiteness is an unmarked category], the more the notion of whiteness as an unmarked norm is
revealed to be a mirage or indeed, to put it more strongly, a white delusion’ (Frankenberg, 2001: 73). Indeed, to claim that whiteness is invisible is to ignore the considerable body of work produced on whiteness by black social theorists such as Frantz Fanon (1986), philosophers such as Yancy (2004), feminist theorists and feminist literary theorists such as bell hooks (1992) and Toni Morrison (1992) respectively, and also, the everyday lived experiences of black and ethnic minority people who live within a racial structure which privileges white people. Therefore, Frankenberg has come to realise that the ‘mirage’ of unmarked whiteness has largely been a white predicament – and one which is relevant to the English countryside.

In her earlier work, Frankenberg (1993) was one of the first white sociologists to recognise that race plays an important role in shaping white people’s lives. Frankenberg (1993:1) situates whiteness as a location of structural advantage, of race privilege, and a standpoint from which ‘white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society’. More recently, and in British context, Tyler (2006, 2012a; 2012b) has addressed how whiteness intersects with class to perpetuate white hegemony in the suburban ‘village’ of Greenville in Leicestershire. Frankenberg and Tyler, and also sociologists Ware (1997) and Cohen (1997) have begun to investigate the meaning of whiteness and its role in perpetuating racial stratification and unequal power relations. However, my research questions relate not to the problems experienced by black and ethnic minority groups and individuals in the countryside, but how white supremacy is maintained in relation to the ‘white Other’.

In the village of Mayfield in Worcestershire where my ethnography is based, white villagers construct their white English and class identities in relation to Eastern European Others who do not conform to the ‘decorums’ of English village life. In The Village as an Idea, Strathern (1982b) argues that ‘belonging’ in a village community
is always defined in relation to that which does not belong. In the case of Mayfield the Others against which ‘villageness’ is defined are white Eastern European migrant workers who work on the village farms. While Tyler (2003, 2006) has addressed the ways in which white suburban village residents engaged in processes of Othering wealthy British Asian villagers, my research is concerned with the way in which the villagers of Mayfield draw upon racist rhetoric and classed discourses to distance themselves from the Eastern European migrant workers who are white. Although the migrant workers in Mayfield are white-skinned, they are constructed as not quite white enough to assimilate into village life. This suggests that intra-racial contests exist in Mayfield where different ‘shades’ of whiteness are positioned in a hierarchy of belonging and entitlement.

Since the eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial period, white people have defined themselves in terms of their ‘not-Otherness’ (Frankenberg 2001: 75). The way in which whiteness has been constructed, Frankenberg argues, is in relation to what it is not rather than what it is. Perhaps this explains to some degree why it is so difficult for white people to name their whiteness, and why whiteness has a habit of sliding into, and overlapping with class and nationality – an idea which will be explored in depth in chapters six and seven.

On this subject Neal (2009: 56) has argued that:

The constant bleed between ethnic identity and national identity is an unsurprising one given their co-constitutive relationship. Nations draw heavily on ideas of shared culture, kinship, history and ethnic identity is not without geography – ethnicity relies on ideas of having ties to real and imagined homelands.
As will be demonstrated in chapters five, six and seven, the residents of Mayfield draw upon, perform, and perpetuate a sense of Englishness without any explicit reference to the nation. National identity is, therefore, deeply embedded in the day-to-day routines of life which ‘flag’ or remind us of nationhood. However, as Billig argues, ‘these reminders or “flaggings” are so numerous and are such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operate mindlessly, rather than mindfully’ (1995: 38). Yet, these mindless flaggings are only mundane and ‘common sense’ to those people whose sense of belonging in and entitlement to the nation remain largely beyond question – the nationally included. Skey (2011: 6-7) has emphasised the crucial link between the discursive processes which constitute everyday life (routine talk and practices, symbolic systems, institutional arrangements) and national belonging which serve to underpin an ongoing and relatively settled sense of place and identity. The summoning of the nation in this way Neal (2009: 55) argues, comes through what Billig (1995) and also Skey (2011) have identified as a ‘banal’ or everyday framework of hailing national belonging and assembling a majoritised ethnic identity.

So what does this mean for the study of English whiteness in a particular location in rural England? For me, the literature reviewed in this chapter points to the need to analyse white English identity on a more local scale. As Young (1997, cited in Skey, 2011: 15) argues:

The everyday realm is where most activities take place and where people generally experience and make sense of the world and those they encounter... It is primarily through the repetition of daily rhythms and routines that individual lives become structured and manageable.
Therefore, in studying the localness of race I address how English whiteness is lived/performed, developed and evolved in relation to the specific local social, cultural, historical and geographic circumstances. It is the relationship between ethnicity, place, and community ties that I turn to in chapter three.

**Conclusion**

Studying whiteness is a highly politically charged endeavour, which does not come without inherent risks and challenges. By paying attention to the way in which whiteness is constructed and lived in rural England, I do not wish to reify its hegemonic status or to fix ‘white’ as a static, homogenous and knowable racial position. Instead I seek to examine how whiteness operates at local level, how it intersects with social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and notions of rurality. Hartigan’s (1999, 2003) theory of ‘shades of whiteness’ has significantly guided my analysis of the intersectionality of whiteness, and will be discussed in further detail in chapters six and seven.

I am interested in how, in the context of the English countryside, some people (English villagers) come to be perceived as ‘more white’ than Others (Eastern European migrant workers) and how such perceptions are related to belonging and exclusion in rural Worcestershire. The tenacious construct of the rural idyll has, and continues to be, a powerful symbol of ‘a particular middle class English identity that underpins a nostalgic vision of a nation defined by village life, class hierarchies, stability and, particularly in an era of postcolonial migration, whiteness’ (Skey, 2011: 43). However, whiteness as a racial identity remains largely invisible to most rural dwellers. As Neal (2009) argues, majority culture is not viewed through the optic of
race or ethnicity – these are attributes which are used to mark Others – and as a result rural England becomes a de-ethnicised landscape. Therefore, by attending to the lives and worldviews of people whose sense of rural belonging and entitlement remains largely unquestioned, we may be in a better position to explain why racial and ethnic minority exclusion from the English countryside remains such a significant problem in an age of postcoloniality, mass migration and multiculture.
Chapter 3
Toward an Understanding of Community Inclusion and Exclusion

Introduction

This chapter builds upon the themes of ethnicity and class discussed in chapter two, but with a sharper focus on their intersection with community inclusion and exclusion. The aim of this chapter is to assess the terms or conditions upon which community inclusion or exclusion can be determined. In doing so, I draw together and evaluate some of the key academic literature which has been written on the relationships between social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, migration, place and community in Britain. It is by no means an exhaustive account, but nonetheless, this chapter identifies some key themes and questions that have served to guide and inform the trajectory of my own research.

The concept of community is central to my ethnography. ‘Community’ is something that the English villagers of Mayfield and Eastern European migrant workers both refer to, albeit in relation to different meanings and practices. For the villagers, community is a construct which taps into the popular discourse of the ‘rural idyll’. Middle-class villagers in particular evoke a ‘sense of community’ that is created through involvement and participation in village social activities, and is therefore very much reliant on villagers’ connection with locality and place. Migrants on the other hand talked about social connections that span across geographical locations, nations and cultures, and therefore rely on the use of mobile and internet technologies for the maintenance of ‘community’ ties. Whilst the literature reviewed here predominantly focuses on urban contexts, the salient themes of community
networks and social ties, social class and social capital, identification with place, and social inclusion and exclusion are relevant to contemporary rural England and are pertinent to the research questions that I explored in Mayfield. One of the main conclusions of this chapter is that ‘communities’ can exist in a variety of forms, and the concept of ‘community’ can mean different things to different people. This argument is woven throughout the empirical chapters of my thesis in relation to both English villagers and Eastern European migrants in the context of rural Worcestershire.

In the first section of this chapter I will provide an overview of the evolution of community studies in Britain and the ways in which community class structures have been conceptualised. I then discuss the problems associated with the study of community due the ever-evolving and polysemic nature of the concept. I argue that although communities are often defined through discourses of harmony, unity, and togetherness (Tonnies, 1963), they can also be understood as diverse, ambivalent and complex (Williams, 1973; Brent, 1997). In addition, while the concept of community captures a sense of warmth, inclusion and belonging, it necessarily and simultaneously creates boundaries which serve to divide and exclude (Cohen, 1985; Gilroy, 1987; Edwards & Strathern, 2000). In the second section of the chapter I focus on the work of Ray & Reed (2005), Blokland (2001), and Fortier (2007) in order to question whether community is necessarily bounded by locality, whether identification with place is central to community cohesion, and the role that place plays in the forging of community identities.

In the third part of this chapter I explore the relationship between social class, ‘respectability’ (Skeggs, 1997; Watt, 2006) and community inclusion and exclusion. The concept of respectability is central to my analysis of the terms or conditions of
social inclusion and exclusion in Mayfield, and as I discuss in chapter five, the very concept of community – as mobilised by the villagers of Mayfield – is a classed construct. The fourth section of the chapter deals with Fortier’s (2007) theory concerning the limits of ‘multicultural intimacy’ and social cohesion in contemporary Britain. This theory has had an important influence on my analysis of the social relationships between white English villagers and white Eastern European migrants in Mayfield, and has been extremely helpful for understanding the types and also the limits of such relationships, which will be discussed in depth in chapter seven. Building on Fortier’s theory of multicultural intimacies I go on to evaluate Back’s (1996) ethnographic study of youth cultures in South London, which demonstrates how discourses of multiculturalism and racism can co-exist in contemporary British neighbourhoods. Finally, I discuss the relationship between nationality, migrant identities and community networks. In doing so, I focus on the new but expanding body of research addressing Eastern European migration to the UK, and more specifically, Eastern European’ post-migration social networks and ties across time, space and social class divisions, which will be explored in greater depth in chapter eight.

The Evolution of British Community Studies and Community Class Structures

Defining community has become a near impossible task. For every sociological interpretation of community there is an equivalent definition of its meaning, purpose, composition, boundaries, and relevance as a subject of research and analysis. In public and academic discourse, the term ‘community’ often stands as a convenient shorthand description of the broad realm of ‘local social arrangements beyond the
private sphere of home and family, but more familiar to us than the impersonal institutions of wider society’ (Crow & Allan, 1994: 1). However, I shall return to the task of conceptualising community in the second section of this chapter. First, I turn my attention to the trajectory that ‘community studies’ has taken as a discipline over the last fifty to sixty years. I shall then discuss the ways in which community class structures (both in urban and rural context) have been imagined and re-imagined, and the implications of this literature for my ethnographic study of Mayfield.

Crow & Allan (1994) suggest that there have been three identifiable phases of community studies since the Second World War. The first phase spanned the 1950’s and 1960’s when community studies researchers conducted investigations by immersing themselves in the local social life of their chosen community for at least twelve months at a time and ‘following up leads that appeared promising’ (Crow & Allan, 1994: 13). Social researchers were often driven by the notion the modern society was witnessing, if not characterised by, a loss of community (see Pahl, 1964 for example). Indeed, in the 1950’s and 1960’s there was a widespread belief that modern society and community were increasingly incompatible, and that close-knit village-like social networks of communality and mutuality belonged to a bygone era. However, critics such as Bell & Newby (1971) condemned this research as backward looking, outmoded, insufficiently rigorous, unsystematic, and overly descriptive. As Crow & Allan explain:

The desire to produce an account of everyday community life saw a typical community study devoting most of its pages to describing family and kinship networks, local work patterns, political and religious attachments and voluntary organisations, to the neglect of explicit discussions of the methodological and theoretical implications of these findings (1994: 13).
The descriptive and apparently methodologically and theoretically deficient nature of these studies meant that their findings lacked generalisability. Whilst they provided a wealth of information about ordinary (usually working-class) lives in specific places at particular moments in time, they had little to say about wider society in more general terms. In other words, ‘the problem with old-fashioned community studies was that they lacked any systematic procedure for linking ethnographic observation with accounts of society as a whole (Byrne, 1989: 28). To counteract these accusations, research on communities in the 1970’s (the second phase identified by Crow & Allan, 1994) became less empirical and more theoretical.

The 1970’s also saw a number of feminist researchers entering the field of community studies, who criticised the previous assumptions drawn from functionalism about the normality and desirability of social integration and mutual support, which drew attention away from issues of conflict and schism within communities. Feminists also highlighted traditional community studies’ neglect of issues relating to gender inequalities, claiming that such reports contained inherent ‘malestream’ biases in their terminology (Frankenberg, 1976 cited in Crow & Allan, 1994: 15). Frankenberg himself (1957, 1966) habitually portrayed women’s lives and roles through sexist language. For example, women were observed as ‘gossiping’ while men were observed as ‘discussing’ community matters. More often than not, however, women were absent from community studies altogether, as researchers focused on the public sphere at the expense of the private sphere, in which women’s lives were anchored. Pahl’s (1964) classic text *Urbs in Rure* exemplifies this issue, as his analysis of middle-class urbanites’ migration to Hertfordshire’s metropolitan fringe is based entirely on data related to the occupations of male breadwinners. In response to the invisibility of women in the community studies of the 1950’s and
1960’s Elias and Scotson (1965:146) made the observation that ‘It is difficult to imagine communities without women and children’, and subsequently women’s centrality to community life began to be uncovered and the gendered experience of community came to be recognised.

Crow & Allan (1994: 40) explain that in the working-class neighbourhoods of the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s in both urban and rural contexts, poverty often drew women into networks of mutual support with other female kin and neighbours. They state that:

…while the occupational experiences of men in traditional working class communities may have provided some basis for the emergence of a shared identity, for women, it was the reciprocal acts and obligations necessary to ensure their own and their family’s survival that engendered a sense of ‘community’ (Crow & Allan, 1994: 40).

Similarly, in his work on neighbours in Britain, Bulmer (1986: 92) has noted the simple logic of such arrangements:

Self-help networks at the local level were a realistic response to low incomes, economic adversity and unpredictable domestic crisis. In the absence of state support for the relief in the home of illness old age or unemployment, the ‘safety net’ for most families was the neighbourhood itself.

Therefore, it was recognised that working-class women learnt to cooperate for instrumental as well as social reasons. As I go on to explain in chapter five, women play a central role in community-making in Mayfield. Women of all ages and class
backgrounds, from long-term residents to recent newcomers, are actively engaged in a variety of community activities in the village. Such activities are often linked to the school, the toddler group, and informal childcare arrangements, involve fundraising and volunteering, maypole dancing, the Church, the Royal British Legion social club, and the hairdressing salon. By contrast, men in the village are more likely to engage in community activities linked to sports clubs, the parish council, and the organisation of the annual summer fair. Thus community engagement in Mayfield, is certainly gendered and women’s contribution to community life must be given due recognition.

By the 1970’s, the critique of community studies as gender-blind, and as insufficiently theoretical and overly descriptive meant that scholars in the field turned away from empirical research, which was replaced by a second phase of higher-level theorising. As Crow & Allan (1994: 13) have highlighted, the 1980’s and 1990’s then saw something of a revival of interest in empirical studies of locality and community life, but that there was subsequently a much greater awareness of the weaknesses and criticisms of the early community studies research. In the third phase, both theory and method were applied to community studies in a more systematic way, and sociologists such as Cohen (1982) consciously avoided the trap of ‘community romance’, or imagining community in some golden age that glorified the past while often denigrating the present. Researchers also began to demonstrate increasing awareness of divisions within communities (not just between them) and issues of social exclusion both in urban and rural communities. No longer was ‘community’ a byword for ‘homogeneous’. Instead, a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of communities began to develop.

Attention was also paid to the social and economic restructuring of communities in the 1980’s, and the impact of this upon community class structures in
both urban and rural locations. For example, Pahl’s (1984) research on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent describes how a relatively self-contained community in the Thames estuary with a long history of employment in the dockyards and associated working-class industries was undergoing significant change due to de-industrialisation and redundancy. Pahl explains that during this period, the fortunes of members of the old working class diverged. A substantial number experienced upward mobility and rose into the ‘middle mass’ while those on the other side of the ‘new line of class cleavage’ were downwardly mobile into the ‘underclass’ (1984: 324). He argues that the former group became ‘more privatised, inward-looking, home-centred and autonomous, are consumption-oriented and consider that they can achieve their individual goals more readily through private plans than through collective [community] action’ (1984: 319-20). Pahl argues that this section of the population became disillusioned with notions of ‘working class solidarity’ and ‘collectivism’ because all collectivism had delivered on Sheppey was soulless council housing estates, which did not seem ‘self-evidently good things’ (Pahl, 1984: 323). Therefore, the people of Sheppey began to witness a growth in owner-occupation. They felt they could achieve their goals better on their own rather than through collective action and through mutual support. As Crow & Allan (1994: 56-7) explain in their analysis of Pahl’s (1984) study:

Against this background, owner-occupation represents the realisation of widely held aspirations to upward mobility in housing; aspiration based in part on the assumption that owner-occupation allows a higher degree of control over the activities of everyday life than that enjoyed by tenants.
Conversely, the options of lower-income households became more restricted and their survival strategies more precarious. Community networks no longer provided a cushion against unemployment; there were fewer informal employment opportunities, and so a process of class polarisation began.

Residents on Sheppey came to make localised distinctions between ‘rough’ and ‘respectable’ people, and this class division also carried strong moral connotations. In their work on this process of privatisation and class polarisation, Pahl & Wallace (1988: 139) explain:

Those who were able to demonstrate their respectability through having comfortable, affluent lifestyles also thought of themselves as morally superior to the less fortunate. Thus they were unlikely to form alliances with those whom they perceived to be the ‘undeserving poor’.

And so the earlier bonds of communality and mutual support had broken down, and a division within the old working-class community was created. Wallace’s linked study of young people on Sheppey growing up in and out of work also found evidence of social polarisation, with those in work tending to see their future in terms of ‘the acquisition of a house, a family, and various consumer goods’ while in contrast ‘the long-term unemployed tended to see themselves as hopeless flotsam and jetsam washed around by the economic tide’ (1987: 221). Although the island of Sheppey cannot be said to be ‘typical’ of all working-class neighbourhoods in the 1980’s, Pahl and Wallace’s findings nevertheless relate to processes of economic change that have a wider significance. What their findings demonstrate is the impact of privatisation on community life in the context of economic restructuring and unemployment, and that it is no longer inevitable that working-class life necessitates ‘affective solidarity’.
In the context of socio-economic restructuring in rural England, Newby et al’s research in East Anglia reveals that farmers and farmworkers were brought closer together by the changing social composition of the village as their growing consciousness of their shared distance from urban newcomers worked to generate a ‘common sense of identity as ‘locals’’ (1978: 194). Originating from towns where many of them continued to work, the newcomers constituted a group of ‘immigrants’ who ‘brought with them a middle class lifestyle which [was] largely alien to the remaining local agricultural population’ (Newby, 1980: 165). In turn, the farming population felt threatened and overrun by outsiders, and their ensuing ‘community of feeling’ smoothed over the divisions between them and enabled ‘what is actually a very diverse group with conflicting interests to unite and speak with one voice’ (Newby et al, 1978: 195).

So while Pahl and Wallace’s research illustrates the conflict within, and the breakdown of the working-class community in Sheppey, Newby and Newby et al’s research highlights the way in which a sense of local community identity can in fact be created or strengthened in the face of socio-economic change, particularly in relation to the middle-class lifestyles of urban newcomers. As I shall reveal in chapters five, six and seven, there is an important parallel here between the conclusions of Newby et al (1978) and my findings in Mayfield whereby the concept of ‘respectability’, and ties to history, people, and place, unite working- and middle-class villagers in opposition to ‘newcomers’ who, in this case, are Eastern European migrants. I would not go so far to say that they ‘speak with one voice’ in their unitedness, but certainly the concept of respectability is operationalized to mark a clear boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’.
Recent sociological literature has asked whether the concept of community can ever be beneficial for understanding social processes, and whether there is any value in sociologists taking an ethnographic approach to community studies. I believe the answer to both of these questions is a resounding “yes”. My ethnographic study of Mayfield demonstrates that the concept of ‘community’ is constantly drawn upon by people in everyday discourse to express various aspects of their experience of rural village life. People’s ideas about living in, belonging to – or not belonging to – a community highlight an element of social experience which cannot be overlooked by sociologists. The fact that community is so hard to define does not mean that the concept should be abandoned as a topic for research. Rather, it means that community is a complex concept, which means different things to different people in particular places, at certain moments in time.

As I have previously discussed, community studies – and particularly those in the old tradition of the 1950’s and 1960’s – have been criticised for being unscientific. Questions have been asked about the reliability, objectivity and validity of their approach (Crow & Allan, 1994: 194). In addition, since every community is unique, community studies have been criticised for their lack of generalisability. In response to these critiques, I would first suggest that complete objectivity is neither one hundred percent guaranteed nor necessarily desirable in any kind of research, whether qualitative or quantitative. All research results and analysis are open to multiple interpretations, whether the findings were produced by an individual in an isolated rural village, or a team of researchers testing statistics in a science laboratory. Ethnographers and community studies experts are well aware of the need for systematic research methods, rigorous critique, and higher-level theoretical analysis. What matters in community studies is not the search for some elusive ‘typicality’ or
generalisability, but the study of everyday lives in a variety of different contexts. It is possible for community studies to build upon one another, though as Crow & Allan (1994: 196) suggest, the process for doing this is rarely a case of straightforward replication, but more a ‘constant chiselling away at different aspects of community living, partly in response to the findings and arguments of other, earlier pieces of research’. My study of Mayfield certainly builds upon the community studies tradition, but its focus on the wider analytical themes of whiteness, migration, social class and identity, and the rural mean that my findings, while derived from a particular village, can contribute to debates on these broader subjects.

The Problematic Concept of ‘Community’

The concept of community is ‘troubled but durable’, and has long been contested and disputed in sociological research (Neal, 2009: 33). Indeed, the term ‘community’ is one of the most ambiguous and elusive in sociology; attempts at definition have been varied and diverse, and the connotations of the term inconsistent. However, community remains a common point of reference among social scientists and also for politicians, policy makers and the general public. As Graham Day (2006) argues, it is precisely because of its various meanings that the idea of community continues to grip people’s imaginations. Furthermore, as society changes over time, so too do community forms, structures and concepts; thus studies of community will never be exhausted or completed as communities are constantly growing and evolving in a constant state of ‘becoming’.

We might think of a community as something that binds people together, a space for sharing something that people have in common and giving them a sense of
belonging with one another. However, as soon as we try to specify more firmly what exactly these common bonds are, how they arise, and how they can be sustained, the problems begin (Day, 2006: 1). Public, academic and policy discourse persistently evokes the term community when talking about some kind of ‘group-ness’ in opposition to individualism and isolation. However, the idea of community captures not only aspects of inclusion or belonging in a group, but also exclusion and the boundaries held between groups. Community is as much about difference as it is similarity, and it is a relational concept (Cohen, 1985; Gilroy, 1987: 235). Similarly, as Edwards and Strathern (2000: 153) have argued in their study of kinship networks and belonging, as much as communities might unite and include, they also divide and exclude.

Ferdinand Tonnies (1963) is often cited as the ‘founding father’ of community studies, whose work has had an important influence on subsequent sociological research on communities. He set out a dichotomy between Gemeinschaft (community bound together by kinship ties, interdependence and emotion) and Gesellschaft (wider society characterised by industrial relations, contractual and business-like associations). For Tonnies, in the context of the industrialisation and urbanisation of nineteenth century Western Europe, community stood for ‘real’ ties of interdependence and emotion between people who form part of an unconscious or ‘organic’ bounded entity, often linked to place or territory. He took the view that Gemeinschaft was incompatible with modern society.

The cultural critic Raymond Williams (1973), however, has questioned the use of the term ‘community’ and its Gemeinschaft connotations of togetherness and harmony. Williams points out that ‘community’ is a term which is rarely used unfavourably in society, social policy and sociology, and that it is almost always seen
as positive; an aspirational goal. Similarly, Edwards and Strathern have argued that community belonging is not a value-free idea, but rather, carries positive overtones whereby it seems natural that people should want to ‘belong’ (2000: 152). Williams (1973) warns against referring to groups of people as a ‘community’ in popular and sociological discourse – for example, ‘the migrant community’ or ‘the rural community’ – as this can confer a spurious sense of caring and ‘unitedness’ on what may be no more than a disparate collection of individuals (Williams, 1973).

Moreover, Williams is sceptical about the notion that community is a vanishing prospect which is incompatible with modern society. He argues that the social construct of community will never disappear, but will be transformed into different kinds of being increasingly detached from the limitations of particular neighbourhoods, lifestyles, or experiences. Community, Williams argues, has become a conscious and political project, a mobilisation of collective powers in the pursuit and realisation of shared values and goals (cited in Day, 2006: 19). Therefore, parallels can be drawn between Williams’ conception of community and Tonnies’ concept Gesellschaft insofar as motive and self-interest are employed in the construction of communities. However, Williams is much more optimistic about this new vision of community, and accepts that the emotional and instrumental can coexist in the construction of group relations.

A more recent critique of the assumption that communities are inherently united and borne out of shared experience has come from Brent (1997) who conducted an ethnographic study of Southmead, a large outer-city housing estate in Bristol. Brent problematises the construct of ‘community as unity’. While Southmead does not live up to Tonnies’ notion of Gemeinschaft, Brent argues, it may still be considered a ‘community’ in a different sense: without consensus, common bonds
and a sense of ‘unitedness’. He argues that conflict is inherent within communities, so community-making is always an ambivalent practice (Brent, 1997: 73). Brent proposes that it is diversity rather than unity which characterises some communities, but he simultaneously concedes that community-formation is inherently based on the drawing of boundaries (collectively or individually) which are built on the construction, rejection, or acceptance of Others. In my study, Eastern European migrants who live and work in the market gardens of rural Worcestershire present an image similar to Brent’s (1997) concept of ‘community without unity’. Findings from my focus groups held with migrant workers (discussed in chapter 8) suggest that a strong sense of community exists within the horticultural farms, even though the migrants are diverse in terms of nationality, language, age, and gender, and that their ‘community’ is short-term and transient, lasting only a few months each year. The Eastern European migrant workers are only ‘united’ in relation to their work, their experience of being seasonal migrants living and working away from home, and through their exclusion from local English communities.

The components which build boundaries between communities may not always be objectively apparent - such as language, geography, race, ethnicity or religion - but may exist instead in the minds of the beholders. Thus, a ‘consciousness’ of community can be created through perceptions of community boundaries, members, and Others. The idea of ‘thinking’ communities into existence links closely with Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of ‘imagined communities’ and also Eric Hobsbawm’s (1983) theory regarding the ‘invention of tradition’. According to Hobsbawm, attachment to a community is achieved by ‘inventing traditions’ through processes of symbolism and ritualisation characterised by reference to the past. The crucial element of the invention of tradition, he argues, is the invention of
‘emotionally and symbolically-charged signs of ‘club membership’ [or community membership]’ (Hobsbawm, 1983: 22). Hobsbawm argues that symbols such as flags, anthems, and emblems command loyalty and respect as vessels in which unity and pride are contained. Furthermore, people become aware of themselves as belonging to a community through their understanding of symbols and through ritual practices or ‘invented traditions’ which use history (or a particular version of history) as a legitimator of action and a cement for group cohesion. Cohen (1985: 50-53) concurs that rituals can confirm and strengthen social identity and people’s sense of social location: they are an important means through which people experience community, and can be viewed as symbolic markers of group identity.

In Mayfield for example, the red, white and blue striped maypole, which is surrounded by quaint seventeenth century black and white thatched cottages (see Fig. 4 on p. 87), acts as a symbol around which ritual practices are performed such as maypole dancing, the singing of Christmas carols, and the annual crowning of the May Queen. Such performances of rural Englishness rely upon a strong identification with place, which in turn secures a sense of community belonging in Mayfield, and also a sense of belonging to the nation. However, belonging to ‘the community’ in Mayfield involves more than just displaying attachments to traditions and symbols of rural Englishness. It is also about engagement in social/village activities and events. In relation to the Leicestershire village of Greenville, Tyler (2012b: 427) has suggested that ‘community spirit’, which is generated through participation in social activities, sustains the village identity. The same can be said for Mayfield. For the residents of Mayfield, the simultaneous attachment to place and engagement with the village’s social networks creates a sense of belonging which is not available to the Eastern European migrant workers. This means that community networks in the
village are predominantly place-based, whereas the migrants’ community attachments do not map neatly onto the boundaries of a village, town, city, or nation. Instead, for them, community can be multifaceted and unfixed in location.

**The Relationship between Community and Place**

Talja Blokland’s (2001) study of neighbourhood networks in Hillesluis, Rotterdam cites the neighbourhood ‘bricks and mortar’, or rather, the physical built environment as relevant to the formation of community identity. Indeed, Blokland states at the outset of her research that the geographical area where one investigates constructions of community, class, ethnicity and integration ‘is more than just a context, and needs to be part of the research problem’ (2001: 269). This argument is relevant to my research in the context of rural England because of the peculiar position occupied by the English village idyll in the national psyche, and the image of the rural village as the epitome of Englishness, which I discussed in the previous chapter. As Sarah Neal (2009: 33) has argued, ‘...the idea of village, the location of the village, the institutions of the village and the processes and rhythms of village life’ summon up and become interchangeable with the construct of community. Similarly, reflecting upon the perceived synonymity between ‘village’ and ‘community’, Graham Day explains:

> As places in which agricultural work is done, villages tend to be looked upon as long established, slow growing, close to nature, and in harmony with their environment, surely the most “organic” of human contexts... the village type of social setting epitomises the social wholeness many expect from community (2006: 40).
It is to the relationship between ‘place’ and community which I now turn.

A significant body of research from sociology and social geography has addressed the role of ‘place’ in the formation of communities and the question of whether communities must necessarily be place-based and bound by particular localities, or whether they can transcend place and exist across local, national, and international borders. The following section of this chapter will examine a selection of this literature, and explore the relevance of the relationship between community and place to the study of the social inclusion and exclusion of village residents and Eastern European migrants in Mayfield.

In her study of ‘multicultural intimacies’ in Bradford, West Yorkshire, Fortier (2007; 2008) suggests that racial, ethnic, and cultural integration depends on a combination of physical relations in geographically bounded areas, as well as a shared psychological or emotional connection with a place. In other words, in order for migrant or ethnic minority residents in any given locale to integrate into ‘the community’ they must demonstrate appropriate attachments to the place where they live. The official line taken by the Home Office (2001, cited in Fortier 2007: 112) is that crucial to community cohesion is the ‘intertwining of personal and place identity’, where the place of identity is ‘here’ (the current place of residence) not ‘there’ (where they used to live). Migrants’ and minorities’ detachment from their roots is seen as a necessary condition to the process of establishing strong local ties and successful local relationships. In Bradford, as Fortier (2007: 113) highlights, clinging to a past life or past place is seen as counterproductive to community cohesion.

This sentiment is strongly felt by many residents in Mayfield, not only in relation to the Eastern European migrant population but also in relation to English
residents who have migrated to the village from elsewhere in the country. As I discovered in my interviews with Mayfield residents the repeated rationale for making no attempt to include Eastern European migrants in organised village social events is that they are only temporary residents who will soon be ‘going home’. So in Fortier’s (2007) terms, the migrants’ place of identity is perceived to be ‘there’ (where they used to live) rather than ‘here’ (Mayfield). Therefore, to become a part of the village community residents must demonstrate a commitment to place, either through social participation or through longevity of residence. Celia, 80, retired to the village approximately ten years ago after a long career in the City of London. She explained that after moving to Mayfield to be near her Grandson she was ‘still living in London in [her] head’, and that when she first moved to the village she used to go back to London nearly every week to attend social and cultural events. Celia – whose experience of ‘village community’ will be discussed in further detail in chapter five – feels that while her home is in Mayfield her social life and social networks remain in London. Celia does not experience an ‘intertwining of personal and place identity’ (Fortier, 2007: 112), and this has implications for her engagement with the place-based community in Mayfield.

However, in their study of ethnic minority migrants in East Kent, Ray and Reed (2005) problematise the notion of the ‘cohesive community’ as a self-evident and distinct collectivity which is bounded by locality, a shared identity, and identification with place. Their investigation into community, mobility and racism revealed that the sense of community felt by migrants was fragmented and transitory, and that community was experienced by ethnic minority migrants as multi-layered and far-reaching, operating on a local, national, and global scale. Their respondents often expressed a sense of community that was unfixed in locality. For example,
Czech and British Roma maintained links with Roma nationally and cross-nationally, and did not feel a strong sense of a local spatially-bound Roma community (Ray and Reed, 2005: 224).

Ray and Reed not only found the minority ethnic population of East Kent to be geographically dispersed, but also socially fragmented. Muslim respondents felt that the Muslim ‘community’ in East Kent was structured according to the geography of their ‘homelands’. For example, Pakistanis maintained links with Pakistanis, Bengalis maintained links with Bengalis and there was little unification on the basis that they could both be considered minority groups in the county. Many of Ray and Reeds’ respondents attributed this fragmentation of the ‘ethnic community’ (their term) to language differences, suggesting that it was difficult to build a sense of community with people who spoke a different language. They also felt it was difficult to build and maintain a strong sense of community since the Muslim population was so transient in the area. Both issues of language and transience are relevant to the level of social cohesion (or lack thereof) between Eastern European migrants and English village residents in Mayfield. However, the findings I present in chapter eight suggest that the language barrier between migrants from different parts of Eastern and Central Europe who live and work on the horticultural farms are often overcome through the use of an Anglo-European pidgin English. While they do not use pidgin English to communicate with local English residents, the peculiar Euro-English language they have developed allows migrants to communicate with each other in their work environments.

In East Kent, one of Ray and Reed’s respondents claimed that ‘half the Muslim population work in takeaways, the other half are students, and these two sides never meet’ (2005: 224). This suggests that community cannot be assumed to be
place-based, and also highlights the fact that ethnicity should not necessarily be considered the most important social factor in connecting communities. For instance, the fact that the Muslim students and those who work in takeaways do not mix points to the role that social class plays in the construction of community. In the following section of this chapter I explore the ways in which community inclusion and exclusion is determined along class lines.

The literature I have reviewed thus far has highlighted the need to question the extent to which the boundaries of any given community can map neatly onto the geographical boundaries of a farm, a village, a town, a country, and so forth. As I described earlier in the chapter the concept of community is meaningful to both Eastern European migrants and English villagers in Mayfield, albeit in relation to different values and practices. For village residents, community is place-based and a ‘sense’ of community is created through participation in village social events and traditions. In contrast, migrants’ community ties span across local and national borders and are not tied to specific localities in a straightforward way.

**Social Class, Respectability, and the terms of Community Belonging**

As I discussed in chapter two, social class can play an important role in determining group membership or exclusion. More specifically, based on a range of empirical research, I argued that the intersection of social class with whiteness has meant that in historical and contemporary context, some white people are perceived as ‘more white’ than Others. In the same way that class status can affect ethnic group membership, it can also affect community inclusion and exclusion. For example, Paul Watt (2006, 2009) has analysed the ways in which people draw upon classed
distinctions to think ‘place’ into existence, and the consequent role that place can play in affirming the identities of those who ‘belong’ there, and Others who do not.

In his study of council housing estates in Camden, North London, Watt uses the idea of ‘place images’, which can be defined as the ‘various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality’ (Shields, 1991 cited in Watt, 2006: 777). Such images, Watt explains, ‘can result from stereotyping or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants, and they are formed by the discursive practices of a range of groups and organisations including the local press, government and employers, as well as residents themselves’ (2006: 777). Place images are therefore related to processes of distinction and the way that people ascribe identities to Others as well as themselves in relation to particular places or neighbourhoods. In Camden, Watt explains how the perceived ‘decline of community’ is linked to the increasing presence of ‘low-status ‘others’’ (2006: 784). ‘Rough’ newcomers or ‘outsiders’ were seen to threaten the ways of life of the ‘decent locals’, and in doing so, threatened the respectable place image that the residents held of their estates.

Ideas about ‘respectability’ therefore have important implications for community cohesion. In his study of place images and the making of working-class social distinctions in Camden, Watt (2006) moves beyond a narrow conceptualisation of council housing estate tenants as an homogenous group by addressing distinctions they make between ‘roughness’ and ‘respectability’. A key way in which tenants differentiated themselves from other residents was through ideas about ‘respectability’. Indeed, respectability emerged as an important lens through which many tenants assessed themselves, their neighbours, and the neighbourhood. Many tenants made strenuous efforts to distance themselves from the ‘rough’ people and
places around their estates, and in doing so, felt that they maintained their own sense of respectability (2006: 786). Tenants emphasised a distinction between those ‘ordinary’, ‘decent’ council-house dwellers like themselves, and those low-status Others who were perceived to be ‘rough’. A similar idea is presented in Skeggs’ (1997) book *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, where in the absence of cultural and economic capital which is often taken for granted by the middle classes, a discourse of ‘respectability’ is drawn upon by working class women as an important resource offering a sense of positive identity.

Many of Watt’s interviewees revealed narratives of urban decline tinged with nostalgia for a lost community. Their increasingly unkempt and shabby housing estates gave way to a ‘place image’ of a community in decline: not an image which the ‘respectable’ working class residents identified with. Several of the estates’ residents identified ‘problem tenants’ who were not considered to be ‘respectable’. For example, several single men publicly engaged in behaviour that their fellow tenants found problematic such as heavy drinking and drug-taking. Maintenance of tenants’ flats and the condition of curtains hung in tenant’s windows also served as markers of respectability or ‘roughness’. As Watt (2006: 788) explains, ‘those who wanted to stress their own respectability felt that their sense of identity was threatened and even betrayed by the visible signs of inner-city poverty around them’. The residents displayed an underlying anxiety about being too close – socially and spatially – to concentrated deprivation. Tenants wanted to preserve the spatial status-quo by keeping ‘problem tenants’ out, and in doing so, maintain enclaves of respectability. As I argue in chapter six, a similar process is taking place in Mayfield where village residents define themselves as respectable in opposition to Eastern European migrants who are not. For the villagers, migrants’ lack of respectability is
evident through their perceived poverty, living and working conditions, clothing and hairstyles, and lack of cultural knowledge.

In Watt’s study, ethnic minority residents were sometimes blamed for the shortage of neighbourhood facilities, and some interviewees expressed a sense of loss related to the perception that ethnic Others were ‘taking over’ the area (2006: 791). However, he also found evidence that the white tenants made distinctions between ‘rough’ and ‘respectable’ ethnic minority residents. Longevity of residence as well as acting in a ‘decent’ manner meant that ethnic minority tenants could effectively prove their respectability over time (ibid). A key concern among the long-term white tenants appeared to be maintaining ‘standards’, therefore the rough/respectable distinction did not always neatly map onto different racialised groups. The main threat to the respectable white working class residents in Camden was not so much ‘other races’ as the presence of ‘rough’ and ‘problem’ tenants. In order to deal with this threat, maintaining a sense of respectability allowed the tenants to symbolically distance themselves from those low-status others who also happened to share the same physical urban space as themselves. As I argue in chapter six, the exclusion of migrants from the village community in Mayfield results from a complex synergy of racialised and class-based distinctions. However, while the migrants are constructed as ‘not quite white’ enough to be included in village life, the processes of exclusion are not always straightforwardly related to race.

Watt’s (2006) study has been closely examined here because it raises some important themes which are pertinent to my research project and have been instrumental in guiding my research questions, particularly those related to Mayfield villagers’ perceptions of the Eastern European migrant Other and the impact that migrants are having on the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the village and
the wider local area. Watt has alerted my attention to the discourses that villagers employ to describe Mayfield as a place. In chapter five I examine the way in which the ‘place image’ of Mayfield (evoked by village residents) is that of a ‘working village’, and the classed undertones that such an image connotes. In chapters six and seven I explore how both working- and middle-class village residents draw upon discourses of ‘respectability’ to situate themselves in opposition to Eastern European migrants. I also draw upon Watt’s (2006) study to analyse the ways in which class and ethnicity intersect in Mayfield. I argue that although the migrants are ‘racially’ white, they are perceived as ethnically Other by villagers who draw upon classed and ethnic markers of difference to position them as such.

**Multicultural Intimacies: Ethnicity and Community Cohesion in Britain**

In her aforementioned study of multiculturalism in Bradford, Fortier (2007) investigates exactly what kinds of multicultural intimacies between inhabitants of Britain are promoted, on what grounds, and how these intimacies relate to new forms of Othering. Fortier (2007: 108) argues that New Labour’s integration project between 1992 and 2008 was to embrace the Other ‘as Other’ in the name of multiculturalism, ‘while pushing him or her away as never fully ‘integrated’ unless he or she embraces ‘our’ values’. Therefore, concealed in the narrative of integration was an assimilationist strategy. On one hand, Fortier argues, we are taught to love thy neighbour ‘as different’, and on the other, ‘the nation’ is constructed as an assumed bond of allegiance where ‘differences are obliterated under a veneer of universal diversity – ‘we are all different’, ‘we are all ethnics’, ‘we are all migrants’, therefore ‘we’ are all the same’ (2007: 108). Moreover, the rhetoric of the national bond
emphasises a ‘glue of values’ which in spite of our differences, can bind us all together if no other common ground can be identified. Within this politics of morality however, the ‘problem’ of living together in multicultural harmony becomes a problem of ‘them’ (migrants, ethnic minorities) adjusting to ‘our’ (white British) values. If assimilation is seen to be successful, ‘the nation can then flatter itself as tolerant and accepting because of its capacity to absorb difference’ (Fortier, 2007: 108).

Different degrees of inter-ethnic mixing are celebrated and feared in Britain. In Bradford, Fortier (2007: 110) highlights the difference between the genial indifference between Muslim and Christian neighbours, and the moral outrage expressed at the Islamicization of white English teenage girls. Neighbourliness is deemed an acceptable degree of intimacy, though an elevation of this intimacy to the level of friendship, sexual reproduction, and a deeper exchange of cultural or religious values provokes anxiety. The British concept of ‘tolerance’ then, is founded on the contradictory proclamation that all cultures are of equal worth, while declaring the need for overriding ‘national’ values. As Fortier (2007) demonstrates, these values fix the limits of multicultural intimacy. A set of universal principles are constructed in the name of civility and morality which must not be violated. Living peacefully side-by-side presents an image of successfully integrated physical relations in geographically-bounded areas, but any more meaningful ‘community’ relationships in Fortier’s (2007) study appear elusive and a cultural distance between ethnic groups is maintained.

The concept of ‘multicultural intimacies’ is central to my analysis of the relationships between English villagers and Eastern European migrants in Mayfield. In particular, I explore the degrees and limits of multicultural intimacy which exist
between villagers and migrants in chapter seven where I argue that although a number
of villagers and migrants do interact at a variety of levels and in a range of spheres,
there remains an inherent power dynamic between the two groups where a boundary
or social dichotomy is erected between villager/insider/self and
migrant/outsider/other. Consequently, certain degrees of intimacy between English
villagers and Eastern European migrants are deemed acceptable and even encouraged
(such as employer/employee and landlord/tenant relationships), while others (social,
romantic, sexual) are unacceptable and feared.

Les Back (1996) agrees with Fortier (2007) that racism continues to exist in
multiethnic and apparently multicultural urban areas. Back states that while multiple
social, cultural, and ethnic identities are being lived and expressed within cities such
as London, these are equally being met by diverse forms of popular racism ‘that
sometimes operate inside urban multiculture and at other times prey on these fragile
forms of dialogue from outside’ (1996: 7). He stresses the need to investigate the
practices that emerge within adolescent communities that give meaning to ‘race’. To
do this he examines urban multiculture in the ethnically and racially plural context of
two council housing estates in southeast London, and addresses the dialogue used in
the transmission of ethnic and racial identities and the various discourses through
which concepts of ‘community’ are made meaningful. Back identifies a range of
divergent discourses used by young people in southeast London to talk about issues
of race, multiculture and social cohesion in their communities. One example is what
Back calls the ‘harmony discourse’ which was employed by local residents to
characterise the local community as free from racial tensions and a place where
everyone gets along regardless of colour. This discourse, Back (1996: 113) argues,
‘acts as a resource that banishes ‘racial things’ from everyday experience’, and
consequently race is not seen to be a source of division in the community. However, his ethnography reveals that while discourses, of multiculturalism, harmony, and tolerance were subscribed to on a superficial level, racism still existed beneath the surface.

I discovered a similar discourse at work in Mayfield, which is a thread that runs through my empirical chapters. On the surface a harmony discourse is drawn upon by Mayfield residents to describe the relationship between villagers and migrants and the impact that migrants have had on the village in recent years. I was repeatedly told that there is ‘no problem here’, that the migrants ‘keep themselves to themselves’, they ‘seem nice enough’ and ‘we don’t really see them’. However, this harmony discourse quickly dissolved when questions about un/acceptable degrees of multicultural intimacy were raised. In general, villagers are content to live side-by-side with Eastern European migrants in a state of relative indifference provided certain boundaries between the two communities are not crossed. The details of these boundaries will be examined in chapter seven.

Nationality, Migration and Community Networks

In the final section of this chapter I shall review the expanding body of literature which has addressed Eastern Europeans’ post-migration community ties and social networks in Britain. While the research I draw upon here has been conducted exclusively in urban areas around England, the key themes of nationality, migration and community networks are relevant to my study and furthermore, suggests that Eastern European migrant experiences of community in rural England are as yet under-researched.
Since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 to include the ‘Accession 8’ or ‘A8’ countries including Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, increased academic attention has been paid to the experiences of A8 migrants who have since come to live and work in the UK. A substantial portion of this research has focused specifically on Polish migrants as they have been the largest group to migrate to the UK from Eastern Europe (cf. Eade et al, 2007; Ryan et al, 2008; Ryan et al, 2009; White, 2011, Kempny, 2010; Burrell, 2009; Rabikowsa & Burrell, 2009) and London has been the focus for many projects (cf. Eade et al, 2007; Ryan et al 2008; Ryan et al, 2009; Garapich & Eade, 2009). However, some work has been undertaken in different areas of the country. For example, Stenning et al (2006) have analysed local labour market and policy responses, immigration dynamics and the social lives of A8 migrants in Newcastle and Peterborough, and White (2011) has researched the lives of Polish families in Bath, Bristol, Trowbridge and Frome in Southwest England.

Ryan et al (2008; 2009) have conducted a detailed study of the ways in which Polish migrants access existing Polish networks and establish new social ties in London, and they highlight the often overlooked difficulties that migrants can face accessing social networks and social support in the UK. Ryan et al (2008) also address the relationship between migrants’ access to social networks and social capital, critiquing Bourdieu’s (1984) notion that social capital derives from the number and type of social networks one can access and draw upon. They argue instead that Polish migrants’ social and cultural capital is also conditioned by wider social processes such as official policy towards migration and the rights attached to immigrant status (2008: 677). In addition, they stress that Polish migrants’
community and social networks span geographical locations and that they are often
temporally fluid, changing with the individual migrants’ needs.

Ryan et al (2008; 2009) and also White (2011) have identified the crucial role
that Polish migrants’ English language skills can play either in the development or
prevention of relationships with British residents. Indeed, White claims that in her
study of Polish migrants in Southwest England, poor English language proficiency
was the main factor inhibiting integration with the local population (2011: 138). A
lack of English language skills therefore prevents migrants from moving beyond
‘thick bonds’ or ‘bonding relationships’ with other Polish migrants to ‘bridging
relationships’ (Putnam, 2007) with British citizens or indeed migrants of any other
rely on thick bonds with other Poles because of the availability of companionship and
support within their tight co-ethnic networks and the limited opportunities to meet
with a more diverse range of people due to lack of English language skills, but also
due to their social and ethnic marginalisation. This problem is reflected in my
findings based upon three focus groups and two interviews with Eastern European
migrants in and around Mayfield.

Reliance on dense friendship or family networks may reflect migrants’ lack of
other social resources. However, the networking strategies employed by professional
Poles included in Ryan et al’s (2008) study were often markedly different from those
of other migrants. Working in more ethnically diverse environments allowed
professionals to meet and form friendships and working relationships with people
from diverse backgrounds. Their professional status and their consequent cultural
capital were central to the creation of bridging relationships. My findings from an
interview with ‘Adam’, a Polish man who works for Mayfield’s district Council
reflect this argument. As I outline in detail in chapter eight, his experience of living in the local area is different to those of the migrant agricultural workers due to differences in their migration strategies, employment, language skills, social networks and cultural capital.

Kathy Burrell (2009) also recognises the role of social class in the development of social networks post-migration. Echoing the findings of Ray and Reed’s (2005) research on the fragmentation of ‘ethnic communities’ in East Kent, Burrell states that class is an important ‘fault line’ along which Polish migrant social relationships are structured. She argues that ‘being Polish on its own, even with this shared history, is not enough to cement bonds with other Polish people’ and that other factors come into play such as class and gender (Burrell, 2009: 236). The role of Eastern European migrants’ social class, social and cultural capital, professional status and their effect on the development of cross-ethnic bridging relationships in rural Worcestershire will be developed in chapter eight.

The research conducted by Ryan et al (2009) on Polish migrants in London has also focused on the transnational social networks that migrants maintain post-migration. Putnam (2000; 2007) regards mobility and migration as key barriers to accessing and maintaining social networks, however, digital, internet and mobile phone technologies play an important role in overcoming such barriers. Rather than being rooted in specific local formations such as neighbourhoods, Ryan et al (2009: 159) argue that ‘migrant networks may be dispersed over a wide geographical area, including transnational ties’. Kelly and Lusis’ (2006: 831) research on migration and transnational ties in Canada also states that ‘immigrants maintain multi-stranded connections to their place of origin’ and that these connections ‘continue to significantly influence the lifeworlds both of migrants and of those they leave
behind’. They remind us that migrants do not simply start entirely new lives as ‘the immigrant’, but that they maintain strong economic, social, cultural, political and emotional linkages with their places of origin (Kelly and Lusis, 2006: 831).

In her study of Polish families and migration since EU accession, Anne White (2011) has identified the problems experienced by temporary migrants in relation to integration in British society, though in general this is a rather neglected area of research. Temporariness can affect Eastern European migrants’ predicaments in the UK in a variety of ways, which in turn can have a direct impact upon migrants’ ability to operate competently and socially integrate into British society. As I discuss in further detail in chapter eight, temporary migrants are less likely to register with GP’s and dentists, they are less likely to access health and leisure facilities, and are less likely to apply for social and state support. White (2011) argues that one of the key reasons for this is that most often temporary migrants maintain official residence status in their home countries. She also states that temporariness is inextricably linked to the idea of return, and this has manifold consequences. For example, many migrants have to cope with the fact that they do not know when or whether they will return home, and migrants as well as receiving communities (including Mayfield) may be reluctant to engage in processes of integration if their migration status is not seen to be permanent. Once again, we return to the issue of the relationship between identification with place and community as outlined by Fortier (2007).

**Conclusion: Implications for My Study**

The literature reviewed here on the subjects of community ties, migration, ethnicity and social class has important implications for my study. Guided by the various
conceptualisations of community proposed by Tonnies (1963), Day (2006), Williams (1973), Brent (1997) and Cohen (1983; 1985) I analyse in chapter five, the ways in which the villagers of Mayfield mobilise the concept of ‘community’ through identification with place, social engagement, and also the role that social class plays in this process. The work of Ray and Reed (2005) and Blokland (2001) raises the important question of whether community is necessarily bounded by place. I explore this question both in relation to the villagers and Eastern European migrants in Mayfield in chapters five and eight. Watt’s (2006) concept of neighbourhood ‘place images’ has also had an important influence on this research project. In chapter five I explore how villagers characterise Mayfield as a ‘working village’, and what this identity or ‘place image’ means to different groups of residents.

The ‘harmony discourse’ identified by Back (1996) in his ethnography of two council-housing estates in Southeast London has influenced my research questions, particularly those related to Mayfield villagers’ perceptions of the Eastern European migrant Other and their impact on the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the village and the wider local area. I also draw upon Watt’s (2006) work to analyse the ways in which class and ethnicity intersect in Mayfield, even though the migrant workers in and around Mayfield are white and European. Indeed, the concept of ‘respectability’ is central to my analysis of how the villagers of Mayfield identify themselves in opposition to Eastern European migrants. The work of Fortier (2007), and her concept of ‘multicultural intimacies’ in particular, has importantly shaped the way I have analysed the types of relationships which exist between villagers and Eastern European migrants in Mayfield. Consequently I have used this concept to underpin my argument in chapter seven. Finally, the literature on Eastern Europeans’ post-migration social networks and community relations has informed my analysis of
the routes – and also barriers to – the formation of social networks in the Worcestershire countryside, and the importance of internet and mobile phone technologies in the maintenance of transnational social ties. The work of Ryan et al (2008, 2009) and Burrell (2009) reminds us not to think of migrant populations as homogenous groups, even though they are so often conceived as such in policy discourse, the media, and also by the villagers of Mayfield.
Chapter 4
Conducting Ethnographic Fieldwork in Mayfield

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an overview of the research methods used during twelve months of residential ethnographic fieldwork and the way in which I analysed the data collected from participant observation, interviews, and focus groups held with the English villagers of Mayfield and Eastern European migrant horticultural workers. I shall explain why I selected the village of Mayfield for my twelve months of residential ethnographic research, why I felt that residential fieldwork was necessary, and sketch the geographic, economic, and demographic details of the village. I go on to explain how I made contact with my interviewees, convey a sense of the interview process, and discuss some of the ethical issues associated with ethnographic fieldwork. I conclude the chapter with an explanation of, and justification for, how I present my interview and focus group data in the empirical chapters of my thesis.

Why Research Whiteness, Class, Community and Migration in the Rural Worcestershire Village of Mayfield?

There are a number of interconnected reasons why I chose to conduct my fieldwork in the village of Mayfield in Worcestershire. I came to know Mayfield as a result of staying with friends who live in a neighbouring village. However, in more sociological terms Mayfield is interesting for four key reasons. Firstly, because of the
large-scale, predominantly seasonal migration of Eastern European economic migrants to the village and surrounding area; secondly, because the vast majority of Eastern Europeans migrate to Mayfield and surrounding villages to work in the horticultural industry – a sector which traditionally employed local people and has significantly shaped the local economy; thirdly, because of the considerable demographic change taking place in the area, even though issues of ethnicity, multiculture, and migration are often seen as ‘out of place’ or irrelevant in rural villages such as Mayfield; and finally, because very little is known about the social, cultural and transnational lives of Eastern European migrants living in the predominantly white and English rural west Midlands. In a village which is not used to the in-migration of non-British migrants on such a significant scale, I am interested in the villagers’ perceptions of these new Eastern European migrants who have been coming to the area to work since the expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004, but also I am interested in hearing from the migrants themselves, listening to their perspectives and experiences of living and working in the horticultural industry in rural Worcestershire.

Since the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the simultaneous relaxation of European employment laws, a large number of Eastern Europeans have migrated to rural areas including Worcestershire. In the case of Mayfield specifically, large numbers of Polish, Latvian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Lithuanian migrants live (in static caravans and farm buildings) and work on large fruit- and vegetable-growing nurseries situated in the village. Many Eastern European migrants associated with the horticultural industry also live in the nearby town of ‘Elmbridge’ which is approximately three miles from the village (see Figure. 2 on p. iv). As a result, Mayfield, the local market town of Elmbridge, and the surrounding villages are
undergoing a period of significant demographic change. Issues of migration, integration, and community cohesion, which have long been important concerns in urban areas where immigrants have traditionally settled, are issues that are now facing rural dwellers in villages such as Mayfield. This is an area historically unused to the large-scale migration of non-British nationals. For example, in 2001 the political district in which Mayfield is situated was 96.9% white British (98.8% including white Irish) (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk), and this is to a large degree what makes Mayfield such an interesting and original site for researching whiteness, class, migration, and rural inclusion and exclusion.

The Village of Mayfield: A Sense of Place

The village of Mayfield is situated in rural Worcestershire in the West Midlands region of England. Mayfield sits on the banks of the River Avon, and its riverside location means that the fertile and nutrient-rich soil is ideal for growing horticultural crops. Consequently, the local economy has for centuries been reliant on the agriculture and horticulture industries. Mayfield is home to two small arable farms, and there are at least another six large fruit and vegetable-growing nurseries known as ‘market gardens’ which supply large supermarkets across the country with horticultural produce such as asparagus, salads, tomatoes, bean sprouts, and in the winter, cabbages, cauliflowers, poinsettias and cyclamen plants. The majority of crops and plants are grown in vast glasshouses, which means that produce is grown all year round, and is less affected by the seasons and harsh weather. Despite the fact that the local economy relies heavily on these businesses, only very few of Mayfield’s residents work in the agricultural and horticultural sector. This reflects the
current trend whereby large farms and market gardens in Worcestershire are increasingly employing migrant workers from Eastern Europe to conduct unskilled manual labour rather than recruiting from local labour pools.

At the time of writing this thesis the most recent available census data is from the 2001 survey. The 2011 census was conducted while I was undertaking my fieldwork in Mayfield, but unfortunately it had not been made publicly available before the submission of my thesis. Therefore I rely upon data from the 2001 census in this chapter. In future publications I shall cite more up-to-date data from the 2011 census, which I anticipate will reveal increased population diversity due to the growing number of Eastern European migrants living in the village. In particular, I expect the number of those describing their ethnicity as ‘white other’ to increase, along with an increase in the number selecting their country of birth as ‘EU: Accession Country’.

According to the 2001 census, the population of Mayfield is approximately 800, however, no official information is available on Mayfield in isolation because data from census surveys are not broken down to, or analysed at village level. Data is available by ward however (an administrative area within each council district), which in this case comprises Mayfield and the neighbouring village of ‘Horton’. Therefore the population statistics available for Mayfield are subsumed within those of the Mayfield and Horton ward, and as such are inseparable. Horton is slightly more affluent than Mayfield and house prices are higher there. Nonetheless, the ward data is useful for building a sense of the ward within which Mayfield is situated. The composition of the population by broad age groups is as follows:
Table 1: Population of Mayfield & Horton Ward by Age Group in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-15</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-29</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

This data demonstrates that the majority (54%) of the population are over 45 with the smallest group being those aged 16-29 (12.5%). According to official Census classification 99.1% of the population are white, and of the white population, 98% are white British and 2% are white ‘other’. Asian, black, ‘mixed’, and Chinese or ‘other ethnic group’ together make up the remaining 0.9% of the village population (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk). In other words, approximately 8 people out of a population of 800 self-identify as non-white. Further details of the ethnic composition of the Mayfield and Horton ward are given overleaf:
Table 2: Ethnic Composition of Mayfield & Horton Ward in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Percentage in Mayfield &amp; Horton</th>
<th>Percentage in England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British, White Irish &amp; White</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Mixed</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Asian or Asian British</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Black or Black British</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Chinese or Other Ethnic Groups</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

29 of my 30 interviewees are white British. One of these 29 was born in the Netherlands but emigrated to England with his Dutch parents 63 years ago when he was two years old, and considers himself to be British. This man’s daughter, who was another of my interviewees, was born in the UK and also considers herself to be British. One of my interviewees is British Asian.

The housing in the village is mixed, and includes a number of listed 14th to 17th century thatched timber-framed cottages, several 17th to 19th century farmhouses, Victorian detached and semi-detached cottages, and an estate of semi-detached red-brick houses and bungalows built in the 1970’s. According to the 2001 census, out of a total 1,011 households in the Mayfield and Horton ward, 784 are privately owned, 137 are rented social housing (from the local authority or other housing association) and 90 are privately rented (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk). The average
house price in the Mayfield and Horton ward was £218,466 in 2001 compared with an average of £160,384 for England as a whole, however, the average household income in Mayfield and Horton was £35,793 compared with a national average of £36,000 (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk). So while house prices in Mayfield and Horton are substantially higher than the national average, the average household income is slightly lower than the average across England.

While the village identity and history is bound up with farming and market gardening, this industry is not a significant source of employment for village people. The 2001 census reports that the largest proportion of villagers is employed in the ‘wholesale, retail, and motor repairs’ sectors, followed by manufacturing, real estate and health and social work. Of my thirty Mayfield interviewees four were directly involved with the horticulture and agriculture industries, and one had been prior to retirement (13.3% of my interviewees). Across the ward however, 8% of the population worked in these industries in 2001. Further details of the industries in which the population of Mayfield and Horton are employed are given in table 3 overleaf.
Table 3: Mayfield & Horton Ward Industries of Employment in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/ Horticulture</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity/ Gas/ Water</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail; Repair of Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels &amp; Catering</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Storage &amp; Communication</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate &amp; Renting</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/ Social Work</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

In May 2011, 6.4% of the population of Mayfield and Horton were claiming out of work benefits compared with 12% nationwide.\(^4\) According to the 2001 census 30.9% of the population of the Mayfield and Horton ward has no educational qualifications. People with ‘Level 2’ qualifications (equivalent to five or more GCSE’s) made up the

\(^{4}\) This is a projected figure provided to Worcestershire County Council by the Office of National Statistics.
second largest group (19.8%). Further details of the population’s qualifications in
terms of education are given below:

**Table 4: Mayfield & Horton Ward Educational Qualifications in 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification Level⁵</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

The census also indicates that the social class composition of the village is mixed,
with 20% of the village population categorised in the AB group comprising ‘higher
and intermediate managerial and professional occupations’, 26% in C1 comprising
‘supervisory, clerical, junior management, and administrative’ occupations, 22% in
C2 ‘skilled manual workers’, 15% in D comprising ‘semi-skilled and unskilled

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⁵ Explanation of qualification levels (as determined by the 2001 census):
- Level 1: 1 or more ‘O’ level passes, 1 or more CSE/GCSE any grades, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ.
- Level 2: 5 or more ‘O’ level passes, 5 or more CSEs (grade 1), 5 or more GCSEs (grades A-C), 1 or more ‘A’ levels’AS’ levels, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ.
- Level 3: 2 or more ‘A’ levels, 4 or more ‘AS’ levels, Higher School Certificate, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ.
- Level 4: First degree, higher degree, NVQ levels 4 and 5, HNC, HND, qualified teacher status, qualified medical doctor, qualified dentist, qualified Nurse, midwife, health visitor.
manual workers’, and 16% in E which refers to those on state benefits, the unemployed, and ‘lowest grade workers’ (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk).

Whilst this traditional method of defining social class according to occupation describes the village as mixed in its class composition, I critique the usefulness of this kind of categorisation in chapter five, drawing on Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of cultural capital and also Skeggs’ (1997) concept of ‘respectability’, which both advocate the importance of less tangible social and cultural habits, understandings, knowledges, and aspirations in determining social class status.

A number of families in Mayfield have histories in the village which span several generations, and there are several kinship networks which are interrelated through first- and second-cousins, marriages, and remarriages. Many village residents were born in the area, their parents having been involved in the agricultural and horticultural industries when they existed on a smaller scale in the village (not the multi-million pound businesses that they are today). However, other people have much more recent histories in the village. A significant portion of village residents are relatively recent migrants from other areas of the West Midlands, the North, Southern Ireland, the South East and South West including the cities of Birmingham, London and Worcester, and other more rural areas in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. The village is described by many of its residents as a ‘working village’ on account of the horticulture industry and other trades and businesses operating in the village such as a sign-writer, farm and building machinery hire, a hairdresser, a plumber, a thatcher, and a carpenter. Conceptualising the village as ‘working’ is the villagers’ way of defining their village identity in relation to the numerous ‘picture-postcard’ villages which have become tourist destinations popular with second-home owners in the neighbouring Cotswolds. The concept of the ‘working village’ also reflects the
villagers’ sense that Mayfield is the ‘real’ countryside: its image is not that of the honey-coloured stone buildings and rolling hills of the quaint English Cotswolds, but farming, enterprise, and hard work. I address the construct of the ‘working village’ in further detail in chapter five.

Mayfield’s geographical location in the West Midlands and its status as ‘not the Cotswolds’ also has a significant impact on house prices in the village. A number of village residents who have moved to the village in the last ten years cite lower house prices than the nearby Cotswold villages as a major motivating factor for buying property here. Despite the lower house prices compared to some of the surrounding villages, Mayfield has maintained a good number of services and facilities for its residents. The village has a Church of England primary school with approximately 80 pupils, a toddler group, children’s playground and a village hall: a venue well-used by the villagers for fundraising events, fêtes, film screenings, amateur dramatics and live music. The village is also home to a Church of England Church (see Figure 1. overleaf), a Royal British Legion social club⁶, a flower-arranging club, a cricket club, youth club, the Maypole Club (a club which organises day-trips for the over-60’s), a Post Office and village shop, two hairdressers, two pubs (which are not particularly popular with village residents because of high prices and lack of community engagement), and a bus which runs to the local town every two hours between approximately 8am and 5:30pm on weekdays. Whilst the bus to town is vital for many of the village residents, the lack of a service after 5:30pm means that it is very difficult for people without cars to leave the village in the evenings - something I discovered for myself, but an issue echoed by others.

⁶ The Royal British Legion is a nationwide charity, which provides support for men and women who have served in the British armed forces and their families. In the past, membership to the Mayfield British Legion social club was restricted to serving members of the armed forces, veterans, and their families. However in recent years, due to dwindling membership numbers and the need to increase revenue, the club has allowed all village residents to use its premises.
Figure 3. Mayfield Church
Many of the social clubs, the pubs, the school and the Church contribute notices and articles to a monthly Parish magazine (a photocopied pamphlet) which gives updates of activities and events, a letter from the vicar, dates for the calendar, and advertisements for local businesses and services all compiled by the owner of the village shop. The pamphlet plays an important role in fostering a sense of ‘connectedness’ in the village – a number of villagers commented to me that even if they did not plan to attend events being held in the village they liked to know what was going on. One village man also maintains a village website which fulfils a similar purpose to the Parish magazine, but also promotes upcoming events at the village hall, and includes some information about the history of the village focusing on the history of the maypole, the Church, and the two village pubs.

Each year the villagers of Mayfield celebrate May Day with dancing around the maypole (see Figure 4, overleaf) to music played by a traditional band comprising an accordion, violins and drums. The men’s, women’s and children’s maypole dancing groups all dress in traditional attire. For example, the ‘morris men’ wear short ‘lederhosen’-style trousers, knee-length white socks decorated with bells and ribbons, white shirts and rainbow striped braces, and straw hats adorned with ribbons and feathers. As well as dancing, the annual May Day celebrations also include the crowning of the May Queen. Girls of primary school age dress in summer dresses with flowers in their hair, and carry posies and garlands of flowers which are later taken to the Church. One girl is elected to be May Queen, is given a velvet cape to wear, and is invited to sit on the ‘throne’ (an old wooden chair covered in a drape) to preside over the day’s festivities which are held to celebrate springtime fertility and to mark the beginning of the summer and the growing season.
Figure 4. The Mayfield Maypole
The maypole has become something of a symbol of the village of Mayfield as it is said to be one of the few villages in the country to possess a permanent maypole that stands at the centre of the village all year round. The maypole is approximately 60 feet tall and is decorated with red, white, and blue stripes and topped with a gilded weathervane. Since the 19th century the care and maintenance of the maypole has been the responsibility of the Mayfield Wake committee. The Wake is another village celebration which takes place every summer. Its origins are somewhat disputed, but a number of villagers whose families have lived in the village for several generations believe that it is related to Oak Apple Day (also known as Royal Oak Day) which was celebrated on the 29th of May to commemorate the restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660. According to an extract from Samuel Pepys’ diary in 1660, ‘Parliament had ordered the 29 of May, the King's birthday, to be for ever [sic] kept as a day of thanksgiving for our redemption from tyranny and the King's return to his Government’ (Anon). Though Oak Apple Day was formally abolished as a national public holiday in 1859, it is likely that the Mayfield Wake is distantly related to this tradition. The Mayfield Wake is now held in the first week of June, and is a week-long village festival. Events include children's sports, a treasure hunt, a rubber duck race on the river, a children’s art competition, an evening of live music, a procession to the Maypole by the Wake Queen and her attendants, a fête on the main street, a fancy dress competition, and Maypole dancing by the children and the women of the village – all of which are interesting examples of how the English rural identity of the village is ‘flagged’ (Billig, 1995) and performed by its residents in the name of ‘tradition’.

The nearest town to Mayfield is a small market town whose economy has been struggling in recent years. The increasing popularity of out-of-town shopping
centres and superstores combined with the recent period of recession has meant that
Elmbridge’s high street is dominated by pound shops, charity shops, fast-food outlets
and a large number of empty retail spaces. Several of the villagers I spoke to
expressed deep sadness at the decline of their local town. Many businesses have
closed due to poor profits and other larger chain stores have relocated to out-of-town
shopping centres where rent is cheaper, parking is free, and shoppers are drawn by the
prospect of shopping for food, clothing, household goods, DIY equipment and office
supplies in one location. ‘Swan Street’, the main road which leads in to the centre of
Elmbridge from Mayfield, however, has seen the emergence of several Eastern
European shops in the last three to four years to cater for the large number of Eastern
European migrants who now populate this particular area of town and the outlying
villages. Swan Street has long been one of the most socio-economically deprived
parts of the town, and has been kept in a state of disrepair for many years. However,
there are mixed feelings among local residents about whether the street’s new Eastern
European population have contributed to this degeneration, or whether they are in the
process of revitalising it.

Travelling on the bus which passes along Swan Street I heard a young man in
his early to mid-twenties remark to his friend ‘What a shit ‘ole this is now’. And in a
conversation with a villager in Mayfield I was told that ‘It’s really gone downhill
Swan Street... I mean it’s always been pretty run down and unkempt, but it’s just so
horrible now. It’s changed so quickly – I’d say in the last three years. Three years ago
it was completely different’. The street is home to three Eastern European grocery
stores which each display colourful posters advertising their produce in Polish and
other Eastern European languages. Hand-written notices and advertisements also
jostle for space in the shop windows and doorways, displayed for the attention of
other Eastern European migrants. During the first month of my stay in Mayfield, an Eastern European butcher and restaurant also opened on this street which demonstrates that increasing numbers of Eastern European migrants are beginning to put down roots in the town and their cultural presence is becoming more visible.

**Moving to the Village and Finding Interviewees**

In order to undertake twelve months of ethnographic research in Mayfield, I took lodgings with a family who had lived in the village for approximately eight years. I felt that residential ethnographic fieldwork was the most appropriate methodological approach in this case because, rather than basing my analysis solely on interview data, it was important for me to develop a sense of place first-hand to add another dimension to my data through participant observation. Building up a fine-grained picture of village life and the social networks that exist in Mayfield, witnessing the rhythms and day-to-day occurrences in the village, and taking part in social networks, clubs and events allowed me to gain a greater sense of what village life is like, and crucially to contextualise the narratives and worldviews expressed by my interviewees in the interview setting.

Approximately two months before I began fieldwork in Mayfield I visited the village to put up posters in the window of the village shop, the village hall notice-board, the bus shelters, the two village pubs, the local farm shop, and a grocery store in an adjoining village, stating that I was seeking lodgings in Mayfield for a period of 12 months from August 2010 until August 2011. As a result I received two responses from people in Mayfield and two from an adjoining village. I arranged to visit Kate and her three children who were looking for a lodger. They were involved with the
social life of the village in a number of ways and we got on well during our first meeting, so I accepted a room in her house in exchange for £350 a month rent. Rather than living alone I felt that living with people with social ties and networks in the village could be a helpful first step in becoming involved in village activities and meeting village residents.

Kate, a single mother, runs a hairdressing salon attached to her family home, which is an important hub of social activity in the village. By spending time around the home and the salon I met a number of village residents, young and old, female and male, all of whom were white and English. The hairdressing salon proved to be an excellent base from which to develop my own social relationships with local people. I explained the purpose of my research to Kate, and that I was looking to meet and interview people about their lives in the village. She played an instrumental role in introducing me to her friends and clients both as her lodger but also as a student researching the life of the village and the migration of Eastern European migrant workers to the area.

Over the twelve months I forged a close relationship with Kate and her children and very much came to be treated as ‘part of the family’. Kate and I often spent evenings chatting over a bottle of wine. I also got to know her friends and family, and she mine. I was invited to attend family birthday celebrations, days out, school plays and shopping trips, and all this contributed to my sense of feeling ‘at home’ in Mayfield. Despite leaving my flat and my partner behind in London, living with Kate was a happy time which enhanced my overall ethnographic experience, and I made a conscious effort to reciprocate her generosity, for example, by helping her children with their homework, creating costumes for fancy-dress parties, baking and cooking, child-minding, collecting the children from school and walking the dog. No
doubt Kate’s trust in me was observed by other village residents that I met when
waiting for her children outside of the village school or when walking the dog – and
this in turn is likely to have positively affected the way in which they perceived me.

However, taking lodgings in the village did not automatically grant me
unbounded access to the village’s social networks. Instead I had to work hard to
initiate and maintain relationships with villagers – often with more energy than would
normally be the case without my research motive. I tried as much as possible not to
miss an opportunity to initiate conversations with village residents, for example, at
the bus stop, during bus journeys, when visiting the village shop, or when taking a
walk around the village. However, I came to realise that my capacity for
enthusiastically explaining my research and making polite conversation was not
limitless, so there were certainly days when I carried my ‘researcher hat’ in my
handbag rather than wearing it on my head.

During my residence in Mayfield between August 2010 and August 2011 I
joined a book club, the village ‘Big Screen’ (film screening) club, attended a charity
fashion show, several coffee mornings (one at the Royal British Legion), introduced
myself to the proprietors of the village shop, attended an evening of live music at the
village hall, joined the village summer ball committee, introduced myself to Kate’s
friends and neighbours, chatted to customers at Kate’s hair salon, helped out at the
Mayfield primary school spring fair and the Mayfield Wake (summer fête), and
visited the two village pubs: In short, I took part in the social life of the village.

I also placed a notice in the Parish magazine explaining my presence in the
village and inviting volunteers to contact me about my research. The Parish magazine
is a photocopied pamphlet delivered free of charge to every household in Mayfield on
a monthly basis. The purpose of my notice was intended to be twofold: Firstly, I
wanted to draw the village residents’ attention to my presence in the village and make clear that I was recording the everyday happenings of village life, and secondly, to invite volunteers to contact me if they were interested in sharing their knowledge of the village with me. Whilst a number of villagers I met said that they had seen my notice in the magazine, and were therefore aware that I was living in and researching the village, advertising for interviewees turned out to be an unsuccessful way of meeting people to talk to, and not one person contacted me as a result of the notice.

Forming relationships with village residents and gaining people’s trust was an important part of the process of arranging interviews, and I was continually engaged in building relationships of trust, friendship, and reciprocity throughout the twelve months of fieldwork. For example, in order to meet village residents – and also as a way of expressing my thanks and ‘returning the favour’ to my interviewees – I helped out at several village social events and committees, babysat and collected children from school, walked people’s dogs, acted as a hairdressing model, supported village charity events, looked after a neighbour’s pets when they were on holiday, and made cakes for a Halloween party among other activities. As an outsider moving into the village I personally learned a lot about negotiating access to the village social networks. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 56) suggest, negotiating ‘access’ to the field and data-collection are not distinct phases of the research process, but rather, they overlap significantly. Indeed, much can be learned from the successes and problems involved in making contact with people, as well as how village residents responded to my research. I used problems and successes with finding interviewees as data itself, which in turn reminded me to be constantly reflexive about my methodological approach.
In total I interviewed thirty village residents (see appendix 7 for a details regarding interviewees’ age, gender, occupation, length of residence in Mayfield and other characteristics). As mentioned above, I met my interviewees and conducted participant observation by joining clubs and societies in the village, attending village social events, and by introducing myself to Kate’s clients and friends. I also used a ‘snowball’ sampling technique, whereby I asked the men and women I interviewed if they could put me in touch with their friends and neighbours: people they considered to be ‘a good person to talk to’ about my research. This proved to be a very successful way of finding interviewees. For example, I interviewed Peggy, a village woman in her seventies whom I met at Kate’s hair salon. Peggy enjoyed talking to me and taking part in my research so she invited me to come along to a coffee morning held every Tuesday morning at the Royal British Legion in the village. When I arrived at the coffee morning Peggy introduced me to several of her friends and explained what we had talked about in her interview. As a result, three of her friends agreed to be interviewed – one of whom introduced me to another potential interviewee. Introductions through friends and neighbours reassured village residents that I was trustworthy. Due to my twelve-month residence in the village people became used to seeing me around, and they knew that I lived with Kate and her family.

My only selection criteria for interviewees were that they lived in the village at the time of my fieldwork and that they were over 18 years of age. Apart from being over 18, respondents were not selected on the basis of their age. However, it was important to include a range of ages in my sample as villagers’ experiences of village life are likely to be shaped by their age. Two of my interviewees were aged between

110
18 and 29, three were in their thirties, nine were in their forties, four were in their fifties, four were in their sixties, five were in their seventies and two were aged 80.

I aimed to achieve a rough gender balance of interviewees but this proved to be more difficult than I had expected. In total I interviewed 21 women and 9 men. There were two reasons for this imbalance. Firstly, men were more likely to work full-time outside of the village which meant that they had less time to attend village-based social activities, particularly on weekday daytimes. They were less likely to collect children from school (I struck up several conversations and arranged several interviews whilst waiting for Kate’s children in the schoolyard at the end of the school day), and due to their longer working hours (particularly for those working in horticulture and agriculture) it was often difficult to commit to a convenient and sufficient amount of time for an interview.

Despite the gender imbalance of my interview ‘sample’, it was important to speak to both men and women as their experiences of village life are gendered due to factors such as involvement in child-rearing, involvement with the village toddler group and primary school, village clubs and societies, and engagement in paid employment. For example, women dominated the village school’s parent and teacher association, the British Legion coffee mornings, and the maypole dancing club whereas men dominated the cricket club, the village hall society, and the organising committee for the Mayfield Wake (summer fair). Women and men are also involved in different social networks in the village and have different feelings about the role of the ‘community’, the migration of Eastern Europeans workers to the area, and they notice social and demographic changes in the local area in different ways. Via my snowball sampling strategy I was invited to several women-dominated social events which took place during week-day daytimes such as coffee mornings, fitness classes,
children’s birthday parties and so forth, reflecting my own gendered experience of life in Mayfield as well as the women I met, interviewed, and socialised with.

**Village Residents with Dutch Origins**

Soon after I moved to Mayfield I learned of a family who had migrated to the village from the Netherlands in the 1930’s. Jan Schulten, one of the first Dutch men to move to the village (in 1947 in his case) lived next door to the house in which I was staying. Jan moved to Mayfield from the Netherlands when he was two years old and he is now sixty-five. He is a retired market gardener who began growing produce for commercial purposes after he left school. Jan’s son also lives in the village and runs a successful plumbing business, and his grandchildren attend the village school. His daughter works for an upmarket jeweller in a nearby town. Neither of Jan’s children, nor his three grandchildren speaks Dutch, but Jan is bilingual as his parents continued to speak Dutch at home after they moved to England.

In total, there are two remaining ‘first-generation’ Dutch migrants living in Mayfield: Jan and his uncle Jacob, as well as two of their respective children and five grandchildren. Jan and Jacob both married English women, and their children in turn married English nationals so their Dutch accents have faded throughout the generations. Jacob and his son each own a large plant-growing nursery in the village. The Schulten family is very much a part of the village: they are well-known and well-liked, own houses in the village, have employed village residents, and are part of the village’s social networks. Therefore, it is impossible to separate them out from the ‘village people’ because the Schulten’s are viewed by other village residents as village people (their history in the village can be traced back to 1937). When I asked
Jan whether he feels Dutch or British, he told me that he feels British, even though his parents were both Dutch and he was born in the Netherlands. The fact that Jan feels British indicates that he strongly identifies with the culture of this country. He has no memory of living in the Netherlands, and he told me that he rarely keeps in touch with members of his family who still live there. The family who matter to him most live here in England, and his wife, who passed away in the 1990’s was an English woman.

Kate introduced me to Jan over the garden fence. I met ‘Anna’, his daughter when she visited Kate’s hair salon, and ‘Rob’, his son, when he came to do a plumbing job at our house. So I got to know the Shulten family in the same way that I met other village families: via introductions to neighbours, Kate’s clients, and chatting to people I met in the village and who passed through the home.

*Eastern European Migrants*

There are a large number of Eastern European migrant workers who work in Mayfield in the fields and glasshouses belonging to fruit and vegetable growers. A significant proportion of the workers are seasonal, arriving in April for planting and sowing and staying until the end of August or September to see out the busy harvest season. However, due to the widespread use of temperature-controlled glasshouses and the extension of the growing season, a small number stay throughout the year. None of the migrant workers live in houses in the centre of the village, rather, they are housed in caravans, converted farm buildings, and occasionally bungalows or multiple-occupancy houses built on farmland. As a result the migrant workers do not get the opportunity to form neighbourly relationships with villagers. It is very
difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate of how many Eastern European migrants are living and working in the village since the population fluctuates with the seasons, and no official data on the migrants in Mayfield are held. However, from anecdotal evidence given by two growers and village people who work in the industry, the number may be somewhere in the region of three to four hundred in high season reducing to very few during the remainder of the year.

Before I arrived in the village I believed that the migrant workers were exclusively Polish (as this is what the few contacts I had made in the area whilst conducting my MSc dissertation had told me). However, it soon became clear after talking to members of the District Council and people involved in market gardening in the area that workers were mostly from other countries including Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania. The Bulgarian and Romanian workers are contracted to work in the UK for a maximum of six months via the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS). In this case, growers contact an agency in the UK giving details of the number of workers they need for the upcoming season, and the agencies recruit workers from Eastern Europe. Therefore the growers are not directly involved with the recruitment of the migrant workers. One tomato grower in the village only employs a very small number of Eastern European workers (between 6 and 8 at a time), and these are usually college or university students looking for temporary work or work experience when they are doing degrees related to agriculture or horticulture in their home countries. Another grower, however, employs several hundred Eastern European migrant workers for six to eight months of the year. Once again, the employees are recruited via a cross-national recruitment agency. Employees from Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania are not subject to time restrictions and a small number of workers have been working in the village for two or three years. Many of the
workers return to their home countries during the winter months but return to work at the same farm each summer.

Prior to arriving in the village I also expected the vast majority of Eastern European migrant workers in the village to be men. This assumption was incorrect: according to the growers I spoke to there are roughly equal numbers of women and men. At some farms there appears to be a broad division of labour between the male and female migrant workers with men largely involved in working on the fields, planting and picking, and women concentrated on working in the glasshouses, tending and picking crops. However, this is not to say that there is some crossover of these roles – I regularly saw a woman with a pram by her side picking cabbages on a cold day in October, and at a local strawberry farm both men and women are involved in the planting, picking, and packaging of the produce. At a large tomato-growing nursery I visited, both men and women are employed in the pack house where produce is sorted, wrapped and packaged for sale in shops. At this particular nursery rather than ‘clocking in’ with time sheets or cards, employees have their thumb-print scanned to ensure that the correct person is arriving for work each day. Generally the workers work six-day weeks with Sunday as their only day off. A Latvian woman I spoke to at one of the growers in a neighbouring village told me that during very busy periods she had worked up to 56 hours in a week. The combination of long working hours, living on farm land rather than in the centre of the village, and poor command of English means that there is very little interaction between English villagers and the Eastern European migrant workers apart from brief encounters on the bus into town or occasional visits to the village shop and Post Office. This meant that it was very difficult for me to make contact with the migrant workers, and impossible to develop friendships with them as I did with village residents.
It is possible that I could have conducted ethnographic fieldwork and formed closer relationships with Eastern European migrants if I had attempted to get a job at one of the village nurseries. However, my sense is that such an attempt would have been unsuccessful. In the past, nurseries employed British students in the summer holidays to assist with fruit and vegetable picking, but this is no longer the case as they can obtain cheaper labour via employment agencies in Eastern Europe. One village resident told me that his two sons, both of whom are at university, had hoped to work at the nurseries during the previous summer, but were told that there were no jobs available. Therefore as a young, English, female student I may have appeared an unlikely candidate. In addition, for ethical reasons I would not have felt comfortable conducting covert research at any of the nurseries. However, if I had exposed my research motives to prospective employers it is likely that I would not have been allowed to come and work/research at their farms. While migrants’ motivations for coming to work in rural England, and their expectations, experiences, and daily lives were important themes in my research, there had been recent media reports of the exploitation of Eastern European children, trafficking, and poor working conditions on farms in Worcestershire which may have made growers reluctant to allow a researcher into their nurseries to work alongside migrants.

During my first couple of weeks in Mayfield I made contact with Adam, an employee of the Elmbridge District Council whose role is to work with migrants and local public service providers to assist the integration of migrants into the area. Adam is a Polish man in his late-thirties who has lived in the USA and the UK respectively for the last ten years. He was interested to hear about my research and was very helpful in terms of providing useful contacts in the area and also translating from Polish and Russian to English and vice versa in the focus groups which I held with
Eastern European migrant workers. Before moving to the village I had hoped that I would be able to approach some potential Polish interviewees via a Polish Community Association that I had heard was running in Elmbridge. However, after moving to the village and speaking to Adam about my intentions, it emerged that the Polish Community Association had failed to attract the interest or participation of many Polish migrants and as a result, is not considered to be a significant locus for Polish social or ‘community’ relations. This was a methodological setback, but with Adam’s support I was able to arrange focus groups at three farms in the Mayfield area by contacting horticultural growers and farm managers with whom Adam had pre-existing working relationships.

In total I was able to talk to 21 Eastern European migrants who live and work in the area. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two of the respondents, and three focus groups at three different farms with the remaining 19. Out of the 21 respondents, eight were male and thirteen were female, their ages ranged from 18 to 40, and their nationalities included Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Indian.

The Interviews

Interviewing English Villagers

In total I conducted 30 interviews with village residents aged between 18 and 80 including 21 women and 9 men. 27 of the interviews took place in the interviewees’ homes and three took place at Kate’s home where I was living. To ensure that my interviewees fully understood what my research project is about I presented each
respondent with an information sheet before beginning the interview (see appendix 3). Respondents and I read through the sheet together, and I ensured that they had an opportunity to ask any questions about my project before the interview began. I also showed respondents the consent form (see appendix 2) before the interviews, but suggested that they sign it at the end of the interview if they were happy with how the interview had gone and they consented to me quoting them in my thesis and potentially presenting parts of their interview in conference presentations and publications.

I elected to conduct semi-structured interviews so that my interviewees would have the opportunity to talk freely about their thoughts and experiences. The interviews did not have a set length: respondents were therefore given the opportunity to talk as much or as little as they wished. The longest interview was approximately two and a half hours long and the shortest approximately fifty minutes. On average interviews lasted around an hour, though conversations often continued after the tape recorder had been turned off and also on separate occasions. It became clear to me that my interviewees often spent time thinking about our interview conversations after interviews had ended, and raised additional thoughts and questions with me on subsequent meetings in the village. In all of the interviews I followed a loose interview guide to ensure a degree of consistency between interviews and to serve as a prompt if necessary (for a copy of the interview guide please refer to appendix 5). However, due to the conversational nature of the interviews, they varied slightly in content according to individuals’ personal biographies, opinions and interests. Whilst similar topics and themes were covered in each interview, different respondents focussed more on some themes than others. Indeed, some of the topics discussed in interviews did not appear on my interview guide at all. This was perfectly acceptable,
as I designed this research project in order to discover what social issues are important, interesting or troubling to the respondents so to a certain degree they were in control of the direction of our conversation and the issues they wished to discuss.

In the interviews with the English village residents, I usually began by asking people how long they had lived in the village, how they came to live in Mayfield, and what the process of ‘settling in’, making friends, developing social networks had involved for them. This usually led to conversations about the social character of the village, the degree to which respondents were involved in village social activities and social and ‘community’ networks. People who had lived in Mayfield for many years and people who were Mayfield ‘born and bred’ often talked about village traditions and how the village had changed over time. Depending on their age, marital and family status, gender, occupation, and political and religious persuasion respondents also talked about things which are important to them such as the village school, the church, the market gardening industry, the different social clubs which exist in the village, the village demographics, the issue of Eastern European migration, their perceptions of Eastern European migrants and the impact they are having on the area, their children, grandchildren, housing and kinship networks.

At different points in different interviews I was aware of a shifting imbalance of power between myself as the researcher and my interviewees. In the majority of interviews I was younger than my interviewee, and I was a novice on the subject of Mayfield life whereas the interviewee was the ‘expert’, imparting their knowledge. However, ultimately, I had control over the thematic direction of the interview and after the interview has been conducted and recorded, I was the one editing the material, analysing it, constructing a narrative, and presenting it to third parties to be commented upon (Frankenberg, 1993). I strove to make it explicitly clear, both
verbally and via my consent form, that interviewees could refuse to answer any questions, discontinue their interview, or withdraw from my study and have their interview erased at any point in the proceedings. In an attempt to democratise the interview process as much as possible (as I understand that this is not entirely achievable) I conducted my interviews in a conversational and dialogical way. I subscribe to the view expressed by Frankenberg (1993) regarding the benefits of dialogue in interviews: that the sharing of information should not be a one-way process where information is only transferred from the interviewee to the interviewer.

I often incorporated elements of my analysis in interviews as it developed, and where appropriate, shared information about my own life and experiences with my interviewees. I used this approach when interviewing residents in the neighbouring village of ‘Middleton’ for my MSc dissertation (Moore, 2009), and found it to be a useful way of introducing ideas which may be considered sensitive, taboo, or controversial. For example I sometimes framed questions in relation to stories recently reported in the media, and asked ‘Is it the same for you?’ or ‘what do you think about this?’ I also employed this method in relation to conversations I had had with other villagers. For example by saying ‘Someone I was talking to earlier this week said [......] is that your experience?, or do you think that is true?’ The affirmation that a particular kind of opinion was ‘allowed’ and up for debate, or that other people had expressed opinions that could be considered sensitive or taboo often helped my interviewees to talk about issues such as class, immigration, and the exclusion of ethnic minorities from the English countryside. My interviewees were reassured that other people had talked to me about these issues, and I was able to share my ideas with them. Since a key element of my methodological approach was fostering my own social networks and friendships in Mayfield I felt most comfortable
with this approach to interviewing rather than attempting to maintain what Frankenberg has called an ‘apparently objective and ...’blank faced’ persona’ (1993: 30). It was important for me to develop relationships of trust with my interviewees and also people whom I did not interview formally but got to know during my fieldwork in Mayfield.

_Talking about Race and Whiteness_

Issues of race, ethnicity, whiteness and immigration are central to my research project, however for many of my interviewees, talking about these subjects was somewhat unfamiliar, sensitive, and even taboo. Soon after I had begun my fieldwork it became clear to me that most of my interviewees had never given much thought to their own whiteness; they did not feel that ‘race’ had much to do with them. As Bridget Byrne notes in her book _White Lives_ (2006), white people generally do not spend much time thinking about whiteness or how their experiences and identities are racialised. This common lack of racial self-consciousness, Gunaratnam (2003) explains, has led sociologists to new methodological developments designed to recognise and uncover the ways in which whiteness is reproduced through its silences and apparent invisibility, and I too had to develop ways of ‘talking around’ race with my interviewees. For example, asking my interviewees about their social lives, likes and dislikes, households, friends, neighbours, schools, jobs, histories and aspirations provided me with a fine-grained picture of their ideas about whiteness, Englishness, social class, immigration, the rural, and ‘villageness’ much more effectively than asking questions about race outright. Whilst asking direct questions about race and whiteness often raised the interesting subject of silences and evasions, a more indirect
approach had the advantage of opening up interview conversations to questions of social imaginary and narrative (Byrne, 2006: 28) in such a way that interviewees did not feel nervous or intimidated by my questioning. By explaining my research to village residents and also the Eastern European migrants in the Mayfield area as concerned with the themes set out above, I hoped that people would feel able to talk to me about these subjects and not feel threatened by the more ‘political’ or controversial subjects of race and ethnicity.

It is also important to reflect here upon the way in which my social positionality and personal biography influenced my questioning and analysis. As a young white woman in my late twenties (at the time of my fieldwork) coming from London (though having been raised in rural Gloucestershire), being white, educated, and middle-class did not provide me with automatic social access to the white people I interviewed and observed: male and female, working- and middle-class, young, middle-aged, and older people, ‘incomers’ and people who were Mayfield ‘born and bred’. Whilst my whiteness may have marked me as a ‘racial insider’ during my research, as Frankenberg (1993) has observed, ethnic identity is complicated by other social variables such as age, gender, class, accent, nationality and sexuality. Therefore, my insider or outsider status shifted at different times, in different places, and with different people. No doubt the villagers made judgements about me based on my social characteristics, and it is doubtless that some people warmed to me and spoke openly to me about their experiences while others were more guarded and cautious when revealing personal aspects of their lives to a relative stranger. I was often asked what my ‘connection’ with Mayfield was, to which the answer was ‘none, besides having some friends who live in the neighbouring village’.
The village where I grew up is not dissimilar to Mayfield, and my rural upbringing in a predominantly white English village had both positive and negative effects on my fieldwork. I had a pre-existing understanding of some of the routines, politics, and the social and cultural norms and neighbourly etiquette associated with English village life. However, at times I was aware that my familiarity made it difficult for me to notice and observe the subtle ways in which whiteness, Englishness, and class were performed and ingrained in the lives of the villagers of Mayfield. I consciously worked hard to view the seemingly ‘normal’, mundane, and unremarkable as remarkable: to problematise my own taken-for-granted assumptions about rural village life. As Byrne (2006: 40) explains, racialised and classed discourses are sometimes so ubiquitous that it takes very careful reading to ‘see’ or ‘hear’ them, and I very much saw myself as implicated in this problem. In my case, my ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ was limited by having a subject position similar to those whose accounts I was analysing. Many of the people I interviewed are quite like myself in some ways and this has various pitfalls, not least of which, as Byrne (2006: 40) argues, is that white people ‘are long trained in colour blindness – that is, the inability to see the impact of racist processes on their lives and the lives of others’. What I wish to underscore is that I undertook this research with an awareness of the simultaneous advantages and limitations of my position.

*Interviewing Eastern European Migrants*

I conducted two in-depth semi-structured interviews with two Polish migrants who both live in the Elmbridge area and have connections through their respective jobs with the villages surrounding Mayfield. The first interview was with Adam who, as I
mentioned earlier, works for the district council and whose role involves working with migrants and local public service providers to assist the integration of migrants into the area. The second interview was with Patryk, also in his late thirties, who migrated to the UK in 2006. Patryk is the chairman of the Polish Community Association in Elmbridge and is also involved with a Polish Saturday school for children in the town. The interview with Adam was conducted at a cafe in Elmbridge, and the interview with Patryk was held at one of the pubs in Mayfield. As with my interviews with the Mayfield villagers, I gave Adam and Patryk participant information sheets before the beginning of their interviews and also a verbal explanation of my project. They were both given the opportunity to ask questions about my research before, during, and after the interviews, and were given a consent form to sign at the end. Both interviews were conducted in English, and in both cases Adam and Patryk were given English versions of the documents as they could both speak and read English fluently. However they both assisted me in translating the documents into Polish which could then be used in focus groups where participants’ English language skills were not so proficient.

The interviews were semi-structured and loosely followed a pre-prepared interview guide (see appendix 6). Adam and Patryk’s individual migration histories and their pre- and post-migration lives differed significantly therefore slightly different subjects were discussed in each interview, but broadly, some of the key themes which the interviews covered included: their motivations for moving to the UK and to the Elmbridge area specifically; changes in lifestyle, profession and living standards since migration; their involvement with Polish/ Eastern European networks in the area; their social integration with local British people; the concept of
‘community’ in Poland and England; and more general experiences of living in rural Worcestershire.

The Focus Groups

Due to the long hours worked by Eastern European migrants on the horticultural farms in Mayfield and the absence of any social interaction between village residents and migrant workers it proved very difficult to make contact with, let alone interview, any of the migrant workers living and working in the village. As the migrants both live and work on private land owned by the horticultural growers the potential for conducting interviews with migrant workers depended on the cooperation and consent of farm owners, growers and managers which would have enabled me to enter the farms and potentially organise interviews.

I contacted two growers who employ Eastern European migrant workers in the village, one of whom I interviewed. When I contacted this grower at a later date in an attempt to arrange interviews or a focus group with her employees my phone calls went unreturned and my messages were ignored. Of course, all potential participants, village residents, migrant workers and horticultural growers were entitled to decline to take part in my research so I did not pursue the matter any further. Similarly, another grower told me twice in telephone conversations that he would be happy to arrange for me to speak to his Eastern European employees, but that the present time was not convenient as they were busy on the farm. A reliance on the Mayfield growers as ‘gatekeepers’ proved to be a barrier between myself and the migrant workers, and emphasised the way in which the migrant workers lives in Mayfield were lived at such a social distance from the villagers.
The limited success of the Polish Community Association in Elmbridge meant that I was not able to meet any Polish migrants there (potentially with connections with the horticultural industry in Mayfield) or to employ a ‘snowball’ sampling technique in the way that I had hoped. In the end, it was largely thanks to Adam and his contacts in the Mayfield area that I was able to arrange three focus groups at three farms. Unfortunately the focus groups were not held in Mayfield itself, but at farms in neighbouring villages because these were businesses with which Adam had existing and good working relationships. The first focus group was held at a large tomato-growing nursery in the village next to Mayfield and had been pre-arranged by Adam and a colleague. The primary focus of the discussion group was the migrant workers’ use of online resources provided by the District Council and how they source information about the local area, such as GP surgeries, library services, transport, education and so on.

The human resources manager at the farm arranged for eight women who worked in the packing factory to attend the focus group, only one of whom spoke reasonably good English (but this only emerged at the end of the meeting). Adam, being Polish himself, acted as translator, but all of the eight women who came to the focus group were Latvian. By chance, one of the Latvian women spoke Polish so every question posed and answer given in the meeting was translated twice: from English to Polish and then Polish to Latvian and vice versa. This meant that the conversation was stunted, it was not clear whose comments and opinions were being translated, and no doubt a lot of information was lost in translation. While the topics of conversation being covered were interesting, the most useful elements of the focus group for me were the personal details that the women revealed about themselves: about their lives before moving to England, the families they have left behind, their
motivations for coming to work in Worcestershire, the lack of opportunity to learn/speak English, the people they socialise with, the places they visit, where they shop, and the difficulties they had experienced accessing public services such as public transport. Although I did not set the agenda in this discussion group and was not able to use my own interview guide, it was nonetheless an interesting opportunity to meet some Eastern European migrants in their work environment who, due to each others’ company (and the absence of their employer), talked relatively frankly about their experiences in rural Worcestershire.

With Adam’s assistance I was able to arrange the second and third focus groups at two different farms within approximately a three-mile radius from Mayfield. The second was held at a strawberry farm, which employs around 300 migrant workers in high season. This focus group comprised of six participants: two Polish women, one Bulgarian man, one Bulgarian woman, one Romanian man, and one Romanian woman all aged between 18 and 30. The third discussion group was held at a smaller strawberry farm, which employs approximately 100 Eastern European migrant workers during the summer months. Participants in this group included one Polish woman, one Bulgarian woman, two Bulgarian men and one Indian man. All of the participants in this group were aged between 18 and 40, with the majority in their twenties and thirties.

Prior to the focus groups I did not know how many participants were going to attend and what nationalities they would be as members of staff at each of the farms gathered together a group of participants themselves. As far as I could tell the selection criteria included a combination of having some command of English, being free at the time, and being someone who could be called upon for a favour. As I did not know the nationalities of the focus group participants in advance I translated my
consent form and participant information sheets into Romanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Czech, and Ukranian in an attempt to cater for all potential language needs. I achieved this by using Google translate, and while it emerged that some of the grammar and phrases on the translated documents were a little muddled, with some additional verbal translation my respondents assured me that they understood what my research was about and consented to take part.

The focus group discussions began with general questions about the participants’ nationalities, ages, and how long they had been working at the farms. I then asked the groups what their motivations were for coming to work in the English countryside, how long they planned to spend in the UK, and what their impressions were of the local area. I followed these questions by asking about their working week, how they spend their free time, and whether they had any social contact with local English people. We discussed the importance of the internet and mobile telephones for maintaining cross-national relationships with family and friends, and also talked about the friendships they have made at the farms. In short, I aimed to build up a broad picture of their lives in, and experiences of the English countryside.

During the focus groups and during my later analysis of them I kept in mind the influence of my personal subject position and the influence that it may have had on the participants’ responses to my questions and the opinions that they expressed. In terms of age the migrants and I were well-matched - I was 29 at the time and the majority of my participants were in their 20’s and 30’s. Several of the migrants I spoke to were educated to university level like myself, and over half of the participants were women. However, I was an outsider in terms of my nationality. While I worked hard to keep the discussions friendly, open, and relatively informal, I could not escape the fact that my Englishness meant that a power imbalance existed.
between myself and the focus group participants. For example, when discussing sensitive issues such as migrants’ experiences of racism, exclusion, prejudice or hardship since moving to the English countryside, they may not have been completely honest or open with me: a white, English middle-class woman living in the local area. I was told by one group that in their experience they had found local people to be ‘very nice and very helpful’, which may well have been true, but also could be an example of my respondents being polite, not wanting to offend me, or telling me what they thought I wanted to hear.

**Participant Observation & the Ethics of Ethnographic Research**

The information collected in my ethnographic fieldwork is not limited to that elicited from interviews and focus groups, but also includes data gathered through participant observation. I recorded my observations and reflections in the form of fieldnotes, which accumulated over my twelve months of fieldwork on a day-by-day basis. Regarding the purpose and usefulness of fieldnotes, Emerson et al (1995, 2001: 353) have suggested that ‘in reducing the welter and confusion of the social world to written words, fieldnotes (re)constitute that world into preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied, and thought about time and time again’ and I have revisited my fieldnotes repeatedly during the writing of my analysis. In committing my observations to paper, I recorded moments that only occurred in passing; fleeting instances that caught my attention as a participant observer in the village. Living in the village allowed me to build a detailed body of fieldnotes, that is, descriptive accounts of people, scenes, events and dialogue, as well as my own personal experiences and reactions which invaluably helped me to contextualise the ideas.
expressed by respondents in the interviews. I draw upon my fieldnotes throughout my thesis because they are a rich and detailed source of data collected via my lived experience of Mayfield and the nearby town of Elmbridge.

Prior to entering ‘the field’ my reading of Ruth Frankenberg’s ethnographic study *White Women, Race Matters* (1993) alerted me to the importance of participant observation and the writing of fieldnotes in ethnographic research. Frankenberg asks of her interviews with her thirty female participants: What is the status of an interview narrative? What does it really tell us? And she answers, ‘An interview is not, in any simple sense, the telling of a life so much as an incomplete story angled toward [the ethnographer’s] questions’ (1993: 41). While Frankenberg’s study differs from my own in that she took a life history approach to her interviews, the idea that the narratives and responses from my interviewees will be ‘angled toward my questions’ is relevant. Whilst respondents’ narratives in the interviews will generally be direct responses to the questions that I pose, the behaviours, actions, events, traditions and dialogues that I observe in the field will not be influenced by my research questions in the same way.

One of the central aims of ethnographic research is to explore social life: making the apparently unremarkable remarkable. Necessarily, this means that ethnography entails the study of people in their everyday social settings using methods of data collection – including participant observation – which capture daily activities and local social meanings. My ethnographic research involved developing social relationships with Mayfield villagers and directly participating in their social lives. As Brewer (2000) explains, participant observation involves data-gathering by means of participation in people’s daily lives: watching, observing, and talking to them in order to discover their experiences, opinions, and worldviews. The intent
behind this close involvement and association is to generate data by watching and
listening to what people say and do, but also to add the dimension of personally
experiencing and sharing the same everyday life as those I am studying. There are
important ethical issues associated with the participant observation element of
ethnography however, which I returned to throughout my time spent in Mayfield, and
also after data collection had ended.

My decision to include participant observation in my research methodology
was not taken lightly and I acknowledge the ethical debates surrounding the method.
However, I believe that it is possible to take on the role of participant observer in the
field while at the same time keeping people’s physical, social, and psychological
well-being firmly in mind. At all stages in my research I have made every effort to
protect the interests, sensitivities and privacy of those I studied. After all, without
them my research would not have been possible. From the outset of my fieldwork I
was open and honest with village residents about my reasons for moving to the
Mayfield and the focus of my study. My on-going interviews across the twelve
months of fieldwork, my participation in village social events, and indeed, my very
presence in the village served as a reminder to villagers that I was there conducting
research, and of my intentions. I explained as much as possible that I was observing
the daily life of the village, and in fact discussed many of my observations openly
with villagers throughout the research process. Therefore, in no sense was my
approach to participant observation covert.

The issue of informed consent in relation to participant observation is
complex and somewhat nuanced. As the British Sociological Association’s Statement
of Ethical Practice (2002: 3) highlights, consent, in the context of field research,
should not necessarily be regarded as the signing of a form or a ‘once-and-for-all
prior event, but as a process subject to renegotiation over time’.\textsuperscript{7} The informed consent of the villagers was an issue that I returned to throughout the twelve-month period of my fieldwork. As mentioned above, I talked to villagers about my observations, my reflections on the notes that I was taking, and the experience of working towards a PhD in general. I took each person’s interest or disinterest in my research, or their decision to talk to me or not, as an indication of whether or not they consented to be involved in my research. As the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (2010: 29) suggests, ‘highly formalised or bureaucratic ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethical regard for participants is to be sustained’. Throughout my research I was sensitive to the issue of informed consent and interpreted behaviour patterns that appeared to deliberately make observation difficult as a tacit refusal of permission to be observed. I was alert to, and acted upon any mere indications of reluctance or non-verbal signs from villagers, and took such signs as a refusal to participate (Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines, 2003: 31, 33). Any other course of action would have demonstrated a lack of respect for villagers’ interests and would have undermined the relationships held between myself and the village residents. My research project received approval from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee and my submission included a detailed assessment of potential risks to myself and my participants.

\textsuperscript{7} See also the ESRC ‘Framework for Research Ethics’ (2010: 29) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth ‘Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice’ (1999: 2).
Analysing the Data

The analysis of my data was not a linear process. I began to analyse my findings whilst I was living in the Mayfield and I often introduced emergent ideas and themes into subsequent interviews and discussed these ideas with my interviewees. Throughout my fieldwork I was engaged in a process of constant reflection upon my observations and what was discussed in interviews. Naturally I had read a broad range of literature that had influenced and shaped my research questions, and I took that theoretical knowledge with me to the village. However, as much as possible I took an inductive or grounded theory approach to my analysis insofar as the themes generated for analysis emerged from my interview data, focus groups and fieldnotes (Bryman, 2008; Mason, 2002: 181-2). I was keen to avoid imposing pre-existing theories onto my findings.

All of my interviews and focus groups were recorded on a digital recorder, fully transcribed and then thematically coded. The themes which emerged from my data were a product of a thorough reading and re-reading of my field notes, interview and focus-group transcripts. I developed thematic codes based on the ‘scrutiny techniques’ recommended by Ryan and Bernard (2003: 88-91) when looking for themes in qualitative data. Specifically, I looked for:

• ‘Repetitions’: topics that occurred again and again in my interview and focus-group transcripts and my fieldnotes.

• ‘Indigenous typologies or categories’: local expressions that were either unfamiliar or were used in a peculiar way.

• ‘Similarities and differences’: exploring how interviewees and focus-group participants discussed similar topics in similar or different ways.
• ‘Missing data’: Reflecting on what is absent from the data, what people did not talk about, or what people omitted in their answers to my questions. (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

The process of thematically coding my data involved significant quantities of coloured post-it notes, highlighter pens and paper. Due the sheer quantity of data I collected over 12 months of fieldwork a CAQDAS package may have been useful for organising my data thematically, however, as Byrne (2006: 39) warns, this way of organising data using analytic software does have the drawback of breaking the narrative flow of individual interviews. For this reason I chose to keep the transcripts of all of my interviews and focus group discussion complete and I colour-coded passages according to analytical theme. I kept a record of which themes occurred in each interview, and the recurrence and prevalence of certain themes shaped the focus of my analysis chapters. At the start of each transcript I created a short introduction to, or profile of, each interviewee which served as a reminder of who the interviewee is, how I came to meet them, details of their length of residence in the village, assumptions and discourses that they employ in relation to particular issues, observations about their home, and any other details about their character that particularly stood out to me at the time of the interview which are not captured in the transcribed text.

During my 12 months in the village I recorded my fieldnotes by hand in a series of notebooks. I colour-coded parts of my fieldnotes in the same way as the interviews and focus group transcripts, often cross-referencing and making connections between passages of interview/discussion group data and the observations recorded in my notes. Throughout my thesis I draw upon information
recorded in my fieldnotes to provide a context for interviewees’ narratives, to evoke a sense of place, and also to substantiate my arguments.

The Presentation of Data in my Thesis

In this thesis I do not claim to provide an objective or generalisable analysis of the intersections of whiteness, ethnicity, and class in Mayfield, the social relations that exist in the village, nor the experiences of Eastern European migrant workers who live and work in the surrounding area. On the contrary, the way in which I present my data is unavoidably partial, subjective and rooted in a particular place at a particular time. Strathern (2004: 7) has argued that writing ethnography ‘is much more... than the recording of facts and observations’ and that ‘the ethnographer can no longer claim to be a neutral vector for the conveying of information; her or his own participation in the constructed narrative must be made explicit’. Therefore I acknowledge that in writing this piece of ethnographic research I have crafted my own narrative in order to reflect and relay the social milieu as I see it. Clifford, (1986: 6) goes so far as to refer to ethnographic writings as ‘fictions’; not as falsehoods or as opposed to truths but in the sense of ‘something made or fashioned’. No doubt my data could be read and interpreted in multiple ways, however, my analysis has been systematically shaped by themes which were not only repeatedly raised throughout my fieldwork, but which I found to be most interesting, meaningful, and insightful.

I would also like to qualify the way in which I quote from interviews, focus groups, and informal conversations recorded in my fieldnotes throughout my thesis. I often quote people and conversations at length and there are two main reasons for this. Firstly, people’s histories, ideas and opinions are not always reducible to concise...
and pithy ‘sound bites’, and rendering them as such not only risks taking statements out of context, but also risks marginalising the narrator/interviewee. Secondly, interviewees, focus group participants and informal co-conversationalists did not always come to discussions with pre-formed opinions about the issues we discussed, and often their thoughts and ideas evolved as the conversation or interview narrative unfolded. Therefore by quoting at length I hope to capture this process, presenting statements made by participants in the context of their narrative development.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reflected upon the advantages and disadvantages associated with ethnographic research and also the ethical issues, particularly in relation to participant observation. I have also outlined the reasons why I feel ethnography was the most appropriate methodological approach to take to this particular research project: It allowed me to build relationships of trust with the villagers of Mayfield which, in the first instance, meant that thirty individuals agreed to be interviewed, but also encouraged them to share personal and often sensitive information with me about their lives and worldviews. Conducting ethnographic research allowed me to witness the rhythms of everyday life in Mayfield, the changes that took place in the village throughout the year, and the routine ways in which whiteness, Englishness and rurality are embedded and lived in the village on a daily basis. An ethnographic approach also enabled me to become involved in the social networks which exist in the village, and to live village life first-hand, using myself as a research tool and incorporating my experiences and observations into my data – none of which would have been possible had I based my analysis on interview data alone.
I have sketched the demographic, economic, and social structure of Mayfield, and also reflected upon the problems associated with conducting ethnographic research ‘at home’, in a village that is in many ways similar to the village where I grew up, and with people who are in many ways similar to myself. I have conveyed a sense of the interview process and the focus group discussions, and have indicated how I often used and drew upon my personal experience of rural life, and included elements of my unfolding analysis in conversations with both village residents and Eastern European migrants. In this chapter I have also outlined the difficulties I experienced with recruiting Eastern European migrant workers to take part in my study. Thanks to the help of one individual at the district council I was able to conduct three focus groups at three different farms in the area, and have collected some rich and unique data which has provided an insight into Eastern Europeans’ experiences of living and working in rural Worcestershire, and within the context of this thesis, provides an important counterbalance to the narratives of the villagers of Mayfield.

While some of the topics I discussed with English villagers and Eastern European migrants were similar, some – related to personal biographies, migration histories, social relationships, and local and transnational ties for example – were inevitably different. Despite this, however, the themes of whiteness, class, social mobility, inclusion and exclusion, are threads which can be traced through the interviews and focus groups and which weave them together conceptually. As ethnographer I was in a privileged position to move between, and communicate with the villagers and migrants in a way that is not commonplace for the residents of Mayfield or the migrants. In doing so I have been able to craft what Marcus (1998: 52) calls an analytical ‘artifice’ where I have brought the multiple sites of village and
horticultural farms into engagement with one another in a way which, though
conceptually apparent in the context of this thesis, may not be perceptible or obvious
in the villagers’ and migrants’ daily lives.
Chapter 5

Class, Community and Belonging in Mayfield

Introduction

In this chapter I draw upon the work of anthropologists Marilyn Strathern (1981; 1982a; 1982b) and Jeanette Edwards (1998; 2000 with Strathern) to illustrate how belonging in the rural village of Mayfield is forged through a variety of connections and attachments which include links to the past, to place, and to people. For different groups of village residents, claiming a sense of belonging involves selecting which of these elements to pick out, which social relationships to mark, and which identities to promote. This selection process is contingent upon social class status.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the role that market gardening has played in Mayfield’s history, and also how it continues to shape the village’s identity. In light of village residents’ move away from employment in the horticultural industry and the growth of the village since the 1960’s, I explain the associated changes in Mayfield’s demographic composition. I then go on to explore how, as a result of these changes, the residents of Mayfield identify and classify themselves and others into three broad categories: Old Mayfield families, Village People, and ‘incomers’. I analyse in depth the qualities and attachments that village residents must display to be included in or excluded from these three categories, and also the different types of cultural, social and economic capital that the different group members possess.

I contend that, broadly speaking, middle- and working-class village residents are separated in spatial as well as social terms in Mayfield. In doing so, I present an
analysis of village residents’ narratives about the class composition of the ‘two ends of the village’, and also examine the way in which engagement in ‘community’ activities is also dependent upon social class as well as village status. Finally, to conclude the chapter, I contrast the public and private narratives of village life that were shared with me during my fieldwork. Although many village residents talked about the importance of neighbourliness, safety, friendliness, and social networks in Mayfield, there were others who challenged this conception of village life through their observations about lack of privacy, nosy neighbours and social isolation. Most importantly, this chapter explores the classed constitution of village life, and provides an analysis of processes of inclusion and exclusion, and the conditions of belonging in Mayfield where whiteness and Englishness are always present, albeit in unconscious ways. Although village residents may not recognise the ways in which they perform whiteness and Englishness in their daily lives, as Billig (1995), Edensor (2002), Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008) and Skey (2011) have argued, it is by paying attention to the minutiae, the everyday, and the banal that we can locate processes of national and racial identification, which often operate at a local level.

**Mayfield and Market Gardening**

Mayfield has a very long history of market gardening (growing fruit and vegetables for commercial purposes) and it is said that when the railway, which runs past the village, was built in the 1860’s trains used to make unscheduled stops at Mayfield so that growers could load on their produce to be sent to London markets such as Covent Garden. A significant amount of the village’s fruit and vegetable produce continues to be sent to London, particularly to large hotels and restaurants in Chinatown. Bean
sprouts, pak choi, lettuce, tomatoes, mushrooms and baby leaf salads are among the village’s major exports though in previous generations peas, cabbage, sprouts and asparagus were widely grown. The large commercial growers also supply produce to major supermarkets nationwide, thus for centuries the local economy has been connected with other regions of the UK via the transportation and sale of crops grown in the village.

Subsistence growing used to be widespread throughout the village with most families growing crops for their own consumption in their gardens or allotment-type holdings. Prior to World War II almost all village families would have worked on the land, with men working full-time and women and children usually helping out in the summer months during the busy harvest season. Mayfield was a working-class village where the majority of residents worked as horticultural labourers. Unlike today’s large-scale growers who use sophisticated growing techniques in temperature controlled glasshouses, pre-war growers were reliant on favourable seasonal growing conditions, which meant that a wet summer or harsh winter could plunge families into poverty when crops failed. A combination of unpredictable weather and difficult labour conditions meant that market gardening in Mayfield went through a period of decline after the Second World War. Peggy\(^8\), 80, whose family history spans several generations in the village explained:

> When the kids and men came back from the War they didn’t want to go back to the ground. They didn’t want the ground work – they either didn’t come back at all, or if they did they didn’t want that life any more. They’d seen a bit more of the world and set their sights higher. They wanted better lives and they’d seen their parents struggle, because it was hard for them. Even if you battled against the weather it

\(^8\) All given names, Surnames and street names are pseudonyms.
could spoil a crop. You could never be sure that you’d be able to sell it in the end after all the hard work. I can remember one year my grandfather, his main summer crop was strawberries, and there was a frost on my birthday in May and it wiped out the lot so they had nothing to live on all summer. They had to come and live with my mother and father because they had nothing to live off. That kind of insecurity is how it was, you know. You had a winter crop, a spring crop and a summer crop and if that didn’t sell or the crop failed you had nothing to live on. It was terribly hard work for little reward.

Economic insecurity was a deterrent, but as Peggy explained, many village men who had joined the army and served overseas returned home with new skills. They had gained experience of the wider world, and envisaged new ways-of-life for themselves and their families in the post-war period. They no longer wanted to struggle like their fathers and grandfathers, and some began to find employment in alternative sectors such as manufacturing and engineering.

This period of decline roughly coincided with the arrival in the village of the Schulten family, a Dutch family of horticulturalists whose land to the east of Utrecht was flooded during World War Two. The first migrant from the Schulten family came to England in 1923 to study engineering at the University of Manchester. After graduating, he subsequently abandoned engineering as a profession and turned to horticulture. He worked on a farm in Surrey for several years, and after a visit to the Elmbridge area in the mid-1930’s he bought ten acres of land and set up a nursery beside the River Avon in Mayfield. By the early 1940’s the business had become extremely successful and between 1937 and 1948 further family members arrived in Mayfield to help work the land and expand the business. Their experience as growers in the Netherlands and a family member with a degree in engineering meant that the
Schulten’s introduced new commercial growing techniques to the village as well as pioneering the use of vast glasshouses, some of which are still standing in the village today. Four generations of the family still live in Mayfield, and members of each adult generation have married local women and men. The Schulten family own one of the largest and most successful nurseries in the village, and they own a significant portion of the land in Mayfield.

Figure 5. Glasshouses belonging to the Schulten family (photograph taken from my bedroom window).

One could argue that this was the beginning of large-scale intensive market gardening in Mayfield, and from the 1930’s and 1940’s onwards the Schulten family became a major employer of village men and women. Today the majority of their workforce is Eastern European, as in recent decades the work of planting, tending,
picking and packaging fruit and vegetables both in glasshouses and on the open fields has been deemed undesirable by local people. The residents of Mayfield have a number of explanations for this. Increased mobility in terms of car ownership has meant that people are able to seek work both further afield and in different industries. The changing shape of the rural British economic landscape and improved levels of education, training and skills have meant that a wider variety of job opportunities are now on offer to Mayfield residents. Some people have suggested that the prospect of earning minimum wage for such physically demanding work, which often entails long and anti-social working hours has driven white British people away from the horticulture industry. Others suggest that other potential unskilled workers are able to derive a similar income on social welfare benefits (this may be conjecture, but is nonetheless an opinion expressed by some villagers).

So a classed discourse is employed by the residents of Mayfield in relation to manual horticultural labour. As Peggy explained earlier, they have ‘set their sights higher’ and want ‘better lives’. As a result, village residents have moved away from the industry because it is perceived as low-skilled, low-paid and thus low-status. This, of course, impacts upon how those who do work in the horticulture industry – namely Eastern European migrants – are perceived by village residents, and these perceptions will be explored in depth in chapters six and seven.

Throughout my fieldwork, village residents from a cross-section of backgrounds and class positions described Mayfield as a ‘working village’. The idiom of the working village is not only a reference to Mayfield’s horticultural past and present, but also to the significant number of small businesses that exist there. For example, there is a furniture maker and joiner, two hairdressers, a chiropodist, a sign writer, an IT consultant, two builders, a commercial artist, a thatcher, a car
mechanic, an accountant, a village shop and a haulage company among others. The steady growth of Mayfield since the middle of the twentieth century has meant that the demographic and class profile of the village has changed, and this is reflected in the different industries and sectors in which its residents are employed.

**The Residents of Mayfield**

The construction of a large number of new houses in Mayfield has meant that the village population has doubled in size since the 1960’s and 1970’s. In response to the growth of the village and the arrival of ‘outsiders’, village residents have developed a ‘taxonomy’ or system of classifying the population into three separate categories: ‘Old Mayfield’ people, ‘village people’ and ‘incomers’. These labels are used by all three groups when describing their own status in the village, as well as using them to highlight connections or distinctions between themselves and others. Belonging to each of these categories is determined by a range of factors such as place of birth, length of residence in the village, and involvement in village social activities. As I shall explain in the following section of this chapter, these labelling processes are also classed. They connote different types of attachment to place as well as social and economic status.

*Old Mayfield People*

The self-classified ‘Old Mayfield’ people comprise a ‘core’ group of families whose histories span several generations in the village. Certain patronyms are widely identified by village residents as being associated with ‘original’ Mayfield families.
Being classed as an Old Mayfield person credits the individual with a kind of ‘true village’ status: a status of ‘belonging’ in the village and permanence. The members of these families that I met during my fieldwork have never lived anywhere except Mayfield and would not consider moving elsewhere. As one Old Mayfield man told me, the village is ‘in my blood’ and that he ‘couldn’t possibly think of leaving the village’ thus implying a deep connection between his family identity and place.

However, in 2010-2011 when I conducted my research in Mayfield, the Old Mayfield families were very much in a minority relative to the number of ‘incomers’ who now live there. There are five large Old Mayfield families remaining in the village and I interviewed members from four of the five. These families have witnessed significant change in the village in living memory such as the relocation of the village primary school (twice), the closure of a second village shop, the private sale of the vicarage and the loss of a village vicar, the building of the Elmbridge bypass which skirts the edge of Mayfield, the building of several housing estates, the change in the nature of market gardening from relatively small-scale and traditional to multinational and anonymous, and changes in the social and class composition of the village.

Each of the five Old Mayfield families has historically been involved in the local horticultural and agricultural industries, and while members of three of the families still are, the other two have sought employment in other sectors. When I first arrived in the village I was warned by Kate, 41, an ‘incomer’ with whom I was lodging that I should be careful when talking to people in the village because ‘you never know who’s related to who’. She told me that she had ‘put her foot in it’ in the past when sharing village gossip with someone who turned out to be distantly related to the subject of story. However I soon realised that when people in the village talked about ‘everyone’ being related, they were actually referring specifically to the people
belonging to these well-known Old Mayfield families. Enid, 70, moved into the village 48 years ago, though she is often mistaken for ‘Old Mayfield’ by incomers due to her apparent omnipresence in the village. Whilst chatting over a cup of tea at the British Legion coffee morning Enid told me:

I went into the shop just after we moved in in ‘64, and the vicar at the time was in there and he said “Oh, this is Mrs Barker, she’s just moved into the village”, and he said “Oh, come with me I’ve got something to show you!”, and he took me down the bottom end of the shop, and hanging on the wall was all the names of the people in Mayfield on the electoral roll like, and he said “just one word of advice, if you look at this it’s all Ellison, Ellison, Ellision, Ellison, Ellision, Greaves, Greaves, Greaves, Greaves. Just mind what you say, because everybody’s related to everybody!” and I always remember that.

This ‘advice’ given to Enid echoes Strathern’s (1981; 1982a; 1982b) findings from the village of Elmdon, Essex, that the notion that everyone is related attributes a sense of belonging to those ‘true villagers’ connected through kinship ties, while simultaneously cutting them off from outsiders. Therefore, in Mayfield, the regular reference to Old Mayfield families’ kinship networks serves to exclude as much as it includes. As Strathern (1982a: 74) argues, ‘kinship in association with village membership provides a model for status identification and discrimination’, which signals who ‘truly belongs’ and who does not.

Despite the fact that there are very few Old Mayfield families remaining in the village, the warning given to Enid in 1964 continues to be repeated to incomers including myself. Although the five Old Mayfield families comprise a very small proportion of the village population, the perception of the village as characterised by
complex and often distant kinship ties prevails. This perception was not only described to me by Old Mayfield people, but also by ‘incomers’. While Old Mayfield people mobilise this discourse of ‘relatedness’ to signify solidarity, belonging, history and ‘true village’ status, I began to understand this conception of the villagers as ‘all interrelated’ as a simultaneous way for ‘incomers’ to distinguish themselves from what they see as the parochialism and ‘inbreeding’ associated with Old Mayfield families. Thus there are particular characteristics associated with Old Mayfield families, which concurrently hold positive and negative connotations for different groups of village residents.

For Old Mayfield people, their group membership connotes kinship, history, belonging, stability and authenticity. But incomers perceive Old Mayfield families in terms of fixity, stagnation and closed-mindedness. When incomers characterise Old Mayfield people as parochial and backward, they are thus distancing themselves from those they categorise. Consequently, as Edwards (1998: 155) argues, ‘every expression of exclusion is also an act of inclusion and vice versa’. Incomers are therefore self-excluding from the closed group of villagers who are perceived as ‘all related’.

Incomers who marry into Old Mayfield families do not become Old Mayfield people by default, even after many years of residence in the village. Once again, this reflects the work of Strathern (1982a) who has explored in depth the opposition between heredity and marriage in terms of who ‘truly belongs’ to a village and who does not. Richard, 52, considers himself to be ‘Old Mayfield’; his family history spans several generations in Mayfield on his mother’s side. However, his father, who lived in the village for 34 years, was never considered to be an Old Mayfield person. Richard explained:
Richard: My father lived in the village for 34 years and he was an outsider the entire time he was here. My Mum was born in Mayfield so she was a local, but my Dad wasn’t.

Helen: So he didn’t become, he wasn’t considered a Mayfield person by default?

Richard: No, and he was a tax man as well which didn’t help [laughs]

Helen: Oh right! So how long does it take to become a Mayfield person? I suppose to be the next generation of –

Richard: You’ve got to be born here. My kids who are 18, 20 or whatever, they’re Mayfield. Um, but you know, if you’re not born here... well it, it, that’s gone away a bit, you know, it’s changed a great deal from when I was young. So when I was young, pretty much everybody had a connection with the village. You lived in the village, worked in the village, the only people who came in generally were people who married into the village kind of thing, like my Father did. But it was mostly, mostly local people.

This illustrates that although Richard’s father married into an Old Mayfield family and fathered children who in turn, are considered to be Old Mayfield because they were born in the village, he would always be considered an ‘outsider’ for the 34 years that he lived there. This pattern has repeated itself with Richard’s wife June whom he married 25 years ago. Richard and June have two sons and a daughter who are
considered Old Mayfield as they were born in the village, so Richard and the children are considered Old Mayfield while June is not. Old Mayfield identity depends on birth status, and in-coming spouses are never fully assimilated.

Richard and June’s two sons have both gone away to study at university so it is likely that they may never return to live in Mayfield as adults. If they do, however, they would still be considered Old Mayfield people. In fact there are several people who have moved away from the village and are still known as Old Mayfield. Tony, who belongs to the Greaves family, mentioned earlier by Enid, is one such example. He was born, raised and schooled in the village, and continues to work as a foreman at one of the large vegetable-growing nurseries. After a marriage breakdown he moved to the nearby town of Elmbridge where accommodation is more affordable, yet due to his Greaves name, he will always be considered an Old Mayfield person even though he no longer lives there. What this demonstrates is that family history and kinship ties are sufficient for maintaining Old Mayfield status, even when individuals no longer reside in the village.

Tony is one of the few Old Mayfield people who still work in the horticultural industry in the village and he works alongside Eastern European migrant workers who conduct seasonal labour at the village nurseries. All of the Old Mayfield families have connections with the village’s horticulture and agricultural histories, either as growers, farmers, landowners or labourers. Therefore, of all the village residents, Old Mayfield people are generally the most sympathetic to the plight of Eastern European migrant workers who conduct the vast majority of manual labour at the nurseries in the village. Old Mayfield people can identify to some extent with the migrants’ daily lives, which comprise long hours, low pay, and hard work. They have a certain respect for the migrants’ work ethic, and the fact that the migrants are keeping the
horticultural industry alive, which is crucially bound up with the identity of the village.

Old Mayfield family histories are entwined with the history of the village and consequently, members of Old Mayfield families claim a sense of belonging in the village that ‘incomers’ do not share. One member of an Old Mayfield family told me that through the generations his family’s ‘blood, sweat and tears’ had quite literally seeped into the village soil, thus illustrating how closely connected many Old Mayfield people feel to the place and the landscape. Several Old Mayfield people, such as Richard, quoted above, have lived in the village their entire lives and would not consider leaving even though the village has dramatically changed around them in the past fifty years. In the past the social networks of Old Mayfield people were rooted in place, bound by kinship networks and the geographical boundary of the village. During my residence in the village however, I observed that while some such relationships remain, Old Mayfield people are now a very small proportion of the village population, and demographic change over the years has meant that their social horizons have expanded. Richard’s sons, who have both gone to university provide such an example, and demonstrate how members of Old Mayfield families are pursuing different career paths and acquiring new types of capital, which may result in a shift in class status.

Village People

The second broad group of Mayfield residents are known as ‘villagers’ or ‘Village People’. These are people who are not Mayfield ‘born and bred’ (Edwards, 2000; 1998), but have lived in the village for fifteen years or more, and who play a visible
role in the organisation of village social events and are seen as ‘contributing’ to a sense of community in the village. Village People do not necessarily have any connection with the village’s horticultural industry, but most are deeply proud of the village’s history and are involved in numerous ways in upholding village traditions. For example, Enid whom I referred to earlier, moved to the village with her husband 48 years ago and was involved with resurrecting the ‘Mayfield Wake’, an annual village fête with teas, cakes, games, stalls and maypole dancing. Enid has always positioned herself as a proactive member of the village, and has also acted as choreographer for the women’s maypole dancing club, chair of the maypole club (a social club for the over-60’s), and organiser of the Mayfield open gardens fundraising day. She is also involved with fundraising for the village church and the Royal British Legion, creates a quiz for each monthly edition of the Parish magazine, and was a member of the Mayfield Women’s Institute, which is no longer in existence. Enid has also curated a private collection of documents related to the history of Mayfield including old photographs, newspaper articles, maps, sketches, poems and so forth, and village residents often donate items of historical interest to her collection; she has become the unofficial curator of village history. Although Enid acknowledges her ‘true’ status as an ‘outsider’ in the village, she feels a deep connection with Mayfield. Her children were born and raised in the village and many village residents (though not Old Mayfield people) assume that she has always lived there.

Village People are concerned with sustaining a sense of ‘community’ in Mayfield, maintaining connections with village history and upholding village traditions. Linda, 46, moved into the village 15 years ago and is a self-employed chiropodist. She is passionate about the importance of the village’s history in informing its present identity. Linda explained to me:
I think my biggest worry is that people moving here [she is referring to English ‘incomers’ as well as Eastern European migrants] don’t have any feeling for the place and the history, that’s what’s always worried me... ‘cos I live in this house, I love this house and all the history of it, and I know that certain people have lived here over the years and I’ve got lots of old photographs. But there’s a hell of a lot of people out there who don’t care less about where they live and the history of it. It doesn’t matter to them.

In Linda’s opinion, an important part of living and belonging in a place is appreciating and connecting with its history. In The Need for a bit of History, Edwards (1998) explores how belonging in ‘Alltown’ is forged through a variety of attachments to pasts, persons and places. She recounts a story about how an ‘outsider’ who had recently moved to Alltown was ‘dying for a bit of history for his cottage’, and was ‘asking everybody he met whether they knew anything about the house he had recently purchased’ (Edwards, 1998: 152). Similarly, while Linda cannot lay claim to a historical or familial connection to the village like Old Mayfield residents, she carves out what she considers to be an ‘authentic’ attachment to place through her research into, and knowledge of the history of her house.

Linda has also been a member of the women’s maypole dancing club since she moved to the village. I watched her and the other members dance around the maypole on Wake Day, and afterwards I asked her about the dances they had performed. She explained that the newly-appointed organiser of the club had begun to introduce new dances into their repertoire, and she was unhappy with some of the less-traditional choices of music:
Well I just thought it was pathetic to do a dance to ‘Amarillo’. How old-fashioned and villagey is that? It’s just not. It’s American trash. There must have been some other tune that somebody could have found that had got a medieval or folk-type base – It’s things like that that really annoy me. In the last 15 years I’ve been here it’s changed a lot. [Village] People like to keep things traditional. I think perhaps I should have helped out with it, because they did ask me did I know a so-many beat tune for a new dance, and it’s an interesting dance, but to do it to Amarillo by Tony bloody Christie! It just needs something a bit more traditional.

Linda told me that she likes to support social and charitable events in the village, and that over the years she has been involved with village quizzes, events at the village hall, maypole dancing, the Mayfield wake, and has held a Macmillan coffee morning in her garden. She admits that she’s ‘not such a great organiser these days, but I’ve always helped and if anyone wants me I’m there to do it’. She feels a sense of social responsibility towards the village and its residents, and her visibility in the village as a health practitioner as well as a ‘community-engaged’ individual has over the years secured her status as a Village Person. She is a long-term resident who is committed to Mayfield as a place and as a community.

While Village People like Linda – and also more recent ‘incomers’ who I shall go on to discuss in the next section of this chapter – are unable to mobilise the same set of connections to the village as those Old Mayfield people who claim ‘born and bred’ status, ‘their intentional activities of dwelling, of neighbouring, of preserving history, of conserving amenities, and of joining in’ (Edwards & Strathern, 2000: 152) attaches them and demonstrates their commitment to Mayfield. So it is important to recognise that Old Mayfield people, Village People, and ‘incomers’ all find different ways of carving out a sense of belonging for themselves in the village.
The third group of Mayfield residents are the ‘incomers’; people who have moved into Mayfield having had no prior connection with the village. Incomers have moved into Mayfield from all over Britain. Some have come from the local rural area; others from rural areas elsewhere in the UK including Ireland, and others from urban towns and cities including Birmingham, London, Newcastle and Leicester. The three main motivations for moving to Mayfield expressed by my interviewees were: to be near to work (often people moved to Mayfield when starting a new job in the area), to be near family, and because the village offers an affordable rural setting in which to raise children with a good primary school and a strong sense of ‘community’.

It is not only those who have moved into the village in recent years who define themselves as incomers however. When taking the public bus from Mayfield to Elmbridge one day, I initiated a conversation with a woman who was waiting with me at the bus stop. After continuing our conversation for the fifteen-minute bus journey I asked if I might interview her as part of my PhD project. She replied that she and her husband had only lived in Mayfield for thirty years, very much considered themselves to be incomers and so would not have anything to tell me about the village. Perhaps I had unwittingly given her the impression that I was only interested in the history of the village, or perhaps she considered history to be an appropriate topic of study for a student who was ‘researching life in Mayfield’. Nonetheless, she clearly did not consider herself to have ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ village status, and on that basis, decided she would have nothing to tell me about Mayfield. This is not to say that other villagers necessarily viewed this woman as an incomer but demonstrates that incomer status can continue to be felt no matter how long a
person lives in the village (as is also exemplified by Richard’s wife and father who married into an Old Mayfield family). What this woman’s comment also reveals is that some village residents intentionally classify themselves as ‘incomers’. They would never claim to be Old Mayfield or even ‘village people’, and actively distance themselves from these other groups.

The way in which incomers distinguish themselves from Old Mayfield people often manifests itself as a class separation. Generally speaking, incomers’ close social networks tend to be with other incomers, and they regularly characterise Old Mayfield people as being ‘rough’, ‘backward’, ‘incestuous’, old-fashioned, uneducated, and lower-class horticultural labourers lacking knowledge of life beyond the village. Old Mayfield people’s lack of experience of life outside the village and also lack of travel [by which they mean cultural] experience is one of the key ways in which incomers set themselves apart. Jack, an incomer in his thirties told me that Old Mayfield people ‘get a nosebleed if they get on the M5 motorway’, suggesting – with tongue in cheek – that the trauma of leaving the village would manifest itself in physical symptoms. Other incomers claim that Old Mayfield people ‘are afraid of change’ in the village and that their lack of life experience elsewhere means that they are ‘stuck in time warp’. However, Old Mayfield people would argue that in fact, it is because of their knowledge of the wider world that they wish to hold on to Mayfield’s distinctive identity and individuality. As Strathern (1982b: 248) contends, in relation to Elmdon, villagers’ ‘consciousness of their own distinctiveness is a product of relations with the outside world’.

The contrast between ‘Old Mayfield’ and ‘incomer’ also manifests itself in discourses about social and status mobility (or immobility in the case of Old Mayfield people), and of social ties and contacts beyond the confines of one’s present
circumstances. Therefore, class position is closely associated with both ‘villager’ and ‘incomer’ status. In the eyes of many incomers, to be an Old Mayfield person is to lack social and cultural experience, and therefore, to lack class status. For incomers, ‘moving on’ is often equated with ‘moving up’, whether in pursuit of a better job, a child’s education, a better home, or a more desirable lifestyle. Therefore an opposition is constructed between incomers’ mobility/openness and Old Mayfield people’s fixity/closure (Strathern, 1981: 269).

Many incomers situate themselves as ‘breathing new life’ into the village, and are keen to be involved in community activities when they have the time. Kevin, an incomer in his forties explained his motivation for getting involved in the social life of the village:

> It’s partially about keeping traditions alive, it’s partially about keeping the community together, and it’s partially about having some fun. You know, let’s be honest, we all enjoy doing it... it’s a good way of meeting people. It’s partially because you want to have an influence over what happens in your community, it’s a way of giving something back to the community, um, and also it’s something to do that’s not work.

Community engagement is another way in which a boundary is drawn between incomers and Old Mayfield people. Many incomers were attracted to the village as they see residence as entailing ‘community’, but as will be discussed later in the chapter, Old Mayfield residents do not talk or think about the village in community terms.

As Kevin suggests, participating in the social life of the village enables incomers to develop their social networks and ‘have an influence over what happens’
in Mayfield. This is how incomers establish a sense of belonging in the village. As Watt (2006: 785) argues, a sense of belonging in a place can be rooted in social connections and ‘knowing people’. While Old Mayfield residents claim attachments to place on the basis of history, blood and kinship ties, incomers forge an alternative connection to the village via their social networks and ‘community’ activities.

‘The Dutch’

A final, albeit much smaller distinct group of Mayfield residents is the Schulten family, whose significance and place in the village history I described earlier in the chapter. The Schulten family occupy a precarious and constantly shifting position in the village’s taxonomy of residents, both in the way they identify themselves and the ways in which they are perceived by others. They are long-term residents in the village – the first member of the family arrived in Mayfield in the mid-1930’s – so their residence pre-dates that of many more recent ‘incomers’. Jan, who was my next-door neighbour while I lived in Mayfield, arrived in the village 63 years ago at the age of two. Upon arrival his mother and father spoke no English and continued to speak Dutch at home, but Jan soon became bilingual and he recalls how his mother would borrow his schoolbooks in order to teach herself some English. However, after his mother and father died Jan stopped speaking Dutch on a regular basis, and when Jan and his two cousins all married local women they spoke English at home, therefore Jan’s children, nephews and nieces did not have the opportunity to learn the Dutch language.

Because Jan was so young when he left the Netherlands he has no memory of living there, but he has returned to visit family members and attend horticultural
conventions since. When I asked him whether he considers himself to be Dutch or British he stated quite categorically that he is British. However, at other points in our conversations there were moments of slippage when Jan revealed a more complex sense of his national identity. For example, when describing a recent holiday to the Caribbean he explained that:

We flew to Acapulco and then we went to the Panama canal, and then we done [sic] the Dutch Islands – well, being Dutch you have to do the Dutch Islands – and um, then we ended up in Barbados.

Later on, after our interview, Jan showed me around the canal boat that he was building in his back garden. He had begun constructing and decorating the interior, and he told me that ‘because I’m Dutch I’ve got these Delft tiles to put around the wood burner’. These references to the Dutch Islands and traditional Dutch hand-painted Delft ceramic tiles suggest that whilst Jan considers himself British in terms of citizenship, when it comes to thinking about his personal biography, family history, travel and culture, he draws upon his Dutch origins. Jan’s daughter Anna, 40, was born and grew up in Mayfield, and also thinks of herself as British but concedes that ‘I am British but I do like to think about the Dutch element as well... it crosses over depending on what you’re thinking about’. At different moments for Jan and Anna, elements of their Dutch and British identities shift in and out of focus.

The Schulten family’s ‘dual identity’ as both British and Dutch is also recognised by other village residents. Some elderly Old Mayfield people who can remember when Jan, his parents, and other members of the Schulten family first arrived in the village will always refer to them as ‘The Dutch’. For example, Marj, 80, who worked at the Schulten’s nursery for 21 years between 1968 and 1989 always
refers to them as ‘The Dutch’, whereas the majority of Mayfield residents would consider them to be Village People. This is because the Schultens are long-term residents who speak with local accents and have an important historical connection with the village and its horticulture industry, and for these reasons, many incomers would not know that they originated from the Netherlands.

In some respects it could be argued that the Schulten family have made a transition from ‘incomer’ to ‘Village People’ status since the first members of the family arrived in Mayfield as horticultural experts. Over the years they have created a substantial number of employment opportunities for village residents, and in doing so, contributed significantly to the local economy. In this sense they are seen as appropriately fitting in with the narrative of horticultural tradition of the village. They are very much an important part of the village’s history, and continue to run successful businesses. According to Old Mayfield people the Schultens have not had much of a cultural impact on the village except for introducing new growing techniques to the horticulture industry. Their ‘integration’ into the village was very much a process of assimilation and they worked hard to learn English as quickly as possible. As I mentioned earlier, Jan, his uncle, and his two cousins all married into local families, which forged important kinship ties that connected them to Mayfield in a manner separate from their business interests.

Two Ends of the Village

In addition to the division of the village population into different status groups, many residents perceive there to be a class and social division between the ‘top end’ and the ‘bottom end’ of Mayfield. Due to its geographical situation within a deep curve of the
River Avon (see Figure 1. on page iii), the village is a ‘dead end’ or a no through-road – you cannot pass through Mayfield on your way to somewhere else. The ‘top end’ of the village is the most picturesque, characterised by black and white 16th century Tudor thatched cottages (see Figure 6. overleaf), a large privately-owned manor house (see Figure 7. overleaf), a dovecote, two arable farms owned by Old Mayfield families, and crucially, the maypole which is the focus of much social and ‘community’ activity in the village. By contrast, the ‘bottom end’ of the village comprises a few Victorian cottages dotted around one large and one small housing estate built in the 1970’s (see Figure 8. overleaf), the village school, the village shop and Post Office, and all of the large horticultural growers. The village hall (see Figure 9. overleaf), British Legion, Church, and playing fields are situated in the middle of the village and provide a kind of unspoken centre-point between the ‘two ends’.

Historically, the Tudor thatched cottages are likely to have been ‘tied’ cottages, that is, cottages owned by the village farms, which farm labourers rented from their employers. The cottages are relatively small compared with the larger family homes found on the 1970’s housing estates, however, these thatched cottages are now among the most expensive and desirable properties in the village, and mostly house middle-class ‘incomers’ rather than Old Mayfield people. Generally speaking, working-class Old Mayfield people are most likely to live at the ‘bottom end’ of the village in the more inexpensive housing. Linda, the chiropodist, who lives in one of the thatched cottages close to the maypole suggested that:
Figure 6. A row of thatched cottages at the ‘top end’ of the village.

Figure 7. Manor House
Figure 8. Brookwood Avenue, built in the 1970’s at the ‘bottom end’ of the village.

Figure 9. Mayfield Village Hall, built in 1931.
There’s a bit of a division between this end of the village and the other end... some of my patients call this the posh end, even though some of them were born down the lane in the cottages that have now been converted into big posh houses... but they were run down then. There’s one that used to be five cottages and it’s now one big house.

Over the years a great deal of gentrification has taken place in the older part of the village, and the residents from the ‘bottom’ end of the village often talk about the ‘top’ end as being ‘posh’. Celia, a pensioner who moved into the village five years ago and lives at the bottom end of the village observed that ‘you’ve only got to look at the cars parked outside those thatched houses... as you’re coming from the maypole along the left hand side, there’s a Porsche and then an Audi and then a BMW coupe… so they’re that kind of person: Kensington and Chelsea’. Celia, herself an incomer from London, makes a class distinction here about the ‘kind of person’ who lives in the thatched cottages through her interpretation of prestigious and expensive cars as symbols of wealth and status.

Similarly, Julie, 50, who has owned and run the village shop for the past five years explained that:

The incomers like the ‘idyllic stuff... whereas the old villagers are shipped out down the other end. It’s funny how it’s all come full circle because those thatched cottages, once upon a time, were workers cottages weren’t they? But now they’re the most expensive places to live in the village. It’s more middle class up that end now, and actually quite a lot of the original villagers, the old village families are down, um, Brookwood Avenue, some in social housing, and some part-rent part-mortgage and what have you. But I think the people from Riverview Crescent and Brookwood with
the larger houses don’t particularly like the smaller cottages, the ‘olde worlde’
cottages. They prefer their square boxes [laughs].

Here Julie’s reference to social housing and ‘part-rent part-mortgage’ in relation to
the ‘original villagers’ highlights their lower levels of affluence relative to the
‘incomers’ who live in the most expensive houses. Furthermore, she ascribes a
distinct set of classed aesthetic values or ‘tastes’ to the two groups whereby the
incomers prefer (or rather, can afford) the ‘idyllic’, ‘olde worlde’ cottages which are
often depicted in the pages of glossy rural lifestyle magazines such as *Country Living*,
whereas the Old Mayfield families have been ‘shipped out’ to the bottom end of the
village to live in the cheaper ‘square boxes’, which do not exude rural charm or evoke
the ‘quintessentially English’ aesthetic. This is another example of the way that
village status and belonging is contested in Mayfield. While Old Mayfield people
claim an ‘authentic’ attachment to place via their place-based kinship ties and family
histories, incomers and Village People are more likely to possess the economic
capital to buy ‘a bit of history’ (Edwards, 1998) or ‘buy into’ a rural lifestyle. Their
capital is demonstrated through their material possessions, ‘taste’ and aesthetics,
whereas Old Mayfield people’s capital is rooted in their local knowledges and kinship
ties.

As well as there being a class division between the two ends of the village,
Julie and others remarked that they also perceived a social division between the ‘top
end’ and ‘bottom end’ which has manifest itself in some of the village’s social events.
For example, each year on Christmas Eve villagers gather at the maypole to sing
Christmas carols, and this year Julie observed that it had:
...ended up as a bit ‘down that end of the village’ – it was that end of the village, round the maypole that came out for it... I think there’s a bit of a division between the old village and the newer end. The people who live in the old village – I mean, take the open gardens for example – when they first started doing that, there were one or two people up at this [new] end who would have liked to have their gardens included but there was a bit of a – geographically and socially I think there’s a bit of a bridge. There does tend to be a bit of a ‘down that end of the village’ community, um, I don’t know, yes there is, there’s no doubt about it, there’s a little community on its own down there.

The idea of a greater sense of community at the older ‘top end’ of the village was also something that Alice, 19, who had recently moved into the village with her mother, described. Their cottage, next door to Linda and close to the maypole, is situated where Alice perceives the ‘heart of the village’ to be. She explained:

The day we moved in the neighbours were all lovely. They came across and said hello and gave us new home cards, and they said if you want any help or anything then just give us a shout... and next door made us tea and brought it round on a tray, so yes, they’re all very nice. It’s nice to have good neighbours. I don’t know if it’s just on this stretch of road, maybe people join together more up here compared to the bottom end, you know, where you’ve got all the new houses. I can’t imagine people coming out and giving you as much support down at that end compared to what they would down this end. It seems like the heart of the village is up here definitely.

For Alice, the offering of tea and greetings cards was proof of good neighbourliness, ‘support’, and community in which ‘people join together more’ than at the other end of the village where the new houses are. It wasn’t clear to me why she couldn’t
‘imagine people coming out and giving you as much support’ at the other end of the village, but I got the sense that the landscape of 1970’s semi-detached houses and red-brick cul-de-sac’s did not evoke the middle class image of ‘community’, the rural idyll, tradition and friendliness in Alice’s mind. For her, the 1970’s housing estates do not represent such a romantic or community-oriented view of village life.

Community

‘Community’ is a classed concept that is usually used by incomers in Mayfield as a byword for the village’s social calendar. For example, as Tanya, 36, told me: ‘There’s definitely a strong sense of community here, there’s always lots of things going on’. So a sense of community is generated by the organisation of and participation in social events such as quiz nights, film screenings, street parties, the summer ball, the school’s spring fete, live music at the village hall, and May Day celebrations.

There is an identifiable group of people who invest a substantial amount of time, effort and resources into the organisation of village social or ‘community’ events, and many of those people are on more than one organising committee or belong to more than one bank of volunteers. For instance, Tanya, who spent her childhood in Mayfield and moved back five years ago with her daughter after the breakdown of her marriage explained that between them, she and her new partner are involved with almost ‘everything’ in the village:

We’re involved with everything. All of it! [laughs]. Well I’m on the committee for the Mayfield school supporters association… and as a branch off from that there’s the Spring fair committee which is the biggest fundraiser for the school, so I help them raise money and the prizes for the auction and the raffle, and Kevin does the
compering at the Spring fair, so we help out on that and help out on the stalls and try and get everybody in the village to help out with something. And then he’s a member of the cricket club, he’s on the committee for the Mayfield summer ball this year, and we’re also starting to help out at the village hall to try and get a Friday night social club going. My daughter does maypole dancing, and I play hockey but that’s in Elmbridge, so we do quite a lot really.

Tanya is associated with a range of different groups and people not only through her own interests but also those of her partner and daughter.

Generally speaking it is incomers and Village People who devote time to organising community events rather than people from Old Mayfield families. Old Mayfield people tend not to talk about ‘community’ but instead talk about Mayfield and its residents as ‘the village’. For them, the whole village was a community before it grew in size in the 1960’s and 1970’s and ‘outsiders’ moved in. Lawrence, 68, from an Old Mayfield family explained:

There’s been a lot of houses built since the ‘60’s – Willow Close wasn’t here and places like that. When I was growing up you knew everybody and everybody spoke and you know, it really was nice, but nowadays people come and buy the houses and they’re both out at work all day and they come back at night and stay indoors, and then they go out again early in the morning and you don’t really see them a lot... It’s a shame really because the village has got so much bigger and you don’t really get that close community feeling any more. Moorland Road is new; it just used to be fields across there.

This quote suggests that Old Mayfield people may feel that there was once a sense of community in Mayfield when the village was smaller and people ‘knew everybody’,
thus constructing a definition of community as comprising familiarity, friendship, social and kinship networks. Lawrence talks about an absence of community, claiming that he no longer feels a sense of ‘close community feeling’ in the village. For Lawrence, ‘the village’ and ‘the community’ were synonymous when he was a child. For other village residents however, community is something to be created by joining in with village social events.

Many of the incomers I spoke to cited a ‘sense of community’ as something that appealed to them about Mayfield, and this contributed to their decision to move to the village. Similarly, Edwards (1998: 156) discovered in her ethnography that ‘rural charm’ and a sense of community attracted newcomers to ‘Alltown’ because, they argued, that these things had been lost in the places they left behind. Paradoxically, Old Mayfield people use the same idioms to describe the changes that have occurred in the village. Lawrence, quoted above, points to a disappearing sense of community due, in his view, to the growth of the village, the commuting behaviours of village residents, and the influx of strangers who do not appear to share the same values of neighbourliness and friendliness.

Despite this, many incomers perceive community involvement to go hand in hand with living in a rural village, with some believing that as a village dweller one has an obligation to participate in community activities. Ruth, an artist, who moved into the village at the same time that I began my fieldwork explained her views on the matter:

My personal view is that you have to get involved [in community activities]. I think it’s all part and parcel of living in a village, and I don’t agree with people who have second homes where they only visit the village at the weekends and don’t contribute anything. You have to become part of the community to keep it alive, so that’s what
motivates me to get involved. I like people and doing things with them, and helping people out and that sort of thing. I also think that when you move in to a village, if you’re willing to get out there and speak to people and help, and be seen to be getting involved in the community spirit then people are a lot more likely to come towards you.

Ruth constructs living in a rural village and participating in community activities as a lifestyle choice, unknowingly distancing herself from Old Mayfield people who do not feel obliged to be involved with such things. As Strathern (1982: 248) highlights in her study of constructs of ‘villageness’ in Elmdon, Essex, ‘village life takes on a new meaning in the eyes of newcomers who redefine the local ‘community’ while at the same time encapsulating it’. In Mayfield, it is also incomers who have redefined the meaning of community, and it is incomers who work hard to keep their idea of community as collective social activity alive.

One could argue that the contemporary concept of community in Mayfield, as understood by incomers and Village People, is a classed construct. Where Strathern (1982b) argues that the idea of the ‘village’ is a product of class thinking; in Mayfield it is rather the idea of ‘community’ that is such. People belonging to Old Mayfield families generally identify themselves as working class families living in a working village. They do not feel the need to become involved in community activities perhaps because they feel a deeper sense of belonging to the village: one that does not need to be performed, proved or validated through participation in community events. Unlike Ruth quoted above, Old Mayfield people are not concerned with being ‘seen to be getting involved’. By contrast, the middle-class incomers work hard to maintain their sense of community, which they understand to be the badge of a ‘good’ village, a friendly, welcoming village and a desirable place to live.
Mary, 46, who has lived in Mayfield for 13 years, explained that there is a
classed dimension to some of the social or ‘community’ events which are organised
in the village. In previous years she has been involved with organising the Mayfield
summer ball – a black tie fundraising event – which she says, has created some
conflict and unease in the village because some villagers consider the event to be ‘too
posh’:

There are those who it alienates because they’re uncomfortable with the formality of
it and they feel that it’s too posh. I did have someone... who emailed me in a very
nasty way and accused me of being a conservative [laughs]. His words were that it
was a conservative ball and that it was bourgeois, and it’s this and it’s that, and elitist,
and that it’s discriminating against this people and that people and, and you just
think, you know, you don’t have to come to everything in the village. It was quite a
nasty and quite a foul-mouthed email which I took great exception to, um, so you do
get people who can be, they see it as elitist but personally I think it’s just jealousy
really. They think you’ve got more money or something, which isn’t the case at all,
um, because the people in this village aren’t moneyed people. From a committee
point of view the ball has struggled because we’ve lost – there were a couple of
groups of quite wealthy people who have gone – and that’s part of the concern for the
ball now, because they used to put a lot of money into it in a number of ways, with
the auction and things... maybe we need to look at having a lower-key event, less
posh. I think you would certainly attract a different crowd, or a different cross-section
of people if it was £25 a ticket rather than £50, or if the sit-down dinner was a
barbeque instead.

On the same subject Richard, an Old Mayfield person who we met earlier, provided
an alternative viewpoint on the ball. He is one of the villagers who feels
uncomfortable with its formality and exclusivity, partly due to the £50 ticket price and formal dress code:

They’ve done about three or four balls now I think. I went to the first one, I’m not into dicky bows [bow ties] and stuff. Um, and I found as well when I got there the first year that there weren’t many people from Mayfield there. I thought, you know, I think it might have changed since, but you kind of thought well, you know, alright it raised some money for the school and the church, but you felt it wouldn’t be bad to see some people – ‘cos I wasn’t very comfortable being in a dicky bow, so seeing a few more from the village in a dicky bow would have been fine, but most of the people there didn’t appear to be what I would call local, not village people… maybe it’s changed now. But it’s definitely aimed at a certain market, a certain group of people I think. The tickets are expensive so it’s not accessible for everyone.

Richard is the chairman of the Mayfield Wake committee and explained that by contrast, the Wake is an inclusive and inexpensive event:

We’re pretty much inclusive. We don’t – we charge for the disco, which is a fiver but pretty much everything else is free. And in the old days, the previous chairman to me, he’s died now, but he was very much about well we must be able to include people who can’t afford much, we shouldn’t be charging this much on the stalls, you know, because you’re excluding people. It’s kind of changed a bit now, although there’s still poverty about I guess, but kids seem to – spending 50p to have a go on something doesn’t seem terribly out of the way now, but, we are still, we still try to be a bit more inclusive and we’re probably catering mainly for families for children… that’s what we’re about. And because we’re not trying to make money out of it, it makes it a bit easier to keep the costs down.
Mary (an incomer) and Richard’s (Old Mayfield) comments suggest that some ‘community’ activities in Mayfield are classed, and that this comes into focus particularly when events are ticketed and specify dress-codes. Different community events certainly attract different social groups or networks of villagers. Furthermore, different villagers’ accounts of the social and community activities in Mayfield vary depending on their own class and village status. While I was often presented with a positive and convivial picture of the numerous social events and opportunities available in the village, I was also told of the difficulties associated with ‘village gossip’, a lack of privacy, and the potential for social isolation in Mayfield. It is to these narratives that I now turn.

‘Like Jeremy Kyle, but Rural’: Public and Private Narratives of Village Life

Although many residents talked to me about the importance of a sense of community and friendliness in the village (particularly ‘village people’ and ‘incomers’), there was also a simultaneous counter-narrative, often from the same individuals, that daily life in Mayfield involves a constant weighing up of the advantages and disadvantages of village life. For instance, Julie talked about some of the challenges that come with living in Mayfield. She explained:

Village life definitely has its unique qualities, and it is lovely being able to walk round the village and spend your life waving to people, but it does mean that you actually have no privacy sometimes, you don’t. Everybody knows when you sneeze. It’s a bit of a weighing up of a balance really. You do have that sense of a community, but it’s quite, um, not intrusive – I’m not sure if that’s the right word – but you lay yourself open to all sorts of things you know.
Similarly, Zoe, 40, a divorced mother of three children talked in detail about the balance between good neighbourliness and looking out for one another versus nosiness and lack of privacy. She considers the village setting to be a safe space for raising her children where village residents know who they are and would help them if they were in trouble. She told me that ‘Mayfield is a lovely safe community, it’s ideal – not desperately exciting – but from the point of view of a family it’s nice’. Zoe gave various examples of the ways in which her neighbours had helped her and her children in the past with the stuff of daily life in the village: locating lost dogs, mowing the lawn, and lending household tools for example. And being a single parent, she explained that she found it ‘comforting’ to have ‘really good neighbours’ who are ‘always around’. However, she conceded:

> It can be like living in a goldfish bowl, that’s the flipside. There’s the peace of mind knowing that everybody knows you and your children, but then on the other hand everyone knows you and your children – everyone knows your business, and it’s about getting a balance between the two. It can be a positive thing, comforting for peace of mind, but then again everyone knows everyone’s business.

Zoe found this particularly difficult when she and her husband were going through a divorce, and this difficulty was magnified because her ex-husband is from a large and well-known local family. She described how:

> Everyone knows the Harvey’s [her ex-husband’s family]... it’s a bit like being married to the Mafia in some ways because everybody knows them and everybody has an opinion about them. And quite a lot of people have been out with them.
There’s four boys and a girl, so quite a few of the local girls I’ve met have been out with a Harvey brother at some point which is always interesting [laughs]. You can be out somewhere like toddler group and someone will say ‘Oh, I used to go out with Simon years ago, he dumped me for so and so’. What are you supposed to say to that? And when Steve and I broke up all sorts of people who I hardly know were coming up to me and saying things to me... you just think ‘Oh for God’s sake!’ It’s just like Jeremy Kyle but rural! ...you just have to laugh really.

Zoe is able to laugh about people’s interference in her private life because she sees herself as *in* the village, but not *of* the village. She is not a member of an Old Mayfield family, and suggested to me that while her young children enjoy life in the village, she would like to move away when they are older. She positions herself as on the outside of the village looking in, and she knows that she is able to leave the village if or when she decides to do so.

It is not just incomers in Mayfield however, who feel frustrated that people’s lives and actions are often scrutinised by the wider village. Arthur, 72, a retired carpenter from an Old Mayfield family came on a monthly basis to carry out some basic gardening and odd jobs at Kate’s house while I was living there. One afternoon we began talking while he was working in the garden. I told him that I was interested to know what it was like to live in Mayfield, and he responded with a potted life history. Arthur’s wife died when they were both in their thirties, leaving him to raise their three sons on his own. Several years later Arthur developed a relationship with a woman who moved into the village from a city in the West Midlands. However, other village residents did not approve of this relationship; they did not think it appropriate that he should re-marry after becoming a widower, especially since his sons were still relatively young at that time. He said ‘that’s what it’s like in this village, people want
to get involved in other people’s business – they judge, and they try to tell you what to do, and if they don’t take to you that’s it’.

Although Arthur has lived in Mayfield since he was born and has many friends and acquaintances in the village, he and his wife do not participate in any of the Mayfield social clubs or events. He explained that they do not attend the weekly coffee morning because they ‘don’t like the gossip’. Instead they prefer to keep their own company. He continued:

I know that makes us sound miserable, but we just prefer to get on with our own lives, keep ourselves to ourselves, and worry about our own lives. We don’t want to get involved in other people’s business – that’s for them to worry about. My son who lives down Riverview Crescent has also been married twice so we’ve got a large family, that’s enough to keep us occupied.

Arthur is almost apologetic about his choice not to go to the coffee mornings and other social events in the village which suggests that he feels that there is an expectation that people who live in the village ought to attend such meetings, particularly if they are retired. As Edwards and Strathern (2000: 152) have noted, in the English village context, ‘belonging’ is not a value-free idea. It carries with it positive overtones, and it is expected or seen as natural that people should want to belong to social networks or ‘the community’.

Similarly, Celia who is also retired and moved into the village four years ago to be near her daughter and grandson echoed a lack of interest in being involved with social clubs in the village – or rather, that she had not found anyone with whom she shared any interests or hobbies. Before moving to Mayfield Celia worked in the City of London and lived a very different lifestyle to her peers in the village. Contrary to
the public narratives of village life as friendly, with a strong sense of community where there is always something going on, Celia has experienced a very different side of village life. She explained that her decision to move to Mayfield was dictated by proximity to her daughter, and that the village itself was almost irrelevant. Her priorities were very different to many other village ‘incomers’:

Celia: …So I bought this place. It was irrelevant where it was – It was to be in striking distance of my daughter, and for me to have a nice easy house to live in with a garden. And of course I could go and get on the train to London, and that was it. And really I do not go any further than the Post Office in the village. I used to go for walks around but I soon got over that!

Helen: So when you moved in, you weren’t particularly interested in finding – A lot of people who have moved into the village have said that what attracted them was a sense of community, that there were lots of things going on, there were clubs that they could join, or they liked the church... but you weren’t interested in that aspect of village life?

Celia: No, I was still living in London in my head. I used to go back nearly every week when I first came here. There was always someone to meet if I jumped on the train.

Helen: So your social life was very much still in London?

Celia: Still is really. I mean, well, who have I got here? Not really. Cathy who I see at the art club occasionally and we sometimes go for a coffee, but no, I haven’t got any friends. I haven’t made any friends as such. I’ve got Gail and
Josie and John and Eric down the lane who are all lovely neighbours, but it’s not a social life.

Helen: Is that – would you say that was out of choice?

Celia: What?

Helen: That your social life is still in London rather than Mayfield.

Celia: Well I never really seem to meet anybody here that really wants to do anything. I mean I like... well, what I do with Cathy happens more in the summer when her husband goes off to cricket, is to go off for lunch somewhere. You know, just to sit around chatting and go somewhere nice for lunch and do that. I go to Cheltenham shopping, but no, I haven’t. It’s not because people aren’t nice, it’s because it’s just a different pace... I’m pretty self-sufficient, I’m not ever desperate for anything. I can fiddle in the garden, I’ve got loads and loads of music, I read a lot and I go back up to London quite a lot. It’s not that I’m unhappy, I mean I’m happy, and to go into the Post Office, it’s always very sociable in there. There’s always someone to talk to if you want someone to talk to. Um, it’s just that I don’t think I have very much in common with people here... You know I used to go for a walk round the village – somebody said go for twenty minutes walk every day and it keeps your blood pressure down – well, it was so boring and I was in such a state when I got home [laughter] that I thought oh Christ! Let’s just get home! And I used to walk through the churchyard, go down the little lane, walk all through the village, twenty minutes, and I never met a soul.
Celia’s description of her life in the village contrasts sharply with that of Julie who talked about walking around the village waving at all the people she knows. Mayfield’s main attractions for Celia were proximity to her daughter and proximity to the railway connection to London rather than the sense of community cited by so many other incomers I spoke to. She was also one of the only village residents I interviewed who spoke candidly about the potential for social isolation in the village. While she admits that she has good neighbours, she makes a distinction between cordial neighbourly relations and a social life. While she lives in Mayfield, her social life is based in London where was born, grew up, and spent her adult life prior to retirement.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that identity and belonging in Mayfield can be ambiguous and fragmentary. Even Old Mayfield people do not ‘belong’ categorically, even when they define themselves as Mayfield ‘born and bred’. As Edwards (1998: 157) argues in relation to ‘Alltown’, ‘this aspect of belonging and identity, uttered with pride on the understanding that it accrues status, fades into the background when status inheres in other aspects of social identity such as class’. So in Mayfield, as in Alltown, social status is accrued and attributed on various grounds by various people. For Old Mayfield residents, ‘incomers’ are perceived as ‘outsiders’: they are outside Old Mayfield kinship networks, outside the village history, and thus outside ‘the village’ itself. By contrast, ‘incomers’, who view Mayfield as a ‘community’, identify Old Mayfield people as outside their community networks and socio-economic sphere. These insider/outsider distinctions are based on social class and different ways of conceptualising ‘belonging’ to place. And according to this system of
classifying village status, Eastern European migrant labourers who work on Mayfield’s horticultural farms are outside both ‘the village’ and the ‘community’: they can claim neither the history nor the social networks as pathways to belonging.

In contrast to Eastern European migrants, the Schulten family, and also those classed as Village People demonstrate that some of those who migrate into Mayfield can be assimilated or undergo a transition from ‘incomer’ to Village People status. However, this journey is only set in motion provided individuals exhibit the characteristics deemed a prerequisite for ‘belonging’ such as long-term residence; an interest in or contribution to village history, heritage and traditions; good neighbourliness and friendliness. Thus what is apparent, is that despite class distinctions and the various ways that village residents claim an attachment to place, Old Mayfield families, Village People and Incomers all mobilise similar idioms of belonging and relationships (either through social- or blood-ties) when describing Mayfield and their place in it. To quote Edwards (1998: 157) once again, village residents ‘value different forms of sociability, display different modes of attachment to ‘the community’ and differentiate themselves from each other, but the raw materials of belonging and not belonging, and the process of constructing them, are similar’. This means that despite their internal differentiation, village residents can define a white English village Self in opposition to the white Eastern European migrant Other. This process of Othering, which is also based on class distinctions and judgements about economic, social and cultural capital is the focus of the following chapter.
Chapter 6

Shades of Whiteness in Mayfield

The Intersection of Race and Class in English Village Life

Introduction

In this chapter I draw upon the work of Hartigan (1999; 2003) to analyse the ways in which the English villagers of Mayfield locate Eastern European migrants as different from themselves, and how migrants are constructed as a white minority or a different ‘shade’ of white. There are a number of British-based studies that have engaged with the concept of ‘shades’ of whiteness. For example, sociologist Diane Reay has paid particular attention to white middle class identities and the ‘value’ gained by white middle class pupils from multi-ethnic inner-city schooling, and middle class whites challenging privilege and ‘doing whiteness differently’ (Reay et al 2007; Reay 2008). Social and cultural geographers Anoop Nayak (2009) and Alastair Bonnett (1998) have also addressed the ways in which the white English working class have been perceived both as ‘white’ and ‘not-white’ in historical and contemporary context, shifting in and out of whiteness due to fluctuations in dominant political, colonial, capitalist, cultural and social discourses. However, it is the American anthropologist John Hartigan’s (1999; 2003) work on shades of whiteness which I have found most useful in understanding the power dynamics and the daily, routine work of boundary maintenance between majority and minority white people in rural Worcestershire.

Hartigan’s (2003) study of ‘white trash’, ‘rednecks’ and ‘hillbillies’ portrays the social contours and circumstances that shape the lives of lower-class whites in the American south. He explains that what counts as ‘white’ in many social situations and
local contexts depends on class identity, and that the terms of racial belonging and difference are importantly inflected by the markings of class. Furthermore, in his (1999) study of ‘class predicaments of whiteness’ in Detroit, Hartigan proposes the idea that ‘shades’ of whiteness exist in American society. He argues that lower-class whites are marked off from the privileges and power of hegemonic whiteness, and it is this intersection of social class and whiteness which I seek to explore in relation to Eastern European migrants in the English countryside. In doing so, I investigate the classed and ethnic markers of difference identified by white English villagers to define Eastern European migrants as ‘racially’ white, but culturally Other such as clothing and hairstyles, language, labour, working conditions, and perceived poverty. While the historical, national, cultural and social context of Hartigan’s (1999; 2003) research is far removed from the contemporary English countryside, I feel that the theory of ‘shades of whiteness’ can be put to work here to explore how Eastern European migrants in rural England are being marginalised and excluded despite the fact that they are white.

My aim in this chapter is to outline how white English villagers position Eastern European migrants as ‘not quite white’ enough to fully integrate or assimilate into English rural life. Fox et al (2012), Garner (2012) and Dawney (2008) have argued that white skin does not shield Eastern European migrants in Britain from processes of racialization and the effects of racism. However, in the rural context of Mayfield, Eastern European migrants are not racialised in a straightforward way because their white racial identities (along with those of the villagers) are largely unmarked and invisible. Village residents do not talk about migrants’ racial identities, but instead draw upon alternative markers of difference based on social class, culture and ethnicity. Therefore I explore the extent to which Eastern European migrants in
Mayfield can be understood as ‘ethnicised’ rather than ‘racialised’ because it is their ethnic identity and class position, rather than their ‘race’, which situate them as Other. As I shall go on to explain, Eastern European migrants’ whiteness only comes into view for my interviewees when they are discussed in relation to past and present village residents who are not white. Thus there is a recognition that Eastern European migrants are white, and that to some extent this allows them to ‘blend in’ to the rural horticultural landscape. However, while the migrants may have white skins, they are constructed as a different ‘shade’ of white by village residents.

During my fieldwork I was struck by how villagers’ construction of migrants as ‘not quite white’ was entwined with classed markers of distinction, rendering the migrants ‘racially’ but not culturally white. The villagers’ local cultural knowledges provide a kind of scaffolding, shoring up their position of hegemonic whiteness. And although Eastern European migrants are white-skinned they are viewed by village residents as a different ‘shade’ of white because ‘they’ do not embody whiteness in the same way as ‘us’. In other words, migrants do not have the necessary cultural knowledge to perform whiteness in the routine ways that English rural dwellers often take for granted.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the village itself cannot be described as ‘middle class’ in any traditional sense. That is to say, the villagers are heterogeneous in terms of their social, moral, and political values and diverse in their lifestyles, acquisition of material goods, and economic and educational positions. This means that different village residents perceive Eastern European migrants and also non-white Others in different ways depending on their own class status. Relative to the Eastern European migrants, however, what the villagers do share is an unspoken cultural understanding of how to fit into the local model of respectable rural living.
which is encompassed by Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘cultural capital’. In this chapter I adopt Bourdieu’s distinctive understanding of social class as rooted in and exhibited through nuanced social and cultural practices as well as economic resources as a lens through which to examine English village life. Processes of socialisation in Mayfield instil in the villagers a distinctive class ‘habitus’, that is, a ‘system of durable dispositions of being and acting that represent the internalized embodiment of social norms and established patterns of behaviour’ (Watt, 2006:777). The villagers’ shared dispositions equip them with the necessary social and cultural know-how to embody and be accepted into village life. However, the migrants’ lack of such knowledge marks them out as cultural and ethnic Others.

There is a series of key questions that I shall address in this chapter. Firstly, can a ‘spectrum’ of whiteness be identified in the village of Mayfield with some individuals and groups being considered ‘more white’ than ‘others’ who somehow fall short of the conventions or norms of whiteness? Secondly, in a predominantly white landscape such as the English countryside, to what extent can local discourses separating white villagers from white Others be racialised? Or is the idea of ‘shades of whiteness’ in this context a misnomer? Are constructions of self/other and insider/outsider instead founded upon class- and culture-based distinctions rather than processes of racialisation?

**Villagers’ Perceptions of Eastern European Migrants**

When I initially raised the issue of Eastern European migration to Mayfield with village residents, a common response was that: ‘we don’t really notice them’ and ‘they don’t have any impact on village life’. For example, Richard, 55, an Old Mayfield resident who has lived in the village since birth explained that:
In terms of the Polish, you know, we really don’t [see them]. I see them up and down the street a little bit, but very little... They all seem to be in caravans dotted around the village. I mean I don’t know where they all live but it doesn’t appear to have had any impact on the housing in the village... it really hasn’t bothered us... when my lads were kind of 15 and 16 it was a bit frustrating that they couldn’t get jobs [on the farms and nurseries] in the summer holidays whereas previously it was pretty easy to go and get work as a student. But now you find that you go and they’ve got [migrants living on the farm] so they’re going to employ them first, but other than that there’s been absolutely no impact at all. I mean, I don’t know any [Eastern European] families – are there many living in the village? I don’t know.

Similarly, Sharon, another Old Mayfield resident who works as the village postmistress remarked:

Considering we have all these workers I don’t see them walking around - but then I never see them working anywhere either! It’s really odd. *It’s like two separate worlds.* There’s the village, and then there’s the big growers and it’s like ‘beam me up Scotty’! They [the migrant workers] just disappear behind a hedge! [laughs]

There is no doubt that the spatial separation between villagers and migrants in Mayfield contributes to the initial sense that Eastern European migration is not having an impact on the village. Few village residents work at the nurseries (also known as ‘growers’) in Mayfield, therefore it is rare for migrants and villagers to become work colleagues. In addition, the majority of migrant workers live as well as work at the nurseries, so at the end of the working day they do not leave the site but
remain there to shower, eat, relax and socialise with their co-workers. The migrants’ long working-hours combined with their spatial ‘hidden-ness’ are often interpreted by villagers as a conscious choice to ‘keep themselves to themselves’. As long as the migrant workers stay on the farms and do not stray into the village they largely go unnoticed, and the ‘two separate worlds’, as described by Sharon, can co-exist in a state of relative indifference. While the spatial boundary between villagers and migrants is determined largely by the migrant workers’ contracts of employment whereby accommodation is supplied with the job, the social boundary between the two groups is less clearly defined.

As I talked in greater depth to the villagers of Mayfield about their perceptions of the Eastern European migrant workers in the village and in the surrounding area, despite their initial ‘no problem here’ responses, it emerged that they were in fact engaged in processes of distancing themselves from migrants using finely-tuned classed discourses and also ‘ethnicised’ discourses which, while based on perceived cultural and ethnic differences, often draw upon racist rhetoric. At this juncture I would like to pause to qualify my use of the term ‘ethnicised’, and to explain my understanding of its distinction from the term ‘racialised’. As numerous theorists of race have argued (Solomos, 2003; Mason, 1995; Miles, 1982), the socially constructed concept of ‘race’ is bound to the body, and in Britain historically, processes of racialization have been based upon embodied markers of difference such as skin colour, body shape, hair texture and so forth which are tied to the colonial past. However, the migrant workers in Mayfield are not postcolonial migrants – they are white and European. Therefore, in the context of rural Worcestershire, they are not racialised in the same way as black or postcolonial Others. In fact, their racial identities are largely unmarked because for the village residents, whiteness (their own
as well as the Eastern European migrants’ whiteness) is invisible and is not something that they reflect upon. Rather than discussing migrants’ racial identities, village residents draw upon alternative markers of difference based on social class, culture and ethnicity, including clothing, hairstyles, language, living conditions, labour, food and alcohol consumption, gender relations and sexuality, to position them as Other. It is their ethnic identity and inferior class status that makes them different, thus I argue that they are subject to processes of ‘ethnicisation’ rather than ‘racialisation’. It is upon these processes and discourses that this chapter is based.

As well as being based on perceived ethnic and cultural difference, social distance between villagers and Eastern European migrants is perceived and maintained by villagers in Mayfield using classed markers of distinction which situate the migrants as racially white, but culturally Other. Relative to the migrants, both the working- and middle-class residents of Mayfield possess a degree of cultural, economic and social capital (as outline by Bourdieu, 1984), which secures their hegemonic social status and enables them to make distinctions between the village Self and the migrant Other. Tyler (2012a: 22), drawing upon the work of Skeggs (1997), succinctly summarises Bourdieu’s understanding of the different types of capital as follows:

Economic capital includes ‘income, wealth, financial inheritances and monetary assets’; cultural capital consists in embodied qualities such as ‘dispositions of the mind and body’ and institutionalised attributes such as education and qualifications – moreover, cultural capital is the acquisition of know-how about the ways in which local systems of distinction are articulated; social capital is ‘resources based on connections and group membership’; and symbolic capital is the form that ‘different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate’. 
As Skeggs (1997) has argued, we can understand class identities as constituted by the acquisition of these various kinds of capital. Class positioning is thus ‘a constant process of creating distinctions between oneself and others on the grounds of physical appearance, social decorum, educational credentials, wealth, aesthetic taste and so on’ (Tyler, 2012a: 22). However, not all Mayfield residents possess the same amounts or types of capital, and this importantly affects the ways in which different groups and individuals perceive Eastern European migrants.

During my fieldwork I identified four key markers of difference which repeatedly appeared in local discourse about the migrant workers in the village. These include: Nationality, language and migrants’ command of English; physical appearance including clothing and hairstyles; the type of work migrants do and their perceived poverty (as a result of working for minimum wage or less); and judgements made about migrants’ living circumstances and housing. Each of these markers of difference is inextricably bound up with ideas about class and respectability. Respectability is a concept which I explore in greater depth in chapter seven, but briefly, a discourse about the respectability of village residents cuts across class locations in Mayfield in order to construct a way of identifying the village population in opposition to Eastern European migrants who are perceived to be not respectable. By constructing the migrant workers as Other the villagers of Mayfield affirm a normative position of English whiteness and are ‘protected from the ruptures of decorum that might undermine its hegemonic status’ (Hartigan, 2003: 110).
Clothing, Hairstyles and ‘Taste’

For many village residents, the most immediate and visible evidence of difference between themselves and Eastern European migrants is that of personal appearance. The clothing and hairstyles worn by migrant workers were mentioned by almost all of my interviewees when I asked them about similarities and differences between the local and migrant populations. In the villagers’ opinion the migrants’ clothing and hairstyles are outdated, unfashionable, and ‘tacky’ (cheap, vulgar and in bad taste). Village people regularly distanced themselves from migrant workers on the basis that they would not wear such clothes and hairstyles. For example Linda, a nurse in her mid-forties who has lived in one of the thatched cottages in Mayfield for fourteen years said:

Linda: The Poles like the flashy stuff... they haven’t got much taste really [laughs].

You can spot them instantly if you go to Tesco’s. They stand out a mile because of what they’re wearing, their bad taste. They’re still into tracksuits aren’t they? 80’s shell-suits. They love the shiny stuff in the charity shops, sort of sequiny, diamante types of things the girls like.

Helen: Do you see them shopping in the charity shops?

Linda: Oh yeah, all the time.

Linda regularly shops in charity shops herself, and she explained to me that the majority of the clothing she was wearing during our interview was second-hand. Therefore it is not buying clothing in charity shops which Linda considers to be in
bad taste, but the tracksuits, shell-suits, and ‘sequin, diamante’ clothing that some migrant women choose to wear. Her statement is reminiscent of the adage ‘I’m not racist, but....’. She shops in charity shops herself, but has the cultural competence to make the ‘right’ decisions about what to wear. Linda twice mentions the concept of ‘taste’: a classed and cultural distinction she is able to make because of her cultural capital and knowledge of how respectable women ought to dress. By making a judgement about what is in ‘good taste’ and what is in ‘bad taste’ Linda positions herself in a location of class privilege and the migrant ‘girls’ as Other, lower-class, and without the cultural capital to make the necessary judgements of taste.

Similarly Zoe, 40, who has lived in Mayfield for ten years, told me about two young Latvian women who attend her part-time accountancy course at the local college:

Zoe: They’re quite sweet both of them ‘cos they’re quite young so they’re quite trendy, but there’s a couple of other [English] girls on the course who are late teens, early twenties and their style is so different. You know, if you put the four of them together you’d know who’s English and who’s not. The other two just look like typical English in jeggings⁹ and boots, and these [Latvian] girls look a bit like 80’s throwbacks, you know, they’ve got short hair on one side and long on the other, bright colours, you know... a very different style

Helen: I guess that might be the height of fashion in Latvia? The style is just different. Or maybe they don’t have much money to spend on the latest fashions?

⁹ ‘Jeggings’ are a cross between jeans and leggings, hence ‘jeggings’. They are stretch-trousers styled to look like very tight denim jeans, and are usually worn by village women tucked into boots and with a long tunic-style top or dress. Jeggings are available to buy in the lower-priced fashion shops in Elmbridge such as Primark and New Look.
Zoe: Yeah, like a lot of the girls around here. But it’s a definite look they’ve got going on. They’ve made an effort, the hair is a style... it’s just very different. It just reminds me of the 80’s, it’s a bit David Bowie-ish. The one girl, she’s got it all down one side and then shaved on the other side and it’s all spiked up.

Helen: It sounds quite brave

Zoe: Oh it is, very. They’re both very distinctive. They certainly don’t just blend in.

Although Zoe describes the Latvian women’s style as reminiscent of the 1980’s thus implying that they are somewhat ‘behind the times’, she does acknowledge the women’s choice in the way that they present themselves by conceding that they have a ‘definite look’ which is brave and distinctive. Not, as Linda previously suggested, about making incorrect choices from the selection of clothes available in charity shops. In both cases however, these excerpts demonstrate that local people (or in these cases, women specifically) have the cultural capital to identify migrant workers through embodied characteristics and make a distinction between themselves and the migrants by making judgements about appearance. Village women do not simply mark migrant women as different, but as inferior: of another time and place. The way in which Eastern European women dress is not simply perceived as distinct, but as out-dated, unfashionable, and lacking the correct feminine aesthetic. The effect of this discourse is, as Tyler (2012b: 436) has argued, ‘for cultural superiority and classed
value to be attached to a set of white middle-class English ‘country’ ways of being’ that is denied to Eastern European migrants.

Language

Command of the English language (or lack thereof) is recognised as another marker of the difference between local English people and Eastern European migrants. If an individual is unable to speak English, or speaks only heavily-accented or broken English, social distance is placed between those individuals and the white majority. Not only are the migrants marked out as Other by local English people on the basis of their language and nationality but they are also treated as inferior and ‘stupid’ as Mary, a Northern Irish woman in her late forties who has lived in the village for fourteen years explained to me:

I don’t know what’s happened with the Polish community who have now come in. I personally haven’t had any reason to have much contact with them at all but I have witnessed people and the way they speak to them, and actually felt very uncomfortable because the assumption seems to be that these people are stupid but I know that a lot of them are anything but. Lots of them are very well educated people who are doing the best they can and doing jobs that people here won’t do now... I have seen some very disrespectful behaviour – from adults, which surprised me very much – because they didn’t speak English, and you just feel like saying well, how’s your Polish?

Mary told me that she had witnessed disrespectful treatment of migrant workers in the village shop and Post Office, in one case when a young Eastern European woman who spoke little English was attempting to send a parcel to her home country, and on
another occasion when an Eastern European man did not have enough money to pay
for a loaf of bread, and after much embarrassment, left the shop with nothing. These
anecdotes mirrored my own observations in Mayfield and also in the local town of
‘Elmbridge’ situated approximately three miles from the village.

One incident in particular stands out in my mind, which took place at
Elmbridge train station. In front of me in the queue for the ticket booth was an
Eastern European woman, probably in her late twenties. She was trying to find out
the price of a return train ticket to one of the London airports. She asked whether she
had to travel through central London as part of her journey and wanted to buy her
ticket several months in advance of her travel date. The woman spoke reasonably
good English but with a strong Eastern European accent, and it was clear (or I thought
so at least) that she was unfamiliar with the somewhat complicated, expensive, and
often infuriating British train ticketing system. The ticket seller became rude and
grew impatient when the woman clearly did not understand what he was saying,
raising his voice so that the entire ticket office could hear the exchange. At this point
I stepped in to try to explain to the woman that tickets are not available to buy until
six weeks prior to the travel date. She promptly left, and when I reached the ticket
booth the seller rolled his eyes and let out a loud sigh as if to say ‘these bloody
foreigners’, assuming that I would sympathise with him and consider his treatment of
the woman to be justified. Uncomfortable with his assumption I said that I thought
there was no need to be so rude to the woman, to which he replied “What do they
expect if they don’t speak proper English?” The ticket seller thus erected a boundary
between ‘they’/them (Eastern European’s who ‘don’t speak proper English’) and ‘us’
(British people who do). This kind of ‘boundary maintenance work’ (Hartigan, 2003:
96) serves to maintain a distance and hierarchy between ‘them’ and ‘us’ where
migrants are seen as low-status and inferior and local people superior due to their command of the English language.

This incident also provides an interesting insight into how I was perceived by local white English people during my fieldwork. The ticket seller’s non-verbal gestures such as his loud sigh and rolling of the eyes suggests that he made judgements about me based on my Englishness and whiteness which led him to believe that I would sympathise with, and understand his frustration with those who ‘don’t speak proper English’. Indeed, my white, English, middle-class identity also helped me to develop a rapport with my interviewees and other people I met in Mayfield. Our shared ethnicity, nationality (and in some cases, gender, age and class location) meant that most of my white English interviewees assumed that I would not disagree with their views on Eastern European migrants, so most of them talked openly with me. See chapter four for further reflections on my self-presentation and (sometimes uncomfortable) positioning as a young, white, English female researcher in Mayfield.

*Labouring on the Land, Attitudes to Work and Poverty*

The third way in which Eastern European migrants are marked out as different from villagers is through factors related to their employment. First and foremost, they are consistently defined and described as migrant workers, thus apparently justifying but also limiting their reason for being present in Mayfield and the surrounding area (and emphasising their temporariness as many of the migrant workers are seasonal). Secondly, the actual labour that the migrants undertake (fruit and vegetable planting, picking, processing, and packaging) has become work that, almost without exception,
migrant workers do. During my fieldwork I came across very few local people engaged in this work, except at the supervisory, managerial, and administrative levels. The fact that they no longer wish to do this work distances the migrants from the villagers whilst conferring on local people some sense of superiority – the work is considered ‘beneath’ them and migrant workers have stepped in to fill a void in the labour market created by local people leaving the horticultural sector. Numerous Mayfield residents told me that local people were not willing to accept the labour conditions (strenuous physical labour, long and anti-social hours) for minimum remuneration. While local people who used to work in horticulture have generally moved on to find employment in other industries with better conditions, Julie the proprietor of the village shop told me that:

It has become the work that migrant workers do now hasn’t it? I think even if unemployment becomes a big problem in this area [during the current period of recession] local people wouldn’t do the picking. I can think of two or three youngsters in the village who are drawing benefits who could easily be doing that work. Well it would be hard work, but they could do it if they swallowed their pride and put their minds to it.

The physical labour of fruit and vegetable planting, picking, and processing has become unpopular and stigmatised – so much so that a small number of Mayfield’s residents opt to accept unemployment benefits from the state rather than doing this work. This also tells us something interesting about villagers’ imaginings of class difference and respectability: the ‘youngsters in the village’ see more dignity in drawing benefits (which is often seen as synonymous with a lazy, work-shy underclass in British society) than performing low-skilled manual labour. The notion
that the ‘youngsters’ would have to ‘swallow their pride’ before doing this work suggests that among the villagers, agricultural and horticultural labour is considered good enough for Eastern European migrants, but undesirable and even unacceptable for villagers.

Jan, 65, a retired horticultural grower whom we met in chapter five echoed this discourse:

We ceased growing about seven or eight years ago because it was very difficult to get [local] labour. English labour is very difficult. You can get foreigners now but that only kicked in when we were finishing you see...With benefits it doesn’t pay to work on the land any more does it? You get more on benefits. So that’s why you have to go for the Eastern Europeans ‘cos they’ll do anything you see. They’re not fussy.

Several of my interviewees recognise and appreciate the positive impact that migrant workers are having on the local economy, particularly in keeping the village’s (and the surrounding area’s) horticultural industry afloat. Steve, 58, told me that thanks to Eastern European migrant workers the industry is now thriving, and Brian, 67, who has lived in the village for approximately 30 years went so far as to say:

My view, or my impression is that they’re actually keeping alive the horticultural traditions, horticultural heritage even. And without them the land around here would probably go fallow and this area would lose its distinctiveness... I think some people feel quite sad in a way that it’s not local people keeping the industry going. But then it’s local people who have made the decision not to do it, so you can’t have it both ways.
It is interesting that Brian places the upkeep of local traditions and the maintenance of the village’s ‘horticultural heritage’ into the hands of Eastern European migrants who, until now, have had no connection with the village or the surrounding area. The migrants do, however, fit in neatly with the idiom of the ‘working village’ discussed by countless Mayfield residents during my research, and analysed in chapter five. Brian repeats the idea that migrant workers are willing to undertake labour which local people no longer desire, but his statement also highlights the fact that while Eastern European migrants are being credited with maintaining the horticultural identity of the local area, their own culture remains invisible.

The Othering of the migrants allows the villagers to keep a social distance from the migrant workers who toil on the land but are still perceived as poverty-stricken due to the low wages they receive. To substantiate the perceived poverty of the migrant workers, many people remarked to me that they would often see migrant workers walking along the main road from the village to the nearby town and to Lidl, a cut-price German supermarket. Both the act of walking the three miles into town and shopping at Lidl are seen by the villagers as signs of poverty: the migrants are not able to afford the bus fare and do not own cars, and many local people consider the products stocked at Lidl to be poor quality. Needless to say, the villagers do not take into account the fact that Lidl is by far the closest supermarket to the village for pedestrians – to go to Tesco, the more popular supermarket, would be a further twenty minutes walk. What many of the village residents also do not consider is that while many of the migrant workers live frugal lives in England, many save their earnings and send remittances home to improve their families’ quality of life. In my interviews and focus groups with migrant workers I also discovered that it is not uncommon for them to work for several summer seasons in order to save money to
buy land and build their own houses in their home countries, which is the preserve of
only the extremely wealthy in rural England.

Living Conditions and Locations

In Mayfield, however, migrants’ living circumstances are seen to be unpleasant,
unsafe, unsanitary, and substandard by the villagers. For migrants who work on the
village farms, accommodation is provided in the form of multiple-occupancy houses
and bungalows with shared bathrooms and kitchens, or caravans sleeping four to six
people with basic kitchen facilities and separate shower and toilet blocks. All such
accommodation is on farmland, separate from the centre of the village and therefore
separate from the social networks and hubs including the village shop, village hall,
pubs and so forth. Steve, 58, who has lived in the village for 24 years told me that he
was ‘not conscious of migrants living in houses in the village, they’re all in caravans’,
which highlights the spatial as well as social division between migrants and villagers.
The migrants living onland are no-one’s neighbours, which precludes the
formation of neighbourly relationships. There is no opportunity to strike up
conversations over the garden fence for example, to become a familiar face in the
village, or perform any other good neighbourly duties.

Linda, 46, whom I quoted earlier, is friends with a couple who employ
migrant workers on their farm in the village. She described to me the living
conditions endured by the migrants on the farm (though she had never visited the
accommodation herself), including the regular flooding of the bathroom in a multiple-
occupancy house due to over-use, and the lack of heating in winter. Several
interviewees also commented upon the location and condition of migrants’ housing in
Elmbridge, the local town. ‘Swan Street’ in particular has become heavily populated with Eastern European migrants in recent years. Village residents often refer to Swan Street as ‘Little Poland’, and Brian, 67, asked me if I had noticed the ‘Warsawification’ of the area. The street has a history and reputation of socio-economic deprivation, and most of the Eastern European migrants here live in poorly maintained flats above shops or houses that have been converted into bedsits. Tanya, 36, explained that ‘you know which ones they are ‘cos the houses have got about 6 doorbells on the front door’. Both Linda and Tanya consider the migrants’ dwellings to be undesirable: a house that has been converted into six flats, or a house without heating in winter and whose bathroom regularly floods is not how ‘we’ (white, English, respectable) live.

Much was made by my interviewees of the transformation of Swan Street into an Eastern European neighbourhood in the local town. Steve, however, told me that Swan Street

...was run-down but now it’s quite a thriving area. Not thriving in the way that everyone in Elmbridge and Mayfield would like it to thrive, ‘cos it’s a lot of booze and sex shops, um, but it’s thriving though! [laughs].

Steve recognises that economically Swan Street’s prospects have improved, but not in way which is considered desirable by respectable townspeople and village people. Once again classed judgements about respectability are drawn upon to distance local people from Eastern European migrants. ‘They’ patronise and have created demand for ‘booze and sex shops’, which are not establishments that ‘we’ approve of.

All four of these markers of difference: Clothing and hairstyles, language and accent, work and poverty, and housing and living conditions, are repeatedly drawn
upon by the people of Mayfield to demonstrate the social distance between themselves and Eastern European migrant workers. However, during my fieldwork, several people made remarks which suggest that perhaps the migrants’ whiteness does afford them a diminutive amount of social and symbolic capital, however tenuous. For example, Ruth, 44, an artist who moved to the village a year ago, suggested that were the migrant workers black, there would be more local hostility towards them:

Helen: ...it must be incredibly intimidating for a black person to move into a village like Mayfield where the population is almost entirely white…

Ruth: Yes, can you imagine? People would be... I mean, they’re gossiping about us moving in and we fit quite well into the village social life. It would be horrendous for them wouldn’t it?

Helen: Yes I think it would be very difficult. It’s something that I’ve been thinking about quite a lot here. Are people indifferent towards the migrant workers because they are white? And would it be really different if they were Asian or African?

Ruth: Hmm, I don’t know. I think there would be a very different feeling about it. I think there would probably be more aggro, more hostility.

Ruth’s comments suggest that the Eastern European migrants’ whiteness works in their favour to a certain degree. Or at least, there would be a ‘very different feeling’ among the villagers if the migrants working on the village farms were of Asian or African origin and not European. For the most part, the whiteness of the villagers and
migrants is not visible and is not reflected upon in Mayfield. As is evidenced by the quote from Ruth above, their whiteness only becomes apparent in relation to those who are not white. However, even though migrants’ whiteness becomes visible in moments such as these, they are perceived as a different ‘shade’ of white in relation to the village residents due to their ethnic difference, lack of respectability, and class inferiority.

*Maintaining Boundaries*

I argue then, that there exists a ‘spectrum’ or ‘continuum’ of whiteness in Mayfield with the ‘most white’ at one end and the ‘least white’ at the other. The ‘most white’ are English, wear clothing and hairstyles thought to be ‘tasteful’ if not fashionable among local people, earn a living wage at the very least, or have an ‘average’ or higher than average income, own their own car, spend a significant portion of their income on food, clothing and other consumer goods, and live in a private (usually owned rather than rented) home. At the other end of the continuum then, the ‘least white’ whites are non-English who dress and style their hair in what is deemed by local people to be an unfashionable way ‘without taste’, appear poor and do not mirror the consumer habits of the white English villagers, and live in caravans or multiple-occupancy housing on farm land.

While the Eastern European migrants are ‘racially white’ (and for the most part, racially invisible), they are not considered to be ‘culturally white’ by the English villagers. As described in chapter five, the people of Mayfield do not fit neatly into any one category of social class, and conventional class markers such as income, property value, level of education and occupation vary widely among them. Their
class status is instead secured by a shared cultural understanding of how to fit in with acceptable and respectable rural ways of living. By contrast, the Eastern European migrant labourers who live and work on the village farms do not have the necessary cultural knowledge or ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) to fit in with this model of village life. While the villagers of Mayfield maintain their class status via performances of consumption, neighbourliness, community, supporting the local pubs and Post Office, attending church and social events, and ultimately, making class distinctions between themselves and the Eastern European migrants, a boundary between the two groups is fortified. Indeed, my interviewees reveal the important ‘boundary maintenance’ work in which the villagers engage to stabilise and reproduce the homogenising practices that serve both to highlight the Otherness of the migrant workers and project an image if themselves which is an ostensibly non-racialised (unmarked) social position of authority and dominance. In Mayfield the intersection of whiteness and class operates as an organising principle which enables access to some (the villagers) and limitations to others’ (the migrants) social movements and interactions.

‘Acting White’: Social Class, Cultural Capital and the Integration of Black and Ethnic Minorities into the Village

In the following section of this chapter I present a shift in focus from white villagers’ perceptions of Eastern European migrants as ‘not quite white’ and culturally Other to the experiences of Anita, 38, a British Asian village resident I met at Kate’s hair salon and later worked with on the Mayfield Summer ball committee. When I interviewed Anita she reflected on ideas of belonging, Englishness, ethnicity and rurality, and I
include her narrative here as she provides an important alternative viewpoint on ideas about social class, village ‘decorums’ and ‘fitting in’. Anita is a racialised minority in terms of her British ‘Asianness’, however as I go on to discuss, her social, cultural and economic capital afford her a class position in the village which the Eastern European migrants are denied. As a result Anita’s elevated social status in the village, despite the fact that she is not white, provides an added layer of complexity to the shades of whiteness theory.

Anita was born in England. Her parents moved to England from India just over 40 years ago. Anita moved to the village three years ago with her two children from her previous marriage. She and her children moved from a multi-ethnic city in the Midlands to live with Anita’s new partner Rob, a white English man who is also in his late thirties. Anita and Rob moved to the village to be near their place of work, but Anita admits that moving to Mayfield from the city has been a ‘massive change’ for her and her two teenage children. Anita told me that she and her eldest child ‘had not quite let go’ of their old lives in the city, and were finding it hard to adjust to life without their large kinship network which they had left behind, including Anita’s Mother, Father and siblings. Whilst a ‘sense of community spirit’ was something that attracted Anita and Rob to Mayfield, Anita told me that they had found it difficult to participate in many village activities:

We just found ourselves um, so busy with our own day-to-day lives that it’s been difficult to actually get involved. As much as I’d like to, I’ve just found that work, children, working on the home... it really is so demanding... I have very little time for myself let alone trying to do something in the village, and I think that’s been the downside.
The ‘working on the home’ that Anita refers to is the on-going remodelling and redecoration of the house she and Rob moved into three years ago. Indeed, each time I met up with Anita she talked about the decisions she was making about decor, ordering her new kitchen and the emotional work of building her new family home. One day she arrived at our house with a selection of Farrow and Ball\textsuperscript{10} paint swatches to ask Kate (my landlady and a friend of Anita’s) and myself our opinions on her choice of colour scheme. Kate and some friends who happened to be at our house at the time assured Anita that she had made a ‘classy’ and ‘classic’ choice, and were impressed with her choice of high-end paint manufacturer. This incident reminded me of the theory proposed by Garner (2007: 108) that ‘money whitens’, and that to an important extent the affordance of white identity is about conforming to consumer and cultural norms.

It also brought to mind Twine’s (1996) study of ‘Brown-Skinned White Girls’ living in wealthy suburban America and how these ‘girls’ came to self-identify as white as a result of their access to the same material privileges and socio-economic advantages as their white suburban peers. For the young women interviewed in her study, a claim to white identity was inextricably linked to a middle-class economic position. One interviewee described being raised to see her class position, and her position as a consumer as more important than her ‘racial’ identity. In other words, Twine explains, she had been culturally trained by her parents to privilege her identity as a consumer, not as a member of a racial group (1996: 213). As the following excerpt from my interview with Anita demonstrates, however, she does not self-identify as white:

\textsuperscript{10} Farrow and Ball is an upmarket paint manufacturer, which is frequently advertised in glossy lifestyle magazines such as \textit{Country Living}, and is very popular among the rural middle classes.
I’m definitely the minority. Um, I am conscious of that, but... really, no-one has expressed much of an interest in my background... they just see me as the Indian lady that lives in that house with the mad family and the mad dog [laughs].

However, there is evidence that the villagers themselves consider Anita’s class position and her position as a consumer as more important than her racial identity, to the degree that in some senses she could be considered ‘more white’ than the Eastern European migrant workers due to her cultural knowledge and assimilation into a middle-class rural lifestyle. For example, Anita and I were both involved in the organising of the Mayfield summer ball, a black-tie fundraiser for the village school, Church, and village hall. During our last committee meeting Anita told me that she was embracing the rural lifestyle and had acquired some hens to keep in her garden: “I never dreamt that I would end up keeping hens! It’s just so completely outrageous, very different. We’re very much getting into the rural”. Anita is drawing upon her ‘tacit cultural knowledge’ about how to fit in to the local system of ‘respectable, desirable, and acceptable ways of living’ (Tyler, 2003: 396) and her socio-economic status plays an important role in her ability to perform a rural white identity. She lives in the village with a white English man, and this combined with her own Englishness and middle-class social status secures Anita’s place on the ‘whiteness continuum’ somewhere above the Eastern European migrants but beneath the white English villagers. Where the Eastern European migrants are perceived as racially white but culturally Other, Anita occupies a different social position as closer to being culturally white but still racially Other. Her class status and her performance of respectable rural living affords her greater acceptance into the village than the Eastern European migrant workers despite the fact that they are white-skinned and she is not.
Beyond the Pale: Marginalisation and the Exclusion of Non-Whites from the Village

While Anita’s class position allows her access to the social life of the village (though Anita admits that her integration into the village social life has been slow), there is evidence that other non-whites who have lived in the village in the past did not assimilate into village life as successfully on account of their apparent lack of cultural knowledge about rural life and their failure to conform to desirable and acceptable models of behaviour. For example, Zoe, 40, a friend of my landlady Kate and single mother of three children under the age of 12, told me about a family comprising a black African mother, a white English father, a mixed-race son, and a black African half-brother who lived in the village for a short period of time several years ago:

Zoe: I mean there was a little boy, I don’t know if anybody told you about him, probably about 3 or 4 years ago, a little coloured boy um, who came from Africa. His mum was married um, I think she came from Uganda and she had a small boy with an English Dad and they moved into the village, they lived... [in] the cottage up here on the right hand side, that little thatched cottage. She then had this older boy, she’d just moved into the village with this little one and they had this older boy. He suddenly appeared after about a year and apparently he’d been living with the grandmother in Africa and she’d left him behind for various reasons. Different Dad I think, um, and she decided to bring him over and he was then plonked into Mayfield and I mean, he was in my daughter’s class and that caused real, not in a bad way, but obviously he was black and he was really black, his brother was more that lovely brown, half caste, but he was really black. And he was quite wild
to start with ‘cos he’d been living with the grandmother and I think he’d had quite a patchy education up until then and very, he just walked everywhere on his own, had no concept of danger or you know, or, not here, just completely different world and he just got plonked in this village school, but to be fair he settled and stuff, and the kids again, they could have gone either way but they accepted him. I think they found him a bit full on to start with ‘cos he was very grown up in some ways, but then not in other ways. Very not, obviously, switched on to what rural life was like, but in other ways was allowed to *rampage* around the village because that’s what he’d always been allowed to do, and he didn’t like being restricted in the house ‘cos obviously he’d been outside and had that kind of life. And he stayed for about two years and then his mum had another baby so they moved somewhere up north, and she took a long time to fit in because her accent was still quite strong and she was quite shy. I think she found it quite hard.

Helen: It must have been very hard for her

Zoe: They just stood out bless them. Not being racist but they did stand out bless them. It was just like ‘oh that’s the black kid’, which sounds awful.

Whilst Anita is British and upholds the ‘decorums of whiteness’ (Hartigan, 2003) in the village through her middle-class tastes and lifestyle, this family who migrated to the village from Africa (with the exception of the ‘English Dad’ whose whiteness is implicit as he is the father of the mixed-race ‘little boy’) do not conform to ‘normal’ ways of living. It is striking how, in almost all of my conversations with village people about life in Mayfield and the impact of Eastern European migrants on the area, the issue of skin colour and the migrants’ whiteness was rarely mentioned. As
with so many areas of rural England, whiteness has become invisible and race is not seen to be present in Mayfield until its residents are confronted with a racial Other. In Zoe’s statement above, the mother and her sons’ ‘blackness’ is made explicit. He is racialised in a way that Eastern European migrants in the village are not.

Zoe refers to the younger mixed-race boy as ‘lovely brown’, but the older boy whom she describes in animalistic terms such as ‘wild’ and ‘rampage’ is repeatedly referred to as ‘really black’: He is off the scale of degrees of whiteness, his ‘otherness’ is irreconcilable with any aspect of life in Mayfield and he is perceived as ‘racially other’ as well as ‘culturally other’. Her imagination of his life in Africa; that ‘obviously he’d been outside and had that kind of life’ fixes the boy as untamed or feral, and thus anathema to respectable English village life. Zoe concedes that the family must have found it difficult to settle in the village and that the boys’ mother ‘took a long time to fit in’ to Mayfield life. However, she does not take on any responsibility for this, instead citing the fact that the woman was ‘quite shy’ and that her accent was ‘quite strong’ as the reasons for why she found life in the village ‘quite hard’.

This family, like the Eastern European migrants, were not seen to possess the necessary cultural knowledge required to be accepted into village life. Once again, accent is drawn upon as a marker of difference as well as perceived inappropriateness – most specifically, the inappropriate behaviour of the older boy who was ‘allowed to rampage around the village’. Not only is the rampaging itself seen as problematic but also that it was seen to be ‘allowed’ by his mother. Thus she is also constructed as ‘not like us’, as ‘we’ (white, English, respectable) would not permit our children to behave in such a way. The family’s failure to settle and integrate into village life is explained by their ‘blackness’: Not in the sense that they experienced racism at the
hands of the villagers, but that their ethnic and cultural difference precluded their ‘fitting in’.

In a return to my conversation with Ruth and her daughter Alice who is 19 years old, race and social class were explicitly conflated. More specifically, Alice suggests that black and minority ethnic people are lower class and therefore cannot afford to live in rural areas, are not attracted to rural, white, and middle class lifestyles, or for whatever reasons (social, structural and so forth), find this kind of lifestyle unattainable. She explained:

Alice: There’s a lot more status I think in England than there is in other countries... because they’re so much poorer, that they work to get the money to send it back home anyway. It doesn’t matter what they do as long as they get the money. Whereas the English, a lot of people, if you’re stuck for cash and there’s a job going in McDonalds, a lot of people are like ‘oh no [groan], I can’t take that’ because it is what it is. Whereas the Polish or whoever will turn around and say ‘actually I will, I need it, and I need to get the money back [home]’. We’re just snobs basically.

Helen: Mmmm.

Ruth: Yes, I think we still have quite a rigid class system in this country. Um, and I think that perhaps that structure doesn’t exist so much in other countries. It’s like corner shops isn’t it for the Indians and the Pakistanis. You know, they work all hours...

Alice: You’re lucky that your post office and corner shop isn’t [nods to indicate run by Indians or Pakistanis].
Ruth: Yeah

Alice: Then they’d be charging you 70p for a Mars Bar!

Ruth: One thing I have noticed around here is that I haven’t seen any coloured people.

Helen: No. I think there’s an Asian woman on the ball committee, but I haven’t met her yet. [I refer to Anita here, whom I had not met at this stage in my fieldwork]

Ruth: Mmmm.

Alice: I’d say that’s quite common in little villages. But again is that not a class thing? They can’t afford to live here.

While Alice explains the lack of people from ethnic minorities in Mayfield as a problem of class, and not being able to afford to live in rural villages such as this, she simultaneously attributes status to the self – she and her mother can afford to live in Mayfield and their whiteness means that their claim to the rural is uncontested. What Zoe, Ruth and Alice each highlight is that when cultural Otherness and racial Otherness combine, inclusion in the social life of the village becomes extremely difficult to achieve.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have begun the task of unravelling the ways in which hegemonic whiteness operates to marginalise Other whites and also people who are not white in the context of an English village in the Worcestershire countryside. I have sought to explain ethnographically how the villagers of Mayfield perceive Eastern European migrants who live and work on the village farms as ‘not quite white’ enough to integrate into the social and cultural life of the village. The villagers’ judgement of the migrant workers as ‘not quite white’ is inseparably entwined with class markers of distinction based on physical appearance, work, economic standing and housing, which render the migrants culturally Other while racially white. The villagers use their cultural capital to employ discourses about respectability, ‘good taste’, and acceptable and desirable ways of living village life in opposition to Eastern European migrants who are fixed outside of white, English village hegemony.

I have argued that Eastern European migrants in Mayfield are ‘ethnicised’ rather than racialised because, for the most part, their white racial identities are unmarked. For the villagers, race and whiteness are invisible – until they are confronted with a non-white Other. Therefore when village residents talk about Eastern European migrants, they do not talk about race, but instead identify alternative markers of difference based on social class, respectability and ethnicity including clothing and hairstyles, language, living conditions, poverty and labour. There is no doubt that when mobilising these discourses of difference, villagers draw upon racist idioms and rhetoric which are embedded in Britain’s colonial past and postcolonial present, therefore the distinction between racialisation and ethnicisation is blurred and difficult to define. Nonetheless, in the context of Mayfield, I maintain
that rather than their race, it is their ethnic identity and lower class position which are
drawn upon by village residents to situate Eastern European migrants as a different
shade of white.

The Eastern European population in Mayfield are whites who make the
arbitrariness of ‘the colour line’ (Hartigan, 2003: 106) apparent by the way their
presence undermines local white racial conventions. Or, as Cloke and Little (1997)
have argued, a ‘third space’ is opened up to new categories of Otherness which fall
between the conventional axes of black versus white. Ethnicised distinctions made
between different ‘shades’ of white in Mayfield are more nuanced: language, physical
appearance, perceived ‘traits’ or ‘qualities’, and poverty are also markers of
difference. Although the boundaries between the village Self and the migrant Other
are heavily founded on class-based distinctions, there is a subtle and complex process
of ethnicisation at work here.

My ethnographic research demonstrates the way in which social class status
and respectability are also crucial in determining which groups and individuals are
included in or excluded from village life. Anita, a British Asian woman has been
accepted into the social life of the village on account of her public demonstration of
her class status, ‘taste’, and the work and energy that she invests in living a
respectable rural English lifestyle. While she is still positioned as the racial Other in
the village, she is seen as more ‘culturally white’ due, in part to her Englishness, but
also due to her efforts to assimilate into the expected and accepted village ways of
life. In contrast, however, racial Others who do not possess the necessary social
capital or cultural capital are excluded from the social life of the village, and they do
not register on the ‘degrees of whiteness’ scale.
However, it is important not to homogenise Mayfield’s population, which is varied in terms of traditional indicators of social class status such as income, educational background, employment and home ownership. It is also crucial to note that different villagers perceive Eastern European migrants and non-white Others in various ways depending on their own class status and the amount of cultural, social and economic capital available to them. Distinctions made between villagers and migrants based upon ideas about cultural difference are rooted as much in social class and economic circumstances as in ideologies about race, ethnicity and whiteness. My interviewees repeatedly slipped between discourses about ethnicity and respectability in categorising Others. For example, Anita’s choice of Farrow and Ball paint, which is produced in traditional ‘heritage’ tones and is perceived by Kate and her friends as expensive, good quality and ‘classy’, marks her out as someone with ‘taste’ to those villagers with a middle-class background or aspirations. However, the paint would not achieve this effect with many of my Old Mayfield interviewees, for whom such a paint brand would be considered uninteresting, pretentious or unobtainable. In other words, it would create a social gulf between them rather than a socio-economic similarity.

Similarly, in relation to the Eastern European migrants, the ethnic and cultural differences perceived by villagers are also inflected with classed judgements. While working on the land is perceived as undesirable by many village residents, many Old Mayfield people who have historically been involved in the horticulture industry have a certain respect for the Eastern European migrants who now conduct this labour as they understand (and in some cases, have experienced) the physically demanding nature of the work as well as the importance of the industry to the local area. Being prepared to engage in such labour and to tolerate the poor working conditions may in
fact create a point of similarity or identification between migrants and Old Mayfield residents, and the migrants are upholding the enduring ‘place image’ of Mayfield as a ‘working village’.

Judgements of difference based on clothing and hairstyles were mostly made by younger and middle-aged, more affluent female interviewees who are more style-conscious and concerned with the ‘image’ that they project to others. They draw upon their cultural capital to define what is in ‘good taste’ and what is not, and use these classed judgements to draw a distinction between themselves and migrants. On the other hand, villagers from all class positions are able to identify language as an undisputable marker of cultural difference. Despite the various demographic situations of the residents of Mayfield however, acceptance into village social life is determined on the basis of assimilating into and adopting the appropriate ‘respectable’ and ‘white’ behaviours, which cut across class locations and are deemed essential for inclusion in English village life. I now turn to the concept of respectability in greater depth in the following chapter.
Chapter 7

Ethnicity, Respectability and Sexuality: The Limits of Multicultural Intimacy in Mayfield

Introduction

The previous chapter examined villagers’ judgements and perceptions of Eastern European migrant workers based on ethnicised and classed interpretations of migrants’ living and labour conditions, language, poverty, clothing and hairstyles. The chapter demonstrated that villagers are able to draw upon their social and cultural capital to construct migrants living and working on local farms as Other and as not-quite-white: lacking the respectability, economic resources, and cultural knowledge required to assimilate into English village life. These judgements are predominantly made from a distance and are a product of the white hegemonic middle-class gaze. Although villagers and migrants live in close proximity to one another in Mayfield, their social interactions are limited. Most often, villagers form opinions about migrants from chance passings in the street, observations from the car window and local rumour, gossip and anecdotes.

The focus of this chapter, however, is the limited social spaces where migrants and villagers come into contact and interact with one another, such as the supermarkets, the nightclub, and the Polish restaurant in Elmbridge, places of work within and outside of the village, and through landlord/tenant relationships. This chapter will reveal that a number of villagers and migrants do interact at a variety of levels and in a range of spheres, but that there remains an inherent power dynamic between the two groups where a boundary or social dichotomy is erected between
villager/insider/self and migrant/outsider/other. This dichotomous relationship subsequently informs local discourse regarding the appropriateness of villagers’ interactions and relationships with migrants. Different degrees of intimacy between English villagers and Eastern European migrants are deemed acceptable and even encouraged, or unacceptable and feared. While social interactions between villagers and migrants appear to be increasing, the boundary between village ‘us’ and migrant ‘them’ remains.

As Fortier (2007:110) outlines in her study of multicultural intimacies between white British and British Muslim neighbours in Bradford, ‘neighbourliness is deemed an acceptable degree of intimacy, though an elevation of this intimacy to the level of friendship, sexual reproduction, and a deeper exchange of cultural or religious values provokes anxiety’. Similarly in Mayfield, as this chapter will go on to explain, it is acceptable for village people to employ Eastern European migrants to conduct jobs that local people no longer want to do; they are considered diligent and hardworking. It is acceptable to lease rental properties to migrants, though it expected that they will overcrowd the dwelling with a constant flow of family members, friends, and tenuous acquaintances. It is even acceptable to sample the cuisine at the new Polish restaurant in Elmbridge (but less acceptable to enjoy it). Formal interactions between villagers and migrants are tolerated and usually involve the exchange of money for services. But to cross the boundary from professional to personal, to enter into an intimate or sexual relationship with a migrant is seen to be beyond the limit of appropriate conduct – this ethnosexual frontier is one which must not be crossed.

The boundary of difference between white English villagers and white Eastern European migrants is in part constructed through village residents’ perceptions of
migrants’ cultural and ethnic Otherness, but also through classed judgements related to the concept of ‘respectability’. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, a discourse of respectability which cuts across class locations is used by village residents to define the village Self in relation to the migrant Other. A number of sociologists (Byrne, 2006; Reay et al, 2007), anthropologists (Tyler, 2012) and social geographers (Watt, 2006) have drawn upon the work of Skeggs (1997; 2004) to deconstruct the power and privilege of white classed ethnicities in Britain. Skeggs (1997), herself influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, argues that class identities are constituted by the acquisition of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, and that class positioning is thus a constant process of creating distinctions between oneself and others on the grounds of physical appearance, social decorum, educational credentials, wealth, aesthetic taste and so on.

Furthermore, as Tyler (2012: 22) argues,

Classed identities are always gauged, judged and measured in relation to dominant white middle-class values and norms. For Skeggs (1997) [and also Watt (2006)], the idea of being ‘respectable’ as opposed to ‘rough’ provides the central idiom through which to analyse individuals’ closeness and distance from white middle-class notions of normality and acceptability. From this standpoint, a mark of respectability and social standing is approval, legitimation and acceptance by the white middle classes.

In Skeggs’ and Watt’s work, the focus is upon the ways in which working-class white people situate themselves as respectable in relation to ‘rough’ low-status Others in order to bring themselves closer to middle-class notions of normality and respectability. In the absence of cultural and economic capital, which is often taken for granted by the white middle classes, the working-class women studied in Skeggs’
work draw upon a discourse of respectability which offers a sense of positive identity. They then demonstrate their respectability through the presentation of the body and the home.

Similarly in Watt’s (2006) study of working-class council housing tenants in North London, respectability emerged as an important lens through which tenants assessed themselves, their neighbours and their neighbourhood. Many of Watt’s interviewees made efforts to distance themselves from the ‘rough’ people and places around their estate, and in doing so, felt that they maintained their own sense of respectability. In Mayfield, a similar discourse of respectability is drawn upon by both working- and middle-class village residents in order to define themselves in opposition to Eastern European migrants who do not conform to local norms, values and decorums. Although this discourse cuts across villagers’ class locations, this is not to say that they are an homogenous group. As I explained in chapter five, the village residents themselves are heterogeneous in terms of social class, educational background, age, gender, religiosity, economic status, political persuasion and so forth. However, they are all able to claim a position of relative power, privilege and status in relation to the low-status Eastern European migrants who are perceived as not-quite-white. Village residents thus assert their own identity and respectability in relation to what they are not, and these distinctions are based on the stuff of their daily lives: food, work, housing, language, clothing, fashion and ‘taste’, money, social networks and relationships.

Therefore, I am interested in the margins; the boundaries between villager and migrant, ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ as locations where unwritten rules about ‘belonging’ and ‘proper’, appropriate and respectable behaviour are tested. I also examine the ways in which constructions of the migrant Other reinforce understandings of the
village Self. Fortier (2008: 89) argues that in a context of social diversity, the very act of naming who ‘to love, suspect, befriend, care for, embrace, welcome and so on, performatively constructs racial, ethnic, cultural and national differences’ along with gender, sexual, and class identities. The ways in which this observation plays out in Mayfield is the key focus of this chapter.

**A Taste of the Other: Food and Restaurants as a reminder of Cultural Boundaries**

The emergence of three or four Eastern European grocery stores, a Polish restaurant and an Eastern European butcher on Swan Street in Elmbridge as well as a distinct aisle of Eastern European foods in the Tesco supermarket are perceived by local people as evidence of the difference between local English residents and Eastern European migrant workers, the assumption being that ‘we’ eat differently to ‘them’; ‘we’ have different tastes to ‘them’, ‘our’ food is not for ‘them’ and ‘their’ food is not for ‘us’. Many of my interviewees feel that the Eastern European stores are out of bounds for them – they fear that they may not recognize the products available, that the food might not be to ‘our’ taste, or indeed some are not interested in trying Eastern European foods, which Roy, 77, referred to as ‘foreign muck’.

Several of my interviewees also anticipated that Eastern European shopkeepers would be unfriendly to them (however, only one of my interviewees had been into any of the Eastern European establishments so these assumptions were unfounded). In conversations about the Eastern European shops on Swan Street village residents often described the posters and notices displayed in the shop windows written in Eastern European languages. They explained that their inability to read and
understand these displays makes them feel excluded from the shops, and they also
dislike the way that posters and notices often entirely cover the shop windows making
it difficult for curious passers-by to see the inside of the shop from the outside. Tesco,
on the other hand, is different: a space where local people can peruse Eastern
European produce at their leisure in a familiar surrounding. Two or three of my
interviewees told me that they occasionally browse the Eastern European (almost
always referred to as the ‘Polish’) aisle, inspecting, comparing, and usually rejecting
the unfamiliar produce without feeling threatened or intimidated. For example, Brian,
67, a member of the Parish council who has lived in the village for 27 years told me:

I sometimes go and have a look down the Polish aisle, it’s next to the rice I think.
Actually I’m often surprised by the number of foreign-language-speaking young
families that I come across in the supermarket. Tesco on a Friday night is like little
Kracow.

For Brian, Tesco is safe and familiar territory where he can observe Eastern European
Others, and their food, from a safe distance.

Only one of my interviewees had visited the new Polish restaurant in
Elmbridge. Pat, 65, the wife of a horticultural grower from an ‘Old Mayfield’ family
described her experience to me:

Pat: I went and had lunch in the Polish restaurant [laughs]

Helen: Oh did you? What was it like?
Pat: Um... it’s very expensive. Outside they said £6 something for lunch, and a friend of mine said ‘I’d love to try it’, she’s very adventurous, and I’m not really, and um, so we went in there. It’s beautifully done out. The stone floors are absolutely fabulous, it’s very pretty, very nicely done, a lot of money spent on it. But if you go, you could actually - it was quite odd. This menu was put in front of me, and it was all sectioned off: fish, meat, salads, you know. And, there was nothing under about £15. And I thought gosh! I’m not coming out for a girly lunch and spending this much, you know? So then the girl who was - very nice girl, but she was Polish and it was difficult to understand - and the only thing that I could see that I fancied, because I didn’t fancy all these dumplings and things, was beef stroganoff, but that was about £16. So I said ‘What is the menu?’ – there was no sign of the menu for this £6. And apparently, I think what she was trying to tell me was that I could choose any two things from the menu and they size them to a lunch portion. I didn’t want the soup but Maureen had the soup, which was very thin soup with thin noodles in. And she had the stroganoff as well, but I mean, I had about two dessert spoons of stroganoff! It was awful! A young-ish foursome came in, I’m sure they were Polish – they sat at one table and they got these sort of like cottage loaves full of meat, quite odd really. They were having something like that, and somebody else had something else I didn’t recognise. But when my stroganoff came, I always think of it with rice. But it was on a kind of pasta which was stuffed, and those were dumplings apparently. But I think of dumplings like what we cook in stew. So you’ve got to know really what you’re at. What you’re asking for. The wine was very expensive. I mean that small bit of whatever I had and a cup of coffee was £10 which was stupid. You could go to a pub and have a nice bowl of soup and some hot bread or even something more than that for much less.
Pat approves of the ‘fabulous stone floors’ in the restaurant and appreciates that a ‘lot of money has been spent’ on the décor. However, she is bewildered by the menu and described the food as both ‘quite odd’ and ‘awful’. She draws attention to the fact that ‘we’ English serve stroganoff (a dish which in fact originates from Russia) with rice whereas ‘they’ serve stroganoff with dumplings, thus highlighting a cultural difference - and in her opinion inferiority - alluding to the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way of serving food.

What is particularly interesting, however, is Pat’s feeling that to enjoy a meal in the Polish restaurant ‘you’ve got to know really what you’re at. What you’re asking for’. This statement suggests that she felt a sense of discomfort at feeling ‘out of her depth’, not having the cultural knowledge to know what to order and what to expect. For a brief moment Pat finds herself in the same situation that Eastern European migrants experience daily in Mayfield: lacking cultural capital and experiencing a sense of vulnerability (as I discuss further in chapter eight). At the restaurant Pat got a ‘taste of the other’ in two senses: she sampled Polish food and used her distaste for it to confirm a sense of cultural difference between English and Polish, but also she experienced (albeit temporarily) what it is to be a cultural outsider.

Bell and Valentine’s (1997) concept that ‘we are where we eat’ firmly anchors food consumption in space. Similarly, Rabikowska and Burrell (2009: 211) suggest that in the case of immigrants displaced from their homeland environments, the material space of food consumption can serve as an ‘ethnic marker’, and for Pat, the ‘material space’ of the Polish restaurant served as an ethnic marker of the difference between Polish and English. By visiting the Polish restaurant it could be argued that Pat took a step towards the cultural Other, but rather than breaking down the
boundary between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ her appraisal of the restaurant serves to reinforce a division between them.

‘The Polish will work, work, and work’: Village Employers and Migrant Employees

The employment of Eastern European migrant workers by village people and local people in the wider Elmbridge area is widespread and accepted if not positively encouraged. In Mayfield itself Eastern European migrants are employed to conduct unskilled labour such as planting, picking, and packaging fruit and vegetables grown on the village nurseries. However, Mayfield residents who work outside of the village also come into contact with Eastern European migrant workers in different sectors. For example, Alice, 23, who works for a company which manufactures and sells catering equipment told me:

…from an employer’s point of view… migrant workers, especially Polish or European will work a lot harder [than English people] for less money. Well at my company… we’ve got a department that has to clean all the catering equipment, if you were to put an English worker and a Polish worker together the Polish doubles the output of the English person. Because the English tend to be lazy, and tend to be slap dash, and think ‘that’ll do’ whereas the Polish will work, work and work.

This mantra that Eastern Europeans (or rather ‘the Polish’ as they are most often known) are hardworking and make better employees than local English people is frequently repeated in Mayfield. Yet, as described in the previous chapter, an unequal power and class relationship is evidenced here and Eastern European migrants are
positioned as not-quite-white. Although an English person’s work might be ‘slap
dash’ as Alice puts it, this is because the work itself is not seen as worthy of their
time and effort. Cleaning catering equipment as well as conducting manual labour on
the village farms is seen to be ‘beneath’ local people, and it is now viewed by village
residents as the work that migrants do. So whilst praising migrant workers for their
positive attitude to work Alice fixes them as Other, as lower-class, and as suited to
the undesirable work that local people will no longer accept.

Similarly, Linda, 46, who lives next door to Alice in a thatched cottage at the
wealthier, more picturesque end of the village explained to me how a Polish man who
worked as a labourer on her friends’ farm came to work as an odd-job man at her
home. She was very impressed with his willingness to work, attention to detail and
range of skills. She said:

Linda: Yeah, I went out with a girlfriend who’s a Schulten [the Dutch family of
growers in the village], I was at school with her. We went out for dinner on a
Friday night, it was when I was on my own here after I’d separated from my
ex-husband, and I said to her that I could do with some help with the heavy
work in the garden and she said she’d ask Kevin, her husband, when she got
home. So I got in, it must have been half eleven, twelve O’clock by the time
we got back. The next morning, Saturday morning, two minutes past twelve
there was a knock at the door. ‘My name is Mateusz, I’ve been sent by
Kevin. Kevin has told me to charge six pounds an hour, I start now.’

Helen: Oh right, so he didn’t ask what the work was?

Linda: No, he said… ‘I do any job, anything’.
[Linda’s partner Dave, 48, who works in the local agriculture industry joins the conversation]

Dave: He did your kitchen when it rained didn’t he?

Linda: Yeah, there was one day when I said ‘it’s going to really rain today Mateusz, I don’t think there’s really much for you to do, but my kitchen cabinets all needed oiling - they’re all oak and they needed stripping and oiling’, ‘I’ll do that’ he said. Anyway, I had to go out and I came back a bit later and he’d covered all the knobs and all the hinges with kitchen towel so he didn’t make them mucky. I wouldn’t have bothered! [laughs] But he did it so well, he put all the newspaper down and did it all. And then he came back another time and brought all these pictures of his wife and family and everything which was lovely. She was making cakes with his mother in the pictures ‘cos they obviously all lived together.

Dave: And I was fascinated with the old machinery that they’d got in the garden, all farm machinery, ‘cos it was all basically converted from horse-drawn to tractor-drawn

Linda: So no wonder he knew how to do things over here

Dave: So he could fix anything, but the farm was so – it was really interesting

Linda: Yeah, he was in his mid-thirties, about thirty-five, but him and his wife worked over here seven days a week for I think six years in order to have their own house built in Poland, in, yeah, it was in Poland. But it was on the
family farm. Then she got pregnant and she went back home to have the baby in Poland and they’re both over there now.

Dave: Didn’t he send somebody else over here?

Linda: Oh he sent his brother to do some work for me, yes. But his English wasn’t as good and it was difficult to explain what I wanted doing. He wasn’t as good. Never mind.

This excerpt from my interview with Linda and Dave demonstrates how village people are happy to employ Eastern European migrants, even when the work on offer is domestic in nature, to take place within their homes. Linda was impressed that Mateusz ‘would do anything’, and delighted in the way that he covered the hinges and door knobs on her oak kitchen cupboards so as not to dirty them with oil: The antithesis of the ‘slap dash’ approach noted by Alice earlier which they have come to expect from English tradesmen.

Linda was interested to see the photographs of Mateusz’s family making cakes, and Dave, who works in agriculture himself, was fascinated by the old farm machinery in the background of the photographs which had been converted from traditional horse-drawn to mechanised tractor-drawn equipment. Rather than focusing upon the differences between them, there is a hint here – a fleeting moment – where Linda and Dave appear to be noting the similarities between their lives in England and Mateusz’s life in Poland: rural, family-oriented and agricultural. Linda and Dave are learning more about Mateusz on a personal level, teetering on the boundary between friendship and the more formal relationship between employer and employee.
However, we are reminded of the function of this relationship by Mateusz’s brother. Mateusz sent his brother to undertake similar domestic-based work for Linda, but he ‘wasn’t as good’ so their relationship failed. While Linda was interested in Mateusz’s personal life, their relationship was ultimately sustained because he was a good worker. Linda was offering work in exchange for financial remuneration and Mateusz completed the work to a satisfactory standard. When Linda realised that employing Mateusz’s brother was not a viable option, their relationship had no future. So while Linda and Dave came to learn more about Mateusz while he worked for them, their relationship was nonetheless structured by the inherent power dynamics found between employer and employee. A similar power dynamic is evident between a village landlords and migrant tenants, which I shall now turn to.

‘They’re no problem, they pay the rent’: Village Landlords and Migrant Tenants

Four of my interviewees own properties within and outside Mayfield (in the local area and also elsewhere in the country) which they lease to rent-paying tenants. This is another example of one of the few contexts where villagers come into contact with Eastern European migrants in the Mayfield area, and another example of how interactions between villagers and migrants are often mediated by written or unwritten contracts related to the exchange of money in return for the provision of a service such as a meal, a job, or in this case, a home. Phil, 39, lives in a small cul-de-sac in Mayfield in a semi-detached house built in the 1990’s. After completing a bachelors degree in a city on the south coast of England, he returned to Worcestershire to start a family. Phil owns two properties in Elmbridge and rents
both out to Eastern European migrants. Indeed, the demand for rental properties from Eastern European migrants has breathed new life into the local property market and has made renting and property development a profitable business for local landlords. When Phil and his then wife were exploring the possibility of renting out their properties in Elmbridge their estate agent assured them that there would be no shortage of ‘Polish’ tenants. He explained:

Phil: We have two rental houses in Elmbridge and both of those are lived in by Polish people. Um, one we don’t really know that well ‘cos they haven’t been there that long. The other ones have been there quite a while. They were living in the house when we bought it, that must have been about 4 years ago, and they’re still living in it now. That’s Stan and his girlfriend, she’s Polish as well and they’ve got a baby, um, and then he’s got a wife at home [in Poland], who came over to stay. And he’s got a brother who lives downstairs [laughs] and it’s all very complicated! It’s a two-bed house and he lives there with the girlfriend and baby, and the brother just sort of appeared. We realised that he was living there as well, but it’s fine ‘cos they pay the rent. If they all want to squash in then to be honest that’s up to them… But they’ve been absolutely no problem… they occasionally give us bottles of Polish vodka, which is quite sweet… We’ve known them for four years and they were living there before we owned the place, um they’ve both got jobs and seem quite stable and settled here.

Helen: Do you know where they work?

Phil: Yeah they must work in town ‘cos they live in town. I think he’s got a fairly decent job, but she’s had the baby now so I don’t know about her. But I think
he’s quite switched on, um, that sounds a bit rude but I don’t think he’s your
average migrant worker. I think he’s come over and got a decent job and
they’ve basically settled here: this is it for them. Permanent. Um, I think he
works for a local business but I can’t remember what. No it’s interesting ‘cos
they moved in about 4 years ago and that was probably our first dealings
with the Eastern European migrants… they’re very nice, and they’ve caused
us absolutely no problems with rent or anything like that. So um, the other
ones we’ve got moved in fairly recently. But it certainly seems that the rental
market in Elmbridge – when we were looking to buy properties a lot of the
agents were saying ‘oh yeah, it’s really easy to rent out houses ‘cos they’re
full of Polish’ basically. All the rental houses, the Polish people rent them. A
lot of them seem to be coming over here and having children ‘cos there are a
lot of them in the schools and the nurseries now too.

Helen: Yes. It’s interesting to see how things are changing.

Phil: Yes, though I must admit, I certainly think that Swan Street seems to be
turning into Polish town. It’s just… obviously there’s quite a few Polish
shops down there, a Polish restaurant, and it’s just becoming a bit of an
enclave of town.

Phil demonstrates something of a double standard here regarding his attitude to
Eastern European migrants living in Elmbridge. He is happy to receive rent from his
tenants on a monthly basis, and describes Stan and his girlfriend as ‘very nice’, as
having ‘caused us absolutely no problems’, and their occasional offerings of bottles
of Polish vodka as ‘quite sweet’ – a term simultaneously endearing and
condescending. However, Phil displays some unease when he observes that Swan
Street is turning into an Eastern European ‘enclave of town’. The migrants he has dealt with are ‘no problem’, but the wider migrant population and their impact on the town are to be viewed with suspicion. Like Linda, Phil is content with conducting business-like transactions with Eastern European migrants; this is deemed an acceptable type of relationship for village people to have with migrants, and if money can be made from migrants all the better.

Woven through Phil’s narrative is a series of classed judgements about his Polish tenants and their lifestyles. It was not clear to me how he came to know about Stan’s marital and family relationships, but Phil clearly perceived his domestic circumstances to be unconventional and noteworthy enough to describe to me. In Phil’s mind Stan’s ‘decent job’ at a ‘local business’ sets him apart from the homogenous mass of ‘Polish’ migrants who have jobs in horticulture, which are not considered ‘decent’ by local people. Here Phil also makes a class distinction between himself and the ‘Polish’ migrants who live and work in the area. Not only do they work in undesirable jobs, but they also live in cramped conditions in rented accommodation. Because Eastern European migrants cannot afford to buy properties in Elmbridge or Mayfield, a class hierarchy is also created between local homeowners and landlords like Phil and migrant tenants like Stan and his girlfriend.

Echoing this classed discourse, Fiona, 52, a tomato grower in Mayfield who employs Latvian and Lithuanian horticulture students on her farm, explained how she had recently upgraded the accommodation she provides for her employees. In particular, she told me about the students’ satisfaction with the provision of new static caravans. She explained:
They are just so grateful. When we got rid of the old caravans and got the new mobile homes – double glazed and everything – well, I’ve never seen a 30-year old man look so excited... it was like giving a hamster a new cage! He was like a hamster on a wheel going round and round, y’know, he just loved it... And when we showed the students the accommodation here this year this one student just could not believe that he was only sharing his room with one other guy! He just couldn’t believe it, ‘cos back there [in Latvia and Lithuania] they stay in dormitories with about 15 guys per room. They are just so grateful.

Fiona’s repetition of how grateful her employees are for their accommodation may have been an effort to convince me of how well she looks after her staff, but she did not offer to show me around the farm or to see the caravans while I was there. Through this emphasis on the students’ gratitude she almost paints a picture of herself as a benevolent benefactor, lavishing extravagance upon her employees. But her deeply derogatory comparison of an employee with a hamster brings into sharper focus the power relationship which exists here. The provision of twin rooms and double-glazed windows are perceived to be relative luxury for these low-status, not-quite-white Eastern Europeans who are not accustomed to ‘our’ living standards. In Fiona’s opinion, ‘back there’ in Latvia and Lithuania students sleep in large dormitories, but here in England ‘we’ are wealthier, more civilised, more respectable.

Two other village residents, Louisa and her husband Ben who are both in their mid-thirties moved to Mayfield from Elmbridge 18 months ago. They have had more first-hand interactions with Eastern European migrants than most of the villagers of Mayfield, primarily because a group of Eastern Europeans lived in the rented house next door to them for the three years that they lived in Elmbridge. Louisa explained that although her general impression of her neighbours was that they ‘seemed very
pleasant’, their unconventional habits and the ‘constant flurry’ of transient tenants were matters of deep concern to her and Ben when they decided to sell their town house in order to move to the village:

Well, the ones that we used to live next door to... how many people actually lived there, I haven’t got a clue! In the mornings – they were so nice – but in the mornings they would bring all their airbeds down into the garden, and you never saw the same person leaving the house – there was a constant flurry. I mean, some of them seemed very pleasant, but you really didn’t know who was who, and who actually lived there, and who was visiting, and when it was school holidays, wow! They all came over. But they were all very quiet and very good neighbours – they made an effort – they always tried to speak to you in English, so they made a real effort... in all fairness, when we found out who lived there when we were moving in we thought ‘Oh God’, ‘cos they were renting it, and we just thought ‘oh no’, and then when we were selling it we were thinking ‘Oh God! Don’t be out in the garden when we have people round’ [laughing] and they weren’t, and we never mentioned them. When people asked what the neighbours were like we said ‘oh fine’ and that’s as far as we went.

To have these Eastern European migrants as neighbours tested the degree of intimacy Louisa and Ben were able to tolerate, and they were worried that prospective buyers of their house would be deterred by the prospect of living next door to them. Outwardly their neighbourly relations were congenial, but Louisa felt that the migrants’ presence would affect the desirability of their own house, which they were trying to sell. The unconventional behaviour that Louisa perceives – living in cramped conditions and bringing one’s bed out into the garden in the morning –
reflects a classed discourse based upon white perceptions of what is normal and respectable.

The house was near to Swan Street; an area which Phil described earlier as becoming a migrant ‘enclave’, and Louisa was worried about the neighbourhood’s deteriorating ‘place image’ (Watt, 2006; 2009) as a result of the increase of Eastern European residents in the area. Although she considered them to be ‘very quiet and very good neighbours’, Louisa neglected to tell potential buyers that the migrants were renting next door, and hoped that they would not make an appearance when they were showing people around the house. These neighbours could very well have been Phil’s tenants who also ‘squeezed in’ to his small two-bedroom rental house in Elmbridge. This illustrates once more that whilst the villagers of Mayfield are happy to profit from migrants’ demand for rental housing, to live next door to migrants tests the degree to which they are willing to engage and interact with the ethnic Other.

The examples of interactions between villagers and migrants thus far in this chapter: as customer and proprietor of the Polish restaurant, as employer and employee, and as landlord and tenant are all loaded with inherent power relations. The residents of Mayfield can choose whether or not to engage with Polish culture/cuisine: they exercise agency in making the decision whether or not to spend their money at this or another culinary establishment. Village residents can choose whether or not to employ Eastern European workers. If migrants will work hard for minimal remuneration, villagers such as Linda, and also the owners of the large fruit and vegetable-growing nurseries in Mayfield can profit from this new labour-pool. If the workers are no good (such as Mateusz’s brother), they are disposable, and a replacement can easily be found. Villagers can also choose to whom they rent their houses. Eastern European migrants’ demand for rental housing in Elmbridge is high,
so once again, villagers stand to make considerable profits from a transient migrant population.

However, to return to a quote from Anne-Marie Fortier given in the introduction to this chapter ‘a deeper exchange of cultural or religious values provokes anxiety’ (2007:110). The interactions noted above take place on the villagers’ terms, but the perception that migrants are turning Swan Street into an Eastern European ‘enclave’ suggests that migrants’ cultural impact on Elmbridge is expanding despite the disapproval of local people. They are stamping their cultural identity onto this place through the opening of the Polish restaurant, an Eastern European butcher, various small shops, and a Polish Saturday school and this is provoking anxiety among village people who do not wish to engage with this cultural difference. Indeed some see it as a threat. One interviewee told me ‘we’ll all have to start speaking Polish soon’ (‘we’ being white English villagers).

As discussed in chapter three, Fortier (2007) has observed that official political discourse about ‘integration’ assumes that migrants should assimilate as much as possible to English life by learning the English language, embracing local culture and simultaneously ‘letting go’ of their own cultural values. However, as Brian, 67, put it, the ‘Warsawification’ of Swan Street is evidence that this is not taking place. It is seen as a defiant act against assimilation, and cements in local people’s minds’ the cultural difference between themselves and ‘the Polish’ as they are locally known. Generally speaking the villagers of Mayfield are not interested in engaging in relationships of cultural exchange with Eastern European migrants. This degree of intimacy is a step too far and would ultimately undermine the existing power relationships which exist between villagers and migrants. A boundary of cultural difference is erected between the two groups, and as I describe next, border-
crossing in the form of cross-ethnic friendships and sexual relationships are rare; a desire for the Other is not considered acceptable and is seen as a threat to white English rural culture and respectable ways of living.

**Elmbridge on a Saturday Night: Discourses of Sexuality, Respectability and Gender**

Throughout this thesis I argue that white ethnicities are entwined with and embedded in class distinctions and inequalities. In this way, racial and class distinctions and identities become inscribed within and co-constitute each other. As I discussed in chapter six, and shall go on to explore in the remainder of this chapter, class identities like ethnic identities are embodied. Thus, drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Tyler (2012a: 21) has argued that:

> Visible markers of class identity and distinction become inscribed on the body and can be read and interpreted by others… Moreover, classed bodies in most Western class-stratified societies are marked and defined by differing dispositions, comportment and aesthetic tastes. In this sense, the way people dress, walk, talk and so on become markers of their classed identities.

The ways in which the English residents of Mayfield perceive Eastern European migrant Others in class and ethnic terms reflects and impacts upon their sense of who they are, and consequently shape how they interact with migrants on professional, personal and intimate levels. In other words, class and ethnic identities frame who village residents ‘feel comfortable and at ease with, who they choose for their friends,
with whom they form romantic relationships, where they live and the domestic aesthetic they feel most comfortable with’ (Tyler, 2012a: 21-22).

In Mayfield there is a particular group of around six women ranging in age from their late thirties to mid-forties who, every few months, go out together to drink, dance and socialize in the pubs and nightclub in Elmbridge. One of the women is from an ‘Old Mayfield’ family and the other five define themselves as ‘incomers’. I came to know three of the women well during my fieldwork because they are good friends with Kate, my landlady, who I lived with for twelve months. Each of the women works either full- or part-time in hairdressing, cleaning, office administration, and product development at FreshPak Foods, a local food manufacturer. Two of the women know one another because they were childhood friends in Mayfield. The others met as a result of having children of a similar age at the village primary school and nursery. All of the women have, and are the primary carers of, young children and young teenagers, and all of them are divorced. Three of the women are in new relationships and the rest are single. Nights out in Elmbridge usually involve a regime of: putting children to bed, administering self-tan, painting nails, blow-drying and straightening hair, applying make-up, getting ‘dressed up’, paying a babysitter for the evening, driving the three miles to Elmbridge, having drinks in the pubs and bars, going to the nightclub, dancing, drinking, meeting men (for some, potential boyfriends or sexual partners), and taking a taxi home to Mayfield in the early hours of the morning.

The pubs and the nightclub in Elmbridge are of particular interest as they have become key social spaces where local men and women interact with migrant men and women in a context outside of the work environment. They are also interesting because villagers and migrants occupy these spaces as equals rather than as employer
and employee or landlord and tenant, and as I go on to explain, interactions outside of this power hierarchy are often uneasy. This group of women from Mayfield talked openly to me about their perceptions of migrant men and women based on their experiences and observations in Elmbridge on Saturday nights. In particular, they talked about perceived differences between English and Eastern European gender relations, the perceived suitability of migrant men and women as sexual partners, and the gendered politics surrounding inter-ethnic relationships. It emerged from my conversations with these women that crossing the ethno-sexual frontier, forging sexual relationships between English and Eastern European was considered seductive by some, but dangerous and unacceptable by others. Indeed, negative stereotypes about the Eastern European Other were often used by the women to reinforce ethnic differences and sustain ethnic segregation. It became apparent to me that ‘proper’ gender roles and sexual behaviour are policed by the women themselves, and the display of this ‘proper’ behaviour by village women is essential to claiming ethnic group membership (that is, respectable, white, English, rural) and also demarcating the ethnic boundary between English and Eastern European.

As described in the previous chapter, village women regularly make distinctions between themselves and migrant women based on judgments about clothing and physical appearance. However, Kate, 41, takes this distinction one step further by describing Eastern European women’s clothing and physical appearance as markers of sexual behaviour and sexual morality. She constructs migrant women as hyper-sexualised and in competition with village women for the attention of local English men. Kate told me, for example, about her observations of Eastern European women when out socialising in Elmbridge:
Kate: ...in town in the evenings... the Polish girls look like prostitutes. You can spot them a mile off. I mean, I’ve been into town at night and some of them definitely are prostitutes touting for business. But their fashion sense is just awful, really cheap. You just think where the hell did you get those clothes from?

Helen: Perhaps their clothes are quite trendy in Poland?

Kate: I don’t know, but the local girls don’t like it.

Helen: In what way?

Kate: I don’t know, they look cheap and they think they’re gonna run off with their boyfriends. They see them as competition I think.

In this excerpt Kate defines ‘Polish girls’ through inappropriateness. Their style of dress, which emphasizes their sexuality is interpreted by ‘local girls’ as inappropriate and threatening, and migrant women are thus positioned as lacking the correct feminine cultural knowledge to dress themselves respectably. Kate’s description of the women as looking ‘cheap’ and ‘like prostitutes’ situates them as without the competence for style, taste, sexual restraint or decorum. So this is not just about fashion, but rather about the ‘type’ of women they are perceived to be.

Kate employs what Finch (1993) calls the ‘classing gaze’ whereby judgments about class are entwined with morals as well as traditional markers of class status. In fact, her judgments about the migrant women hark back to the 19th century when a woman’s respectability was determined in relation to her role as a wife and mother,
her responsibility, the control of her sexuality, and her care, protection, and education of children (Skeggs, 2005; 1997: 5). Therefore one could argue that this conceptualisation of migrant women is produced from anxiety about disruption to the local social order – the forgoing of respectable femininity and the risk of competition for potential boyfriends, husbands and fathers due to uncontrolled and immoral sexuality. By conceptualising migrant women in this way, village women are able to consolidate their own identity and power by distancing themselves from Others who transgress local cultural norms. Migrant women are being characterized by absence or what they are seen to lack. In the village women’s eyes they lack taste, style, femininity, morals, respectability and class, and as Skeggs (1997) has argued, to be not respectable is to have little social value or legitimacy. Furthermore, village women are policing the boundaries of multicultural intimacy between local men and migrant women by constructing migrant women as inappropriately sexual and lacking respectable femininity.

Echoing Kate’s observations from the nightclub in Elmbridge, Zoe, 40, developed the narrative about migrants’ sexuality, this time in relation to migrant men. She explained:

Zoe: The Polish men seem to be more pushy [than local men], they’ll come on the dance floor and they’ll be really quite pushy... they’ll make a decision, make a beeline for you and be like, “come on, come up here and dance”, you know

Helen: They come and dance with you and your friends?

Zoe: Oh yeah, they’re quite full-on as well. They don’t back down, you have to be quite firm with them if you’re not interested.
In my conversations with Zoe and Kate the theme of Eastern European men as aggressive or ‘pushy’, and the need for local women to be cautious of them was raised repeatedly. There was a recurrent perception that gender relations in the UK are more progressive than in Eastern Europe, and that Eastern European men do not view women as their equals. For example, Kate feels that:

They don’t treat their women properly. They don’t respect them, and the English girls won’t have it. We’re used to being treated equally y’ know, with more respect. You do occasionally see English lads getting together with Polish girls, but never the other way round. In time I’m sure there will be more mixing, but that’s certainly not the case at the moment.

In Kate’s opinion, Eastern European men’s failure to treat women ‘properly’, with respect, is unacceptable. Her construction of Eastern European men’s male chauvinism situates them as undesirable and threatening, characterised like Eastern European women by their lack of cultural awareness and competence. They are therefore held in opposition to local English white men who, Kate believes, treat women with more consideration.

Zoe, who had recently separated from her husband, talked about Eastern European men in a different way however. Stepping out of the discourse against relationships between English women and Eastern European men she told me that she is sometimes attracted to Eastern European men when she goes out with her friends to the pubs or nightclub in town, but that her friends discourage her from approaching these men on the basis of their nationality, perceived cultural difference, and thus the perceived threat that they pose. She explained:
Zoe: I say ‘oh he looks quite nice’ and they say ‘no, he’s Polish’. To be fair I probably wouldn’t go there anyway ‘cos they’re generally a lot younger than me, but there is a bit of a ‘oh he’s Polish, so no’ attitude. I don’t particularly know why but it’s just ‘oh, he’s Polish, you don’t want him’. I mean there was one guy who - it was really funny ‘cos he was really hot! And we were all stood in the corner eyeing him up and he never really danced, he just seemed to be surveying the room and we were a bit concerned ‘cos we couldn’t decide – I don’t know if you’ve ever been in there – but the lighting’s quite dark and we couldn’t decide whether he’d got beige jeans or white trousers on, and obviously we couldn’t get too close to check it out, but we were thinking hmmm, not too sure about that style! And then interestingly about two weeks later, my friend who works at FreshPak Foods11 sent me this text saying ‘you’ll never guess who’s just walked in - beige trousers man!’ and he’s got exactly the same trousers, top, and shoes that he had on at Time12 about two weeks ago so we decided: right, that’s obviously his only pair of clothes. And she said that he came in and he seemed to be on sick leave, and she was ear-wigging [eavesdropping], and apparently they asked how his wrist was and then asked if his nose was better, and she thought ‘oh, I bet he’s been fighting’. So, you know... she texted back saying ‘I think he’s one to be admired from afar’. He’s Polish, wears the same clothes all the time and fights [laughs] so that was quite funny. Quite stereotypical really. You can imagine some middle-England little old woman saying ‘Oh that’s what the Polish do, work at FreshPak and fight, cause problems’... But I must admit I have noticed a few times that they are more pushy, definitely.

11 FreshPak Foods is a pseudonym for a food factory situated in a neighbouring village that supplies supermarkets nationwide.
12 Time is a pseudonym for the nightclub in Elmbridge.
Helen: Oh right. And one thing that somebody else told me about Time was that you quite often see British guys getting together with Polish girls but not the other way round. So like you were saying: local women aren’t that interested in Polish men but the other way round it seems to be different.

Zoe: I suppose local men probably think they’re something a bit exotic and a bit different. And they definitely have a different look about them.

Helen: Mmm. But why do you think local women just think ‘Oh, he’s Polish, I don’t want anything to do with him’?

Zoe: I don’t know. I don’t know whether it’s because they’re transient so you’re never gonna have a proper relationship with them, or whether it’s just that they’re different. I think it’s probably just that they’re different. I don’t think they say it in a horrible way but it’s just that they’re a bit different, which is the Elmbridge mentality really.

What is interesting about this passage is that whilst Zoe repeats the discourse of Eastern European men as aggressive and lacking in appropriate local cultural knowledge as indicated by his beige jeans/white trousers, she also acknowledges that ‘difference’ in itself is seen by many local women as a good reason to keep their distance from Eastern European men.

In Kate and Zoe’s accounts and observations of Elmbridge on Saturday nights, both migrant men and women are constructed as possessing aggressive sexuality. In the case of migrant women it is their fashion sense which leads local women to this conclusion, and for migrant men it is the interpretation of their
behaviour as ‘pushy’ and persistent in the context of the nightclub in town. Village women also cite Eastern European men’s disrespectful treatment of women as justification for maintaining a boundary between them. In doing so they construct Eastern European migrants as the cultural Other whose gender relations are unequal and thus unacceptable. These ‘sexual sanctions’ forbidding relationships between Eastern European migrants and local men and women demarcate positions of power by enforcing white middle-class conventions of respectable behaviour and thus the personal and public boundaries of ethnicity (Stoler, 1989: 634). This discourse of respectability is classed, and is therefore a way for villagers to define themselves against migrants: a way of constructing migrants as a different ‘shade’ of white, and saying ‘I am not that Other’.

**Conclusion**

While it is widely accepted among villagers that Eastern European migrant workers are contributing positively to the local economy and keeping the traditional horticultural industry in the village afloat, an elevation of the employer/employee or landlord/tenant relationship to the level of friendship, cultural exchange, or sexual reproduction provokes anxiety. There is a limit to the multicultural intimacy that villagers are willing to tolerate. For them, living side-by-side in a state of relative indifference presents an image of successfully integrated physical relations in the geographically-bounded space of the village, but there is scant evidence of the development of any more meaningful face-to-face ‘community’ relationships, and a social and cultural distance between ethnic groups is maintained.
Villagers’ perception of migrants’ suitability to unskilled, repetitive, and low-paid work situates migrants as ‘beneath’ them, with lower social class status. Migrants are repeatedly complimented for being hardworking and making excellent employees, but only in jobs and industries which local people consider undesirable. Village employers can profit significantly from migrant labour, but villager/migrant relationships rarely transcend this contractual relationship which is imbued with unequal power relations.

Similarly villagers who own rental properties in Elmbridge are happy to rent to migrant workers as high demand ensures a steady flow of revenue. If tenants fail to pay their rent or are not considered suitable, there is no shortage of migrants to take their place. However, whilst villagers in such a position benefit financially from letting their properties to migrants, many Elmbridge residents (including Louisa and Ben who have just moved to Mayfield) are not comfortable with the prospect of having Eastern European neighbours. Whilst their experience of neighbourly relations with the migrants next door was largely congenial if not somewhat ambivalent, wider local discourses about respectability, class, and the social desirability of having Eastern European neighbours concerned Louisa when they came to sell their house. Louisa was aware that the neighbourhood in which their house was situated (near Swan Street) was becoming known as an Eastern European ‘enclave’ and ‘Polish Town’ by some local people, therefore she sought to conceal from prospective buyers the fact that Eastern Europeans lived next door.

Another villager told me that she believed the Swan Street area had ‘really gone downhill’ over the last few years since Eastern European migrants had begun to move in. In the eyes of middle-class passers-by or indeed, prospective buyers who have the status and capital to label a place as respectable or not, Eastern European
migrants are seen to be giving the place a bad image. Those like Louisa and Ben who are keen to stress their own respectability felt that their sense of identity was being threatened and even betrayed by the visible signs of poverty and disreputability displayed by their neighbours such as bringing their many inflatable beds out into the garden in the mornings and lining up empty vodka bottles in their windows. Central to this discourse about ethnic and class distinction are ideas about ‘the proper and respectable constitution of place’ (Tyler, 2012a: 23). From this perspective, the Swan Street area of Elmbridge had become associated with a ‘rough’ place image (Watt, 2006) where Louisa and Ben no longer feel a sense of belonging.

In their study into the role of space and locality in the formation of white middle-class identities, Butler and Robson (2003: 1792) suggest that ‘middle-class people identify with neighbourhoods where they perceive “people like us to live”’. Louisa and Ben exemplify this theory: they draw distinctions between class groups which enables them to identify respectable ‘people like us’, and Others who are not. Therefore, as Tyler (2012a; 2012b) and Watt (2006) have argued, discourses of race, class and place are deeply entwined with one another. In Mayfield, migrants who work on the village farms also live on farm land in caravans and converted farm buildings, therefore they are nobody’s neighbours – there are no casual ‘over the fence’ conversations and neighbourly relationships are not formed. In Elmbridge where Eastern European migrants and local English people do live side by side, the degree of multicultural intimacy which local people are willing to tolerate is being tested, with some like Louisa and Ben moving out of the town.

A boundary of cultural and class difference is erected by the villagers of Mayfield between themselves and Eastern European migrants, and while certain relationships based on power and privilege such as that of employer/employee and
landlord/tenant are accepted, crossing this boundary of difference in the form of
cross-ethnic friendships and sexual relationships are rare; a desire for the Other
(particularly English women desiring Eastern European men) is not considered
acceptable and is seen as a threat to white English rural culture and respectable ways
of living. Local women strive to prove their respectability by wearing the ‘right’
clothes and adopting the ‘right’ standards of heterosexual femininity, defining
themselves in opposition to Eastern European women who wear the ‘wrong’ clothes
and are thus constructed as hypersexualised. Similarly, migrant men are constructed
by village women as ‘pushy’ male chauvinists who should be approached with
caution. In Mayfield sexuality has become a fundamental class and ethnic marker
implicated in a wider set of relations of power. Elevating the degree of intimacy
between villagers and Eastern European migrants to that of friendship, sexual
reproduction, or a deeper exchange of cultural values provokes anxiety about the
preservation of white, English rural identity.
Chapter 8

Eastern European Migrants’ Experiences of Rural English Life:
Language, Community and Social Mobility

Introduction

Until recently, a distinguishing feature of immigration to the UK has been its urban orientation. Since immigrants have settled mainly in metropolitan areas, sociological research has focused primarily on the lives and characteristics of urban immigrants, the integration challenges and opportunities they have encountered, the strategies they have employed to overcome difficulties, as well as neighbourhood responses to new immigrant groups (cf. Back, 1996; Kershen, 1997; Kempny, 2010; Eade et al, 2007). However, since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 Eastern European migration to the UK is having a significant and growing impact on rural areas, particularly where migrants have arrived to work in the agriculture, tourism, and food production industries.

Within the last six or seven years a small number of academic researchers have begun to study Central and Eastern European migration to rural areas and migrant agricultural work. However, they have tended to focus mainly on the labour process, on exploitative practices, and on the economic structures that have created the need for migrant labour (see for example, Rogaly, 2006; 2009; Stenning, 2006; Anderson et al, 2006). Dawney has conducted qualitative research in Herefordshire, which, like my own, explores ‘discourses of racialization, of cultural superiority, of class, of labour, of rurality’ and how they are brought into play in ‘the active construction and performance of identity’ (2008: 2). Though, as I shall go on to
explain, while there are some parallels between our findings, the majority – and particularly those related to migrants’ experience of racism and harassment in public spaces – are significantly different. Throughout this chapter I shall draw comparisons between the experiences and opinions expressed by my migrants in my study with the migrant narratives presented in these earlier studies of migrant workers in the English agriculture industry.

While the previous chapters outlined the ways in which the white, English villagers of Mayfield in Worcestershire draw upon class-inflected markers of difference to position Eastern European migrants as ‘not quite white’ enough to fully integrate or assimilate into English rural life, this final ethnography chapter will focus on the narratives of migrants themselves to understand their motivations, aspirations and experiences of living in rural England in greater depth. In chapters six and seven the judgements made about Eastern European migrants by village people were discussed and analysed. In this chapter, the migrants themselves are given a voice: a chance to respond, and to present an alternative impression of life in rural England which is based not on images of the rural idyll, ‘traditional’ farming practices and tight-knit place-bound communities but transnational ties and the day-to-day operations of capitalist agri-businesses in the English countryside. In Mayfield, the migrants’ presence is screened out, and the purpose of this chapter is to address this imbalance. To avoid colluding in the screening-out process, I present the migrants’ narratives here as a way of creating a dialogue between the two groups which does not exist in reality.

This chapter examines the daily lives of Eastern European migrants who live and work in the Mayfield area. Through their narratives I trace the key themes of this thesis: ethnicity, community and social class. In particular, this chapter responds to
the villagers’ perceptions of migrant workers and low status, lower-class Others who are not respectable. I illustrate that, in fact, many of the migrants I talked with during my fieldwork are socially mobile young people who through their migration strategies are engaging in a process of acquiring economic, cultural and social capital. Rather than analysing migrants’ experiences of living in rural Worcestershire through a problematically value-laden ‘integration’ framework I view and interpret their accounts instead through a social mobility lens. This is because social integration with the English population was not a priority for many of my Eastern European interviewees – particularly short-term migrants – who were more keen to earn money for themselves and their families, gain work experience, and experience living and working in another country.

The data presented in this chapter is based on material collected in three focus groups conducted at three horticultural nurseries just outside of Mayfield but situated in its immediate surroundings (I reflect on how and why these particular nurseries were selected in chapter four), and two in-depth interviews with two Polish migrants: Adam, 36, and Patryk, 37. The focus group participants were predominantly seasonal workers from a variety of national backgrounds including Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Latvian and Lithuanian, and they were further differentiated by age, gender, life experiences, educational background, social class, profession, migration histories and plans for the future. In total there were 19 focus group respondents. There were eight women in group 1, three women and three men in group 2, and two women and three men in group 3. With the exception of three participants, all were in their twenties and thirties. All but two of the migrants (who had permanent jobs on the farms) lived at the farms where they worked.13

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13 See appendix number 8 for a more detailed profile of the Eastern European research participants.
Adam and Patryk’s experiences of living in the local area are different to those of the migrant agricultural workers due to differences in their migration strategies, employment, language skills, social networks and cultural capital. However, they are connected to the migrant workers on the farms via a two hidden chains of ‘supply and demand’. Adam works for the district council and is the co-ordinator of a project that aims to support migrants in the local area. Migrants such as those living and working on farms in Mayfield and the surrounding villages, as well as those who plan to stay in the area long term, have created a demand for projects such as this. Adam frequently communicates with migrants in Elmbridge and the surrounding villages and provides them with information related to health, accommodation, translation and legal services for example. Through his work, Adam also has developed a good relationship with many of the farmers and growers who employ migrant workers, and it was through Adam and his contacts that I was able to organise and conduct the three focus groups. He attended each one and acted as a translator when necessary. Adam is himself a Polish migrant who plans to stay in the UK indefinitely. Due to his personal experiences of migration and the nature of his job, he had some valuable insights to offer on the experiences of, and challenges facing Eastern European migrants in the area.

Patryk is also a Polish migrant who lives in Elmbridge and is involved in the organisation of community-related activities including a Polish Community Association and a Polish Saturday school. While Patryk is not directly linked with the farmers and growers in the area, he works at Freshpak Foods on the outskirts of Mayfield which processes, packages, and distributes produce which is grown locally. Through his community activities, he sees himself as playing an important role in
setting up an infrastructure to help support the integration of future migrants to the area, particularly those who wish to settle long-term. Patryk also highlights an interesting and often unseen link between the villagers of Mayfield and Eastern European migrants. Tanya, an Old Mayfield resident, has an administrative job at Freshpak Foods where Patryk works in the warehouse. While most of my interviewees, including Tanya, often talked to me about how little they come into contact with migrants in the area, and the limited impact that migrants are having on the local social landscape, it emerged through conversation that Tanya knew Patryk, and it was she who initially approached him about taking part in my research. She passed his contact details on to me, and we subsequently arranged an interview.

My residential ethnographic fieldwork in Mayfield had an important influence upon the interviews and focus groups I held with Eastern European migrants. Not only did the local knowledge, networks and friendships I developed in Mayfield lead to the identification of ‘gatekeepers’ who helped to make the interviews and focus groups possible, but they also provided a context in which to situate migrants’ perspectives and also guided my analysis of their narratives. As much as possible I was keen to discuss similar themes and topics in my conversations with migrants that had been raised by village residents. For example, people in Mayfield had talked to me about community, social networks, kinship, culture, ‘belonging’ and social class, and addressing similar topics with migrants has meant that I have been able to identify a range of perspectives on common subjects, highlighting the differences and also similarities between the two groups.

Numerous complex, interlocking, and recurring themes were raised in the two interviews and three focus groups which I held with Eastern European migrants in and around Mayfield. Topics of conversation related to their experiences of migration
to the UK and their lives in rural England included access to, and involvement in social networks, ideas about ‘community’, maintaining transnational social networks and relationships (particularly in relation to the use of technology such as Skype, Facebook, email, and cheap mobile phone calls), language skills and interactions with the local population, de-skilling and long working hours, food, children, social class, aspirations, and short- and long-term plans for the future. However, there are three key themes that weave a thread throughout this chapter, despite my respondents’ diverse individual experiences. These themes are: social networks and ‘community’, language, and the acquisition of economic, social and cultural capital.

Focus Group Discussions

The three focus groups were conducted at three different farms in villages surrounding Mayfield (see Fig. 2 for their locations). The reasons for holding the focus groups at these particular farms have been detailed in my methodology chapter. The farm where I conducted the first focus group, which I shall refer to as ‘Elmbridge Valley Growers’ is a very large business that grows tomatoes hydroponically (with water and nutrients but without soil) in heated greenhouses which span approximately four acres. Not only does the farm grow a variety of tomatoes that supply supermarkets including Sainsbury’s, Morrisons and the Co-op, but it also has an on-site factory where the tomatoes are sorted for size and quality, and packaged. The employees who tend the tomatoes and work in the pack-house are predominantly Eastern European migrants who usually work at Elmbridge Valley for between two and ten months per year. Due to the heating of the greenhouses the growing season has been extended to February through November so the demand for migrant labour
is less dictated by the seasons. Elmbridge Valley employs approximately 400 workers at any one time, and accommodation is provided on-site in the form of caravans, a farmhouse, and some purpose-built accommodation.

The second focus group was held at ‘Hillside Nurseries’, a soft fruit grower specialising in strawberries and raspberries. The produce at Hillside is grown using more traditional methods in large plastic polytunnels situated on open fields. This means that the crops are more affected by the seasons and weather conditions. Here, Eastern European migrant workers are employed from March to September. Almost all of the workers live on-site in caravans housing four to six people. When I visited the farm in high season the caravans were full to capacity, with just over 300 resident employees. The third farm at which I held a focus group was ‘Meridian Nurseries’, the smallest of the three. Meridian Nurseries also grows strawberries and houses its migrant employees in caravans on-site and in a large bungalow. Again, the farm employs Eastern European labourers between March and September. Many of the employees at Meridian and Hillside return to the same farm each summer. Initially the farms recruit workers via employment agencies based in Eastern European countries, however, after the migrants have worked for the farms once they can bypass the agencies in future years, arranging their contracts directly with human resources at the individual farms.

All of the focus group participants were aged between 18 and 40 (with the majority in their twenties and early thirties). The proportion of men and women in each focus group is outlined in table 5 overleaf:
Table 5: Focus group participants by gender

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<th>Elmbridge Vale</th>
<th>Hillside Nurseries</th>
<th>Meridian Nurseries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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At Elmbridge Vale all eight women in the focus group were Latvian, at Hillside the group comprised two Polish women, two Romanian men, and one man and one woman from Bulgaria. At Meridian Nurseries the group was made up of two Bulgarian men and one Bulgarian woman, one Polish woman, and one Indian man. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds, and had worked in a variety of different industries before coming to work in rural Worcestershire. For example, among them were; a hairdresser, a student of dance and performing arts, childminders, factory operatives, a graphic designer and a bartender. Many of the participants talked about their families and relationships; several were married and had children, but the majority were single.

The focus group discussions began with general questions about the participants’ nationalities, ages, and how long they had been working at their respective farms. I then asked the groups what their motivations were for coming to work in the English countryside, how long they planned to spend in the UK, and what their impressions were of the local area. I followed these questions by asking about their working week, how they spend their free-time, and whether they had any social contact with local English people. We discussed the importance of the internet and mobile telephones for maintaining cross-national relationships with family and friends, and also talked about the friendships they have made at the farms. In short, I
aimed to build up a broad picture of their lives in, and experiences of the English countryside.¹⁴

Motivations for Migration

For the majority of the seasonal migrants I spoke to on the three farms, financial gain was their main motivation for coming to work in rural Worcestershire. Aija and Iveta, two Latvian women in their mid-thirties explained that they came from an industrial town in Latvia where, until recently, three or four car factories had been the main source of employment. However, due to the poor economic climate across Europe many of these factories had been forced to close, and as a result thousands of people have been made redundant. They described how many towns in Latvia are becoming ‘ghost towns’ where the ‘productive’ working-age population are migrating to other regions and other countries in search of jobs, leaving behind the very old, the very young and those not able to work. With no success finding alternative employment in Latvia, Aija and Iveta felt that their only option was to seek work overseas. They signed up with an employment agency in Latvia which sent them to work for Elmbridge Valley Nurseries. Iveta told me this was a last resort: ‘If we knew how and where to find better jobs in Latvia we wouldn’t be here’. Brigita, 25, also works at the same farm. She explained:

My husband and I are taking it in turns to work overseas. We have a two year-old daughter so while I am away my husband and my Mother take care of her, and when my husband is away I take care of her. He was working in Sweden throughout my

¹⁴ See appendix number 6 for the detailed focus group/interview topic guide.
pregnancy and when the baby was born he came back to Latvia, but he couldn’t find a job so we decided that it was my turn to travel to find work.

Brigita’s English was very good and she told me that ideally whilst living in Worcestershire she would like to enrol on a part-time college course and gain a qualification which might enable her to get a better job in England and put her language skills to good use. She explained that ultimately she would like her husband and daughter to move to England rather than her returning to Latvia, but until she got a better job she would not be able to afford a place for them to live, so in the meantime she continued to send her earnings home.

Emiliya, a 26-year-old Bulgarian woman working at Hillside Nurseries also explained that her main motivation for coming to work in rural England is to earn and save money. When I met Emiliya she had travelled to England to work at Hillside for three subsequent summer seasons, returning to Bulgaria in the winter months. Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007) would classify Emiliya’s migration strategy as that of a ‘stork’: a circular migrant found mostly in low-paid occupations such as seasonal agricultural work who usually stay in the UK for between two and six months at a time. This ‘commuting’ behaviour demonstrated by ‘storks’ such as Emiliya ‘often becomes a long-term strategy and means of survival, hence they regard their economic status as improving’ but mainly with reference to the economic situation in their home countries (Eade, Drinkwater & Garapich, 2007: 10). Emiliya is keen to return to Hillside in future years.

In the focus group at Hillside Emiliya talked about her earning power in the UK. When asked why she chose to come to England specifically and not elsewhere in Europe she replied: ‘Because in England it’s £5.95 an hour. When I working in
Germany I had £2 per hour’. Emiliya told me that she usually works for two weeks with one day off, and she qualified this by explaining that she is simply maximising her earning potential – earning as much as she can during her six months on the farm. When I asked her why she decided to come to rural England to work on a farm rather than working in a restaurant in London for example, she replied:

I think on the farms we can earn more here. They have piece rate here so the best pickers can earn £15 an hour, and if you’re working four, five months, after you have money for whole year so it’s motivating for us. It’s better working four months here than working in London in restaurant or whatever and not saving money. We still get hourly rate, but we get extra money for piece work.

Some of the other participants in the focus groups saved their money to support themselves for the remainder of the year in their home countries. While Emiliya saves some, she spends the rest on travel and holidays. Last year, for example, she visited Italy using the money she had earned at Hillside in the summer. While some of the other respondents in the group (and some of those in the two other focus groups) were unemployed in their home countries, Emiliya has three other part-time jobs back in Bulgaria. She is a childminder ‘for rich people’, a cleaner, and also has a job which involves plant propagation and preparing plant food. She explained how she is able to keep her three jobs in Bulgaria whilst she is away in the UK:

I have a girl who take my job taking care of children when I am away, and the cleaning job is just casual. I keep my job in Polish laboratory in Bulgaria because I can do the work temporarily for six months. Sometimes they call me here on my mobile about some special thing, some problem, if they need to know what to do.
It is interesting that Emiliya maintains transnational ties with her employer in Bulgaria who can call her on her mobile phone while she is at work at the strawberry farm in England to ask her advice. The maintenance of this relationship guarantees that the job at the laboratory will still be there for her in six months time when she returns. Emiliya very much views the time she spends working in rural Worcestershire as a money-making enterprise rather than experiencing British culture, learning English, or forging relationships with local people. However, this was not the case for all of the migrant workers I spoke to.

Alin, 30, from Romania also works at Hillside nurseries, and he has returned to work at Hillside for four consecutive summer seasons. Before this he worked at a farm in Herefordshire, but was very badly paid, so he appealed to his employment agency for a transfer to Hillside where he currently works. Alin told me ‘After I moved to this farm I earned very good money so every year I come back here’. However, Alin was unusual in the group insofar as his main motivation for coming to the UK was not just financial gain but also an interest in travel and experiencing another culture. Alin explained:

For me, I came here because I wanted to try something else, a different culture. I went to South Korea one year, two years in Italy, and I tried to go somewhere else. Then I tried England and I came back because I made good money... Maybe I will try to stay longer here in this country, not only the seasonal work. That is my dream now... In Romania it is very difficult because of the economic crisis.

Alin also told me that he had hoped that coming to work in England would allow him to improve his English language skills, however, the reality of working long hours on
a farm almost entirely with other Eastern European migrants has made this difficult. He observed: ‘on the field you don’t have to speak, you have to work’. In the same focus group, Grigor, 20, from Bulgaria said that while his initial motivation for coming to do seasonal agricultural work in England was financial, his priorities have changed:

My motivation this year was not money. The first time I come here it was, but I come back to practice my English because I studied English in American University in Bulgaria, that was my opinion. So I came here, but I started to learn some other languages [at the farm] so I don’t lose anything! Where I went in Bulgaria I could not find some job, so I decided to come back here for some more money, that’s why I’m here.

As I shall discuss later in this chapter, the majority of migrants I spoke to rarely have the opportunity to speak English with English people since they spend most of their time on the farms, and because migrant and local English social networks rarely overlap. Grigor is philosophical about this however, stating that he has instead had the opportunity to learn languages other than English whilst working at Hillside due to his cross-national group of colleagues and friends from countries including Poland, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania.

Those who still have jobs in their home countries are able to work in a kind of seasonal rotation, such as Emiliya quoted above, and Dorota, a Polish woman in her early twenties who each year works ‘three months in Germany caring for older people, one month in Poland, and then here for the summer, and then Germany again and so on’. Others who are unemployed in their home countries attempt to save their
earnings during their six months in England, which they then use to sustain them for the remainder of the year.

In his study of unorganised temporary migrant workers in the UK, Rogaly (2009) recorded similar findings. Rather than seeking respite from harsh employment relations in their home countries, the majority of the male and female Eastern European migrant agricultural workers he spoke to were ‘using favourable currency conversion rates and higher hourly pay’ to save ‘money for planned uses such as future studies, house-building or renovation’ (Rogaly, 2009: 1980). While some of my focus group participants had clearly sought work in the English horticultural industry due to unemployment and financial insecurity in their home countries, many were motivated by reasons similar to those cited by Rogaly, such as saving for travel, education, housing, or simply improving their families’ quality of life through financial remittances.

*Life and Work on the Farms*

Almost all of the seasonal employees at the three farms live on-site in caravan sites, converted farmhouses and other farm buildings. At Hillside, for example, the caravan park houses approximately 300 migrant workers in high season. Some of the caravans have three bedrooms and sleep six people; others have two bedrooms and sleep four. The caravans have a small kitchen with a fridge and cooker, a table and seating area, and a toilet and washbasin. There is no hot water supply to the caravans, so for showers the workers must use a separate shower block similar to those found on British and European campsites. Further facilities available for the workers on the farm site include a computer room where they can use the internet, a post room where
their mail is sorted into pigeonholes, and a bus which is shared with Meridian Nurseries and visits Tesco three times a week, and is also used for occasional day trips and excursions – usually to the car boot sale in Elmbridge on Sundays. Elmbridge Valley and Meridian Nurseries both provide similar accommodation for their workers, though Elmbridge Valley does not provide any transport for their workers and Meridian does not have a computer room, but many of the migrants bring laptops with them.

There was consensus among the Lativan women who I spoke to at Elmbridge Valley Growers that they worked approximately 60 hours per week, though their hours largely depend on deadlines which need to be met for deliveries of produce to large supermarket chains. The women usually have one day off per week, and this is usually a week day since large orders often need to be fulfilled by Monday mornings so they must work Saturdays and Sundays. The number of hours worked were echoed at Hillside and Meridian. As mentioned earlier, migrants such as Emiliya take one day off in a fortnight in order to maximise their earning potential. However, Emiliya confessed that having never worked on a farm before, she found the work very physically stressful to begin with,

When I started here it was very difficult for me. Every day I had meeting with manager because I don’t want to work this job. But then I decided I want to work. I can work. Everybody can work if they keep thinking about the money. You have to want to do the job, not to think ‘oh this job is not for me’, but it’s very difficult, they have to be motivated, not to stay and think oh, pain in back, pain in legs, they have to motivate.
Not only is the labour physically demanding, but also the working hours are long and anti-social. As Rogaly (2006: 7) suggests in his study of the role of migrant workers in British agriculture, workers such as Emiliya are often willing to make:

…trade-offs between short-term pain and long-term gain, being willing to put up with the hard work and long and uncertain hours often involved in agricultural work in exchange for relatively high earnings (when converted into the currency operating in their home country) and/or English language acquisition.

Such trade-offs, he argues, are particularly likely to be made by seasonal workers who wish to earn as much as possible in a short amount of time and by university students who may have professional aspirations.

At Hillside and Meridian Nurseries the employees start work at 4:30 am when the temperature is cooler and the strawberries are not too soft for picking. Usually they finish work at around 3pm or 4pm depending on the weather and the orders which need to be fulfilled. The following excerpt from the discussion outlines the structure of a typical day at Hillside:

Helen: What time do you usually finish in the evening?

Grigor: Um it depends, on the work, on teams, the weather

Dorota: Normally about four o’ clock

Alin: Yeah, today I finish at five past two
Dorota: But we start at half past four in the morning

Helen: Wow! Why do you start so early?

Grigor: Um, it’s because the weather is cooler, the fruit is not so soft, and the fruit has to be ready to be collected by the lorries.

Adam: ...I think it would be very difficult to convince any of the local people to get up at four in the morning to start work at four thirty. I just can’t imagine that happening.

Alin: They might have further to go to work I guess. We get up at fifteen past four, go in the smoking area, and after that we go in the field. At four o’clock I wake up.

Helen: Does that mean that you all go to bed really early?

Dorota: Uh Hmm! [laughing, in agreement]

Lucyna: Some people do

Grigor: When I’m picking, when I come back from the field I go take shower, eat something and go then go sleep for couple of hours. Then evening time we get together with group of friends and we sometimes go to sleep late but we sleep in the daytime.

Helen: Oh right, so you get up again and then go back to bed later?
Grigor: Yeah

Alin suggests that living on the farm site makes it easier for them to start work early in the morning, and while Dorota goes to bed early Grigor and his friends have developed a strategy which allows them to have a sufficient amount of sleep whilst also making time to socialise in the evenings.

Social Networks and ‘Community’

To a large extent, with the exception of shopping trips to Tesco and the occasional car boot sale in Elmbridge, the migrants are very isolated from the farm’s locality and English social networks. Most of the time they are confined to the private spaces of the farms and nurseries which, during the summer months, become Eastern European ‘communities’ within English villages. They rely on ‘thick bonds’ with other migrants for friendship, support, information and so forth and rarely form ‘bridging’ relationships with people from outside of the farm on account of their lack of free time and in some cases, their limited English language. Through my conversations with migrant workers and their employers I discovered that it is common to find groups of migrants who do not speak English and who become completely reliant upon one friend or another individual to deal with all communication in English on their behalf (also see Kelly & Lusis, 2006 and Ryan et al, 2008 for similar findings).

Further research suggests that migrants who maintain strong ties only with other Eastern European co-workers may be socially disadvantaged (Wierzbicki, 2004), and that immersion in Eastern European-specific networks may also be associated with a lack of resources and can foster dependency and marginalisation.
(Ryan et al, 2009: 162). Because many of the seasonal workers are not able to develop relationships with members of the local population, they remain dependent upon their Eastern European counterparts, and generally rely on word of mouth for information about local services and the local area.

In addition, both Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2000) have argued that mobility and temporality are key barriers to accessing and maintaining place-based social networks. This certainly appears to be true for the vast majority of Eastern European migrants who come to work on the farms and nurseries in the Elmbridge area on a seasonal basis, with most staying between two and six months a year. Spencer et al (2007: 59-60) also found, in their study of the social experiences of Central and Eastern European migrants in the UK, that agricultural workers were the group most likely to report that they spent most of their leisure time with other recent migrants either from their home countries or from elsewhere. One explanation that Spencer et al (2007: 60) give for this high level of social contact with other migrants is the high proportion of migrant agricultural workers whose colleagues are migrants rather than British people. This explanation is certainly reflected in my findings as I go on to explain.

However, despite the fact that seasonal migrants may not develop local, place-based social networks with English people, internet and mobile phone technologies allow migrants to maintain transnational relationships with friends and family ‘back home’, and also with friends who may be working in other locations in the UK. The migrants I spoke to regularly use text messages, mobile phone cards, email and Skype to maintain contacts with home. Alin explained:

Alin: Two, three times a week I call my friends at home, it’s not a problem.
As this excerpt demonstrates, rather than being rooted in specific local formations such as villages, migrants’ social and support networks are dispersed over wide geographical areas, including transnational ties. This almost certainly has implications for seasonal migrants’ need or desire to form close friendships and develop social ties with English villagers (and indeed there are many barriers such as language, time constraints, and hostility from local people which make such relationships very difficult).

Although relations with villagers may be distant, I was struck by the strong sense of camaraderie among the migrants, particularly at Hillside. A prominent theme which emerged from the focus group there was that around 40% of the 300 migrants who live and work at the farm during the summer months are returnees. Lucyna, 32, from Poland told me that ‘It’s one of the reasons we all come back here, everybody, we all meet in the summertime’, so whilst there may be little social contact between the migrants and local English people, the migrants within the farm are developing cross-national networks and forming lasting relationships which adapt to change across time and space. Despite the long hours and the physical labour, Lucyna and the
others who participated in the focus group at Hillside enjoy the social element of living on the farm. She explained, ‘It’s not boring. Here it’s like a small village. There are lots of romances and things like that, so it’s definitely not boring!’ It is interesting to think of the farm as a ‘small village’ within a village with its own social networks, social events and romances. Within this ‘small village’ strong social bonds are formed within the boundary of the farm site and social contact with the residents of the wider village is rare. However, the migrants’ social relationships are also widely dispersed across regions and national boundaries; maintained via internet and mobile phone technology.

_Speaking English_

The focus group participants at each farm were selected (not by myself but by individuals responsible for human resources at the farms) in part because of their English language skills. However, there were a number of participants who did not converse in English, either because they had not learned the language or because they lacked the confidence to speak English publicly. Several of the Latvian women at Elmbridge Vale Growers did not speak English, and one Polish woman at Hillside understood my questions but responded in Polish. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Adam attended each of the focus groups and acted as translator. Several of the focus group participants expressed an interest in improving their English language skills whilst working in Worcestershire. However, when I asked the group at Hillside whether they had had much opportunity to speak English Alexandru, 22, from Romania answered:
It’s a little different here [on the farm] to speak English – I mean *British* English. Because here people is not from England, they are Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Latvian, um, many nations. British English we don’t understand it very well. We have to try to explain to everyone what we mean.

And Emiliya, 26, from Bulgaria added,

Yes, this year we have an English manager but we don’t understand anything he speak [laughter]... Every time I need to speak to him I have to get a translator [a friend who can understand] to go with me because I don’t understand anything... For me it’s impossible.

Emiliya and Alexandru struggle to understand ‘British English’ (English spoken by British people) and this highlights how little they come into contact with members of the local population. Instead, they speak a modified version of English, using English words, words from their first languages, and gestures, to communicate with their Eastern European friends and colleagues. In the focus group at Elmbridge Vale, Iveta, from Latvia, said ‘every time I return to the UK I improve my Polish not my English’, which concisely demonstrates how rarely the migrants interact with local English people and how concentrated their social and working relationships are within Eastern European networks.

*Free Time*

Many of the migrants work very long hours and their leisure time is limited. Often they take one day off each fortnight and are most likely to spend the day sleeping and
relaxing in their caravans, resting in preparation for the next fortnight’s work. Due to lack of time, money, and transportation they rarely take part in the kinds of leisure activities that villagers do such as swimming, sports, going to the pub, the cinema, or visiting the library in Elmbridge. Similarly, Spencer et al (2007: 61) found that for seasonal agricultural workers living on farms in rural areas ‘accommodation and its location has a particularly significant impact on their leisure and social relations, providing them with limited opportunities to socialise with British people compared to those living in cities’. Relatively isolated accommodation without access to the leisure facilities available in towns (or the transportation to get to them) means that seasonal agricultural workers become reliant on the company of their migrant colleagues, thus the social and leisure opportunities for the migrants I spoke to, are significantly influenced by their rural isolation. Occasionally the farms do organise social events and visits such as barbeques, football matches, go-karting, and trips to local towns. At Hillside and Meridian however, who share a bus for the transportation of their workers, the main off-site activity on weeknights is a shopping trip to Tesco for food. Another popular pass-time is taking the farm bus to the car boot sale held in Elmbridge on Sundays.

In each focus group I asked the participants how they spend their free time, and the general consensus within the group was that they like to relax in their caravans, catch up on sleep, and generally rest and rejuvenate. However, Alin was keen to point out that others, including himself, prefer to explore the surrounding area, including Elmbridge:
Alin: Depends, different for everyone. Some people go shopping, I go to Jacuzzi, I go to disco on Saturday night... to Time, we were there last Saturday, it was my birthday.

Helen: ...so when you go to Time or to the pubs do you talk to any English people, or do you mostly just talk to your friends from the farm?

Alin: Usually I speak with my friends, but sometimes we’re talking to [laughs] we are talking to some womens because they come to flirt with us. I was talking to one woman who was 36, 37 years I don’t know, she came to speak with me OK... she was a really nice woman you know

All: [Laughter]

Alin: I try to pay some drinks at the bar and she come to me “Hi, how are you? You feel good?” I think she might have known somebody from my group but I didn’t know her. It was nice yeah.

Alin’s account of his contact with local women echoes the narratives of Kate, Zoe and Tanya in the previous chapter who frequently observe Eastern European men in the nightclub in Elmbridge.

I also asked the groups if they had ever visited the library or the leisure centre in Elmbridge, but again, the response was that they do not have time. Instead they use the internet on the farm site, and many migrants bring books and magazines with them to read while they are in the UK. Alin told me that in previous years he had visited the village pub once or twice but so far this year he has not had time as he has been working 10-11 hours most days. The group said that they prefer to buy cheaper
alcohol at the supermarket and have parties or drinks on-site rather than going to the pub because they would rather spend time with their friends and the pub is expensive. Alin also said that even if people did want to go to the pub in the village ‘many people don’t know where to go, especially the new ones’. However, Agnieszka, 30, from Poland said that she and her friends like to take walks around the village to look at the countryside and the village architecture, and to learn a bit more about village life by looking at the church and the primary school for example.

*Interactions with Local people*

When conducting the focus groups it became clear that the migrants experience very limited interaction with local people, except for brief encounters in shops, in the nightclub in Elmbridge, and occasionally on the bus. The migrants’ general impression of local people was that they are ‘very nice’ and ‘very helpful’. However, upon reflection, it is possible that here they were expressing what they considered to be publicly acceptable sentiments rather than privately-thought opinions due to my position as a white English researcher who was living in Mayfield at that time. In other words, out of politeness they may not have expressed their true feelings to me. Migrants interviewed by Spencer et al (2007: 73-4) expressed similar perceptions of British people as ‘polite but distant and not interested in forming friendships’. Though they did find that contact with British people increased over time, and that contact was more extensive among those migrants with good English (ibid).

Research conducted by Dawney (2008), however, presents a very different narrative of Central and Eastern European migrants living and working in rural Herefordshire and their interactions with local British residents. She states that every
migrant she interviewed (albeit only six, who may not necessarily have been representative):

…recounted evidence of hostility towards them by British people. This took the form of one or other of: verbal abuse in the street; verbal abuse in bars and pubs; being refused service in shops and agencies; people pretending not to understand; patronising/condescending behaviour; deliberate unhelpfulness and rudeness (Dawney, 2008: 8).

From this evidence Dawney concludes that there is ‘clearly a problem with small, low-level, but often repeated acts of racism and discrimination’ in Herefordshire (2008: 8). Interestingly, in my study, while the residents of Mayfield openly discussed their opinions about Eastern European migrants with me – which were often based upon class-based distinctions, cultural stereotypes and racist rhetoric – the migrants themselves did not discuss issues of racism and discrimination in the focus groups. This is not to say that such prejudice does not exist however. In chapter six, for example, I recounted an incident that I witnessed first-hand at Elmbridge train station where the ticket officer was unhelpful and rude to an Eastern European woman who did not fully understand what he was saying to her. In the same chapter I quoted Mary who had witnessed the staff in Mayfield’s shop and Post Office treating migrants disrespectfully and ‘as though they are stupid’. There are two possible explanations for the fact that my focus group participants did not talk about hostile treatment from local residents. The first is interviewer bias: they may not have felt comfortable talking about such a sensitive issue to me, a white, English ‘outsider’. The second is that migrants’ interactions with local residents are extremely limited due to their long working hours and their social and spatial isolation. For this reason
it is possible that many of the migrants have not experienced face-to-face aggression or prejudice from English people simply because they come into contact with them so infrequently.

In the focus groups we also discussed local events held in the villages during the summer months, and while the majority of participants expressed an interest in attending social occasions such as live music, summer fetes and barbeques, they were mostly unaware of such events taking place. In addition, they stressed that their working hours either preclude attendance, or they are too tired after work to go out. None of them expressed fear of hostility or racism from local residents as a reason for why they did not join in with village social events.

Alin, who visits the nightclub in Elmbridge with his friends, appeared to have had the most contact with local people (and interestingly, the same is also true for the villagers of Mayfield who also go there). However, a question that emerged from these discussions is to what extent seasonal migrant workers need or want to forge social relationships with local English people. For the majority, their migration strategies are temporary and they regularly use the internet and mobile telephones to contact friends, family, and even employers in their home countries. This means that they may not need to develop social networks with the local population as they can access emotional support, information and friendship via their existing and often transnational social ties as well as from each other.

Adam

As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, I also conducted two interviews with Polish migrants. Adam works for the district council as the director of a
government-funded migrant integration project. After seeing an article in the local newspaper about two ‘migrant integration’ initiatives in Elmbridge, I contacted Adam, who was named as the coordinator of the initiatives, and arranged to meet him to find out more about what his job involved and to tell him about my research. Upon his suggestion we first met in a café in Elmbridge, and I interviewed Adam in the same café around a month after our first meeting.

The arrival of large numbers of both short- and long-term Eastern European migrants in the area has driven the need for public bodies such as the council to provide such support services. Adam often works directly with migrants, helping with translation, attending meetings with Eastern European business-people in the area, attending Eastern European social or ‘community’ events, and also providing assistance to those in crisis, migrants who find themselves homeless, and trafficked people. Adam also works with local service providers such as the Police, fire service, schools, health centres, libraries and so forth to help them to meet the needs of their Eastern European users. Since a very large number of Eastern European migrants in the area are seasonal, working on farms in the rural villages surrounding Elmbridge, Adam has a good relationship with many of the farmers and growers who employ migrant workers. Thanks to Adam’s contacts in the industry, his interest in my project, and the good working relationship we developed during my 12 months in Mayfield, he was able to assist me in arranging my focus groups. Adam speaks several Eastern European languages and he acted as a translator during the focus groups when the need arose. Due to his professional role and also his personal experience of migration to the Worcestershire countryside Adam made a valuable contribution to my PhD project, and his perspective on Eastern European’s
experiences of rural English life - whilst different to those migrants living and working on farms - is worth examining here.

Adam is what Eade, Drinkwater & Garapich (2007: 10) would call a ‘stayer’ – a migrant who has been in the UK for some time, and who intends to remain for good. Since he first moved to the UK Adam has experienced significant upward social mobility, and his language skills and professional status have afforded him a degree of social and cultural capital which most seasonal migrant workers in the Elmbridge area do not possess. His migration history and his life in the Elmbridge area are very different to those of the seasonal Eastern European migrants working on the farms. Adam is 36 years old, but before migrating to the UK he lived and worked in the USA for seven years. Adam graduated with a degree in philosophy from a Polish university and in his mid-twenties he moved with a friend to America with the aim of becoming a Catholic Priest. Over time Adam began to miss Europe, his family and friends, and had a change of heart about his vocation. He returned to Poland in 2006, unsure what to do with his life from then on. In 2007 he moved to the UK, and chose to live in Worcestershire as he had a friend and a relative who already lived there. When explaining his motivation for migrating to the UK Adam explained:

The ability to come here and experience the culture and learn about it and be a part of it - that was a deliberate decision on my part. I could have gone to Cyprus or Ireland for example, um, but language was a big factor.

For Adam it was culture, language, and the chance to experience life in Britain which were the main attractions rather than being motivated primarily by financial gain.

Despite Adam’s university degree and his experience in outreach and social work that he gained in America, his first job in the UK was washing dishes in a
restaurant. He told me about his determination to work, and how this eventually led him to his current job at the district council:

When I first came to this country I said I’d do any job. I don’t like being idle. I started off as a dishwasher in a restaurant and ended up as the manager but I hated it. I went on to work in care, but I also worked in a factory in the meantime because there was a bit of a gap and again, I didn’t want to be without a job... and after doing this care work where I was a shift leader... a combination of many things led me to this job.

Adam’s fluency in English has enabled him to acquire a professional job, and this in turn has had an effect on the cultural and social capital he possesses. As Alexander et al (2007, cited in White, 2011: 151) point out ‘to acquire language is to do more than acquire the ability to communicate; it is to acquire culture’, and in Adam’s case social mobility. And as Ryan et al (2008: 686) found in their study of Polish migrants in London, the ability to speak English and to communicate with a diverse range of people is particularly important for migrants, not only in improving their employment opportunities but also in gaining a fuller understanding of, and confidence in, British society. Language is also a crucial factor affecting migrants’ ability to extend and develop social networks (Ryan et al, 2009: 164). Adam’s professional status and language skills mean that his networking strategies are markedly different from the other Eastern European migrants discussed in this chapter. Where many migrants rely on close circles of Eastern European peers for information, friendship and support, Adam does not need to rely on Polish groups because he has the necessary skills to find his own way in British society. Cultural capital is key here: he can move with relative ease across a range of social, cultural, and physical environments such as his
workplace, church, social occasions with colleagues, Elmbridge, his neighbourhood, and the farms he often visits as part of his work.

Over time, Adam has developed new relationships in England, moving from the ‘thick bonds’ with his friend and cousin whom he relied upon when he first migrated to Worcestershire to ‘bridging’ relationships (Putnam, 2007: 143), meaning that he now has social ties to people who are different to him in terms of nationality. Unlike the migrant workers living and working on the farms who are more likely to find companionship and support within tight-knit Eastern European networks, Adam has also had the opportunity to connect socially with British people. But as a long-term resident, this was always his goal whereas the seasonal migrants working at local nurseries have different motivations, and for them, developing social ties with the local population is not necessarily a priority.

The majority of Adam’s friends are British, and unlike most seasonal migrants he does not rely heavily on a transnational network of friends and family for socialisation and emotional support. In fact, Adam lives with his British girlfriend and many of her friends have become his friends too. Despite the relationships he has formed in Worcestershire, he can understand why many new Eastern European migrants may not need or wish to interact with the local English population:

Adam: Today if I want to go back home I book a ticket, and if everything goes according to plan I can leave Birmingham say 10 o’clock, and be home at 4 o’clock literally sitting at my parent’s table, it’s so, so easy. This cliché about the world getting smaller... when I was a kid I dreamt about travelling through Europe. Today I can afford to drive through Europe stopping at France, Germany and getting to Poland, and all this becomes so simple and you take it for granted very quickly as well. So there is no need to create this
artificial sense of belonging or whatever it was like, you know, what’s the word the German’s use?... the ersatz of the real thing. You have the real thing within a 24 hour drive or a couple of hours of the plane.

Helen: Yes, or via Skype or SMS

Adam: Yes all that. It’s a whole different ball game. You are in your living room back home using Skype as you say, and it doesn’t cost you anything.

Adam’s comments suggest that due to advances in the speed and price of European travel combined with the development of technologies such as Skype and instant messaging using mobile phones, migrants are able to maintain their social networks ‘back home’ and perhaps do not need to forge place-based social ties in their immediate surroundings. He argues that there is not necessarily a need to create a ‘home away from home’ these days; or the ‘ersatz’, an imitation, of the real thing.

Our discussion also touched upon the subject of the Polish Community Association in Elmbridge and Adam explained that it had not been as successful as he had hoped. He observed that for some Polish migrants, building a sense of ‘community’ may not be a priority upon their arrival in rural England:

Once people get here, and I’m generalising, but I think it fits the majority I’m afraid, they are very busy trying to make it in this country, um, get a good job and then progress, make sure that your job is getting better, that you’re getting overtime, and that you’re making good money. People will work incredible hours to save and to better their lives. The second thing is, they’re so busy trying to profit from being able to have a job, being able to send their kids to school, buy the nice clothes... there is so, so much focus on this drive to succeed in material terms... people do forget about
something that was never really present in recent Polish history, which is you know, community activity, community engagement, um, being good citizens. Being a good citizen for someone of my age and definitely people older than me means – or used to mean – being a member of the communist party and telling on your neighbours. So, it’s definitely something dramatically different to what this means in this country. And there were no charities, there were no community support groups. All the third sector and non-governmental organisations, whatever you want to call it, all that was lacking with one exception which was the church, and even that was sort of controlled obviously, and trying to be infiltrated by communists.

Adam suggests that Polish people in the Elmbridge area may be reluctant to join organised social and community groups because of the meaning that community engagement, community activity, and ‘good citizenship’ acquired during the communist era, and that while migrants are working extremely hard in England to make a better life for themselves and their families, they do not prioritise involvement in community activities, since this may not have been a part of their pre-migration lives in Poland. However, despite Adam’s observation that Eastern European migrants in Elmbridge and the surrounding area may not be ‘doing community’ through pre-arranged events and organised committees, the narratives of other migrants, which I shall now turn to, suggest that they are engaged in community-focused activities and in developing and maintaining social networks. While Adam adopts an understanding of ‘community’ similar to that of the villagers (that a sense of community is created through participation in organised social activities), other migrants connect socially with others in less organised and formalised ways, and do not necessarily talk about these connections in ‘community’ terms.
Patryk

Patryk – my second Polish interviewee – is 37 years old and at the time of our interview he had been living in the UK for five years. He was made redundant from his logistics job in Poland and struggled to find alternative employment. With a young family to support, Patryk and his wife decided that it would be beneficial for him to seek work overseas. Patryk made it known to friends and family in Poland that he was looking for work in Europe, and as a result, an acquaintance told him about a job opportunity in Birmingham. The terms of the job sounded agreeable and he had some basic English language skills, so Patryk travelled to Birmingham by coach in pursuit of work, where his wife and children would join him once he had settled into his job and found somewhere to live. However, when he arrived in Birmingham there was no sign of the job he had been promised. The telephone number he had been given by his contact in Poland had been disconnected, so he found himself in the UK with no employment and no accommodation.

Luckily Patryk was able to contact a cousin who was already living in the Midlands, and she allowed him to stay with her temporarily. She then helped him to find another job and more permanent accommodation. Patryk’s cousin was working at a food-processing factory, Freshpak Foods, in the village neighbouring Mayfield, and she encouraged him to apply for a vacancy there as a forklift driver in the warehouse. Patryk’s job application was successful, and he subsequently found a flatshare in Elmbridge with four South African migrants, with whom he improved his conversational English.15 After six months Patryk felt that his job was secure and he

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15 Around this time large fruit and vegetable growers and food-production businesses employed a significant number of South African migrants, particularly on short-term, seasonal contracts during the summer months. However, when I conducted my fieldwork, they had been replaced with Eastern Europeans (who by this time were EU citizens), and there were very few South Africans remaining.
had saved enough money for a deposit on a rental flat, so his wife, and young children joined him in Elmbridge where they still live.

I met Patryk as a result of a conversation with a Mayfield resident who works in the administration department of Freshpak Foods. However, Adam had also suggested that Patryk would be a ‘good person to talk to’ about the Polish Community Association (PCA) in Elmbridge, of which Patryk was the chairman and a founder-member. It had become apparent, however, that the PCA had not attracted very much interest among the Polish population in Elmbridge and as a result, its success had been limited. I was interested to know what had motivated Patryk to take on the role of chairman, and also whether he could explain why the Association had failed to thrive since there is a significant number of Poles (as well as other Eastern European migrants) living in the town and surrounding villages.

His motivation for setting up the group was manifold: he hoped that it would foster social connections among the Polish population in the Elmbridge area, provide an opportunity to arrange excursions, social events and celebrations with fellow Poles, and also, to set up a forum where Polish migrants could share issues and problems and discuss ‘community’ matters. However, after one or two successful organised visits to tourist attractions, interest in the PCA waned. It seemed that many Polish people in the area had a stronger need for practical, instrumental support in setting up their lives in the Elmbridge area rather than developing social networks. For example, Patryk told me:

Patryk: In the start when we opened the Polish Community Association, ah, the people think we are open just for help. OK, we tell yeah, we can help you with some documents, we can translate for you, we can help you fill in these forms, but uh, few of my friends told me it’s not just what it is for. People
think OK, we come with the documents, he fill in for me, go with me to the
district council. We doing like this, but uh, afterwards we hear in the town “I
was with Patryk, and nothing, nothing, I haven’t had any help from council,
any, I can’t get any money, I can’t get social house”. Hey what do you think?
You think I go to the council and say you have to give to him because I am
from, I am chairman from Polish community association?

Helen: Oh right. So they misunderstood what it was about?

Patryk: Yeah, yeah. You can’t do everything and bring it for them like that.

It seemed that some of the Polish migrants who had approached the PCA had
misunderstood its purpose, or at least the amount of leverage Patryk had with the
local council. Whist Patryk was happy to help people with filling in forms and
translation, he could not be held responsible for decisions made at the district council
regarding financial support and social housing. What this does demonstrate however,
is the need for this kind of practical support in the Elmbridge area, and that sufficient
advice may not be adequately provided or may not be getting through to migrants via
other public service suppliers.

Notwithstanding the initial misunderstandings regarding the purpose of the
PCA however, something that Adam and Patryk both explained was that generally
speaking, Polish people take a different view of ‘community’ activities and social
networking relative to people in Britain, and that often, as Eade, Drinkwater &
Garapich (2007) and Ryan et al (2009) have documented, Polish migrants in the UK
have been known to view one another with suspicion, jealousy, or as in competition.
When I asked Patryk whether he and his family had made many friends in the local area, or if his social networks were predominantly based back in Poland he answered:

Patryk: We found a few families here, but it’s difficult to find some normal people here, you know.

Helen: What do you mean by normal?

Patryk: Um, Polish people, they are very difficult to do some, some associations. Some you know, they want to, I don’t know. I think it’s everything from 20, 30 year ago when people fighting for bread, for meat, and they are still, they still think ah, OK, we shouldn’t connection with you – They think ‘look, they open the Polish Community Association now they bought the new car’. It’s um... Jealous? Jealousy.

Helen: Oh right

Patryk: It’s very bad for some people. They just think about money, money, money, yeah. Some people change. They try to do the same as English people, English younger [young people]. But it’s just the younger generations who change, for others it’s very bad.

Patryk suggests that his difficulty making friends with other Polish migrants stems from their experiences under communism. In his opinion, a culture of distrust and jealousy remains a problem when forging social relationships even post-migration in England. Though as he suggests, this may be a generational issue. None of the migrants on the farms talked about this problem. What is also revealing about
Patryk’s answer is that he does not mention friendships or relationships with English people. When I asked him if he had made any friends in the local area, I did not expect that his friendships and ‘associations’ as he calls them, would be so confined within national boundaries. He explained that he has some English colleagues but that their relationships do not extend to friendships outside of the workplace.

Patryk’s suggestion that Polish migrants are suspicious of one another may also go some way to explaining why the PCA has enjoyed only limited success. The importance of a ‘sense of community’ and ‘community’ initiatives: a discourse so pervasive in Britain, and indeed in the village of Mayfield, do not, according to Patryk, have the same resonance or meaning in Polish society. In Patryk’s – and also Adam’s - experience Polish migrants do not feel compelled to join community groups purely on the basis of shared nationality. The migrants in Elmbridge and surrounding villages such as Mayfield are cross-cut by age, gender, social class, education, and so on. Therefore, as Kathy Burrell (2009: 236) argues in her study of Polish migrants in the UK, ‘being Polish on its own, even with this shared history, is not enough to cement bonds with other Polish people – other factors have to come into play too’.

Despite this, Patryk and his family have forged some social relationships through the Elmbridge Polish Saturday School which he and his wife are involved in running, and it seems that his two children have played an important role in increasing Patryk and his wife’s social connections with other Polish parents. He values the opportunity to educate the children of Polish migrants (some of whom were born in Poland and some of whom were born in the UK) about Polish language, history and culture. He told me:
The Polish school is important for us, for meeting some other people. The youngest children is 3 ½ or 4 year and the oldest we have is 18, 19, something like that. There the children learn about Polish language, they don’t have to write much down, it’s more like learning about our [linguistic] rules. Ours and English are different... They do some geography with history, more as history of Poland because many times you know, Poland was occupation many, many times... They learn some culture with music, some songs, Polish songs, old traditional songs. I can tell you about 50 percent of the children there were born here and 50 percent were born in Poland, so for some they can remember what they knew in Poland and for others they learn about the country where their parents come from.

Patryk and his wife were motivated to be involved with the running of the Polish Saturday school in order to provide a cultural education about Poland for their children, and moreover, for their children to play, enjoy themselves, and socialise with other Polish children. However, Patryk acknowledges that the older children, or rather teenagers, become less interested as they become more integrated, make more friends outside of the Polish school, and are old enough to meet up with friends in town rather than taking part in the organised activities at the Saturday school:

Every Saturday my wife and some more parents were going to Wexford [a town approximately 15 miles from Elmbridge] to Polish school, and I said why not open one here?... So my wife, me and a few friends said why not? You know, it’s not for us, it’s for kids we can do something. If after one year, two years we see is not very interesting we close yeah, it doesn’t matter. But the school is open for two years now, and now we’ve got some problems with money but we’ve still got about 30 children coming. When it’s nice weather in summer it’s better... the youngest group is the best, they want to come, want to meet with friends, they want to go on some break.
inside or outside playing together. Worst is with the older ones. They got different world. More friends, more English friends. They can go into town, it’s different with them.

While Patryk continues to rely on Polish networks for social activities and friendships, he is witnessing the teenage children (and his own adolescent children) improving their English language skills, making friends at school, and becoming socially mobile.

Patryk has met some English people through his job at Freshpak Foods, but his relationships with them do not extend beyond the workplace and he told me that he would not see any of his English colleagues outside of work. Most of the English people who work at Freshpak are concentrated in managerial and administrative jobs whereas he works in the warehouse. Patryk has also widened his networks beyond the Polish population in his dealings with the district council who assisted him in setting up the PCA, yet again his relationships with these people remain professional rather than social. He has ambitions to advance his career however, and he sees language as the key to his success. He explained that he had applied for a job with a pharmaceutical company who was seeking a candidate to communicate with clients in England and Poland:

It’s good money, but you know, my English is still uh... I think I have to learn more in this area, the technical language I suppose. They wanted contact with clients to be by phone or internet, but they didn’t think it was for me. My Polish is very well, but my English – ah, maybe it will be difficult for me to translate from Polish to English, I don’t know. But I think I can improve my English. I have to improve my English.
Patryk’s believes that his lack of fluency in English is a barrier to increasing his earning power and to advancing his career. When Patryk initially arrived in the UK his plan was to earn enough money to comfortably support his wife and children, yet he and his wife planned to keep their options open regarding their migration plans. At the time of our interview, however, Patryk and his family were keen to stay in England for the foreseeable future. His children are doing well in school and are becoming integrated with both English and Polish children in Elmbridge, and his wife is also has a part-time job at a factory in Elmbridge which produces ready-meals and processed foods.

Although Patryk talked about community isolation, he and his family are in fact developing numerous social ties and connections, both with the Polish migrant population and the local English population in varied and complex ways. Both Patryk and his wife are employed, they have friends at the Polish Saturday School, and his children are acquiring both social and cultural capital through attending a local school. While he may not use the term ‘community’ to describe his family’s networks, they are nonetheless forging place-based relationships with others who live in Elmbridge.

**Reflections on Class Status, Respectability and Social Mobility**

Contrary to villagers’ perceptions of Eastern European migrants as lower-class, low status Others who are not respectable and thus ‘not quite white’, I observed those migrants who took part in my interviews and focus groups to be ambitious, conscientious and socially mobile young people. As I mentioned earlier, they came from a variety of national, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds; among the
respondents were a student of dance and drama, a child-minder, a graphic designer, a hairdresser, a former chaplain, horticulture students and a bartender - and their motivations for working in the horticulture industry in rural England were equally diverse. For some, the experience of working on an English horticultural farm for the summer is not dissimilar to the British middle-class concept of the gap year or conducting voluntary work overseas: the rationale being to work hard, play hard, make friends, have fun, and gain some experience of living and working abroad. For others, working in rural England provides an opportunity to improve their financial stability in order to support their families, pursue education, build homes or travel the world. I also met students who were acquiring industry-related work experience as part of horticultural degrees taken in their home countries.

While I met individuals who talked about being forced to seek overseas employment as a last resort due to the collapse of local industries for example, and the extreme hardships they have faced in doing so (such as being separated from children, partners and families, or operating an annual rotation of three different jobs in three different countries), there are migrants who use the experience of working in the Worcestershire countryside to accrue economic, social and cultural capital. The migrants I met during my fieldwork are socially mobile young people who do not mirror the portrait painted of them by the residents of Mayfield. Rather than lacking in respectability, many Eastern European migrants hold strong moral and ‘traditional’ values; many are married, have children and families whom they are providing for, and are saving their earnings to invest in property, education and business. My sense is that the villagers would perceive such behaviour in their own children to be highly respectable, sensible and conscientious.
Migrants are also marked out as Other and a different ‘shade’ of white by Mayfield residents due to perceptions about cultural and ethnic difference. For the migrants, however, the food, fashion and language that they have brought to the English countryside is comforting and a connection to their homelands; an expression of identity and all part of maintaining ties to home. Yet at the same time the migrants are experiencing a new culture and some are learning new languages, and they will either take this capital home with them, or will continue to develop it in the UK. One need only recall the young Latvian women discussed in chapter six who were learning accountancy skills alongside Zoe at the local college, and Matteus, discussed in chapter seven, who worked at a horticultural nursery in Mayfield for several years so that he could build a new home for himself and his family in Poland.

Adam has experienced significant social mobility since he first arrived in England. He started out washing dishes in a restaurant, and now he coordinates a migrant integration project at the district council. He speaks fluent English, has a professional job, an English girlfriend with whom he owns a house in a desirable location, has broad social and professional networks, and embraces a transnational lifestyle. Inexpensive flights from the midlands to Poland allow Adam and his girlfriend to travel to visit his parents and friends regularly.

Patryk’s migration trajectory has been somewhat different. He is employed, but in a job for which he is over-qualified. In fact, he feels that his children are overtaking him in terms of their social mobility and acquisition of cultural capital. He commented that they speak English more fluently than him, and that they have more English friends. Patryk is concerned with maintaining a connection with Polish culture and educating his children about their heritage and genealogy. His social relationships are mostly with other Polish families, especially through his
involvement with the Polish Saturday school and the Polish Community Association in Elmbridge. While Patryk does not possess the transnational lifestyle or the same degree of cultural capital as Adam, his children probably will in the future.

Conclusion

Adam, Patryk, and the migrants at Elmbridge Valley, Hillside, and Meridian Nurseries all have different experiences of rural English life. The seasonal migrants are largely isolated from local English social networks due to their long working hours and the combined effect of low economic and social capital. In other words, they do not earn enough money to spend on socialising and leisure activities, preferring instead to save their earnings and socialise on the farm sites. Their social networks in Worcestershire are therefore confined to the farms with other migrant workers, and they are unable to form ‘bridging’ relationships (Putnam, 2000) with local English residents partly due to their long and anti-social working hours, and also because local and migrant social networks rarely overlap.

Language also significantly shapes the migrants’ social networks. For example, Adam’s fluency in English has helped him to build a network of English friends and successfully advance his career from a dishwasher in a restaurant to the coordinator of the district council’s Migrant Integration in Rural Areas project in Elmbridge. Patryk’s language skills have also helped him at work, and also in working with the district council to found the Polish Community Association. He is witnessing his children becoming fluent in English, and believes that he too will need to become fluent in order to move into a more professional career. The seasonal migrants have very limited opportunities to learn or practice English whilst living and
working in the English countryside. Since their colleagues are predominantly from Eastern European countries they tend to speak their own languages to their peers, or a kind of ‘hybrid’ or pidgin English with those from other nationalities. This means that when they do have an opportunity to speak English to local people they often do not feel confident to do so (and many others do not have any English language skills at all).

Length of stay in England has an important influence upon migrants’ interactions with local people, as well as individuals’ motivations for migration. Adam and Patryk both plan to remain in England long-term, whereas many of the seasonal migrant workers are primarily concerned not with experiencing British culture but earning as much money as possible in the space of a few short months. This inevitably has an important bearing on the development of social ties with the English population during their time in the Worcestershire countryside. But despite this, they forge close and often long-term relationships with one another.
Chapter 9
Discussion and Conclusion

Making Sense of Whiteness, Class & Rurality in Mayfield

Introduction

In this concluding chapter I draw together the key theoretical threads that weave throughout my research and outline the unique contribution that this thesis makes to existing knowledge about white hegemony and ethnic minority exclusion from the English countryside. I begin by discussing the way that class is constructed in the village, and how classed discourses are deployed by village residents in order to situate Eastern European migrants as lower-status Others. I then go on to explain the relevance of race – and in particular, whiteness – to this study. I argue that although my thesis focuses on the processes by which majority whites (English villagers) construct minority whites (Eastern European migrants) as rural outsiders, it is still important to understand the role of race in creating such distinctions. I contend that because whiteness as a racial identity so often goes unnoticed in Mayfield, Eastern European migrants are not racialised in a straightforward way. Instead, I suggest that the migrants are subject to a process of ‘ethnicisation’, whereby their cultural and class differences are the most important bases upon which they are excluded from village life. The migrants’ race only comes into view when they are discussed in relation to black and ethnic minority village residents, and it is at this point that villagers realise that although Eastern European migrants are white, their inferior culture and class status situates them as a different shade of white.
I then continue with a discussion of the importance of ethnographic methods to developing a deep understanding of social inclusion and exclusion in Mayfield, and also the ways in which village residents understand and perform their nationality and rurality, which often occurs on an unconscious, taken-for-granted and banal (Billig, 1995) level. Once I have presented the villagers’ perceptions of Eastern European migrants and the ways in which they define their English rural identity in opposition to the migrant Other, I justify my inclusion of the migrants’ voice in my thesis. Migrants’ own accounts of life in rural England are not only suppressed in Mayfield, but have also been largely overlooked in the academic fields of sociology, rural and migration studies. I argue that rather than reflecting the villagers’ image of migrants as low-status, ‘backward’ and lacking respectability, the migrants I interviewed were instead ambitious and socially mobile young people who through working in rural Worcestershire are acquiring economic, social and cultural capital. Finally, I conclude the chapter and this thesis by reiterating the importance of the rural as a new territory for the study of whiteness, migration and multiculture.

Social Class and Respectability: Defining the Village Self against the Migrant Other

The villagers of Mayfield are diverse in terms of their class situations, political and religious beliefs, wealth, occupations, age, and gender as well as other factors. They also have varied histories and ties to Mayfield, and these social locations and stratifications shape the ways in which different village residents perceive Eastern European migrants. The first section of this chapter will explain how social class is
constructed in Mayfield and the role that class plays in securing the villagers’ insider status while excluding Eastern European migrants from the village.

Some family histories can be traced back for generations in Mayfield and people belonging to these families are known as ‘Old Mayfield’ people. Being known as an Old Mayfield person credits the individual with a kind of ‘true village’ status: a status of ‘belonging’ and permanence in the village with large place-based kinship networks. The members of these families that I met and interviewed have never lived anywhere except Mayfield and would not consider moving elsewhere. These individuals feel a deep connection between their family identity and place. Almost all of the Old Mayfield families have links to the village’s horticultural industry. If they no longer work in horticulture themselves, it is likely that their parents and grandparents did. Three Old Mayfield families still own farms and nurseries in the village, and so they feel a very deep connection with the land. The physical landscape of the village has quite literally been shaped over the generations by the hands and machinery of their ancestors. As a result, many Old Mayfield people are very knowledgeable about the physical, social, and horticultural history of the place.

Old Mayfield residents vary in their relationships to traditional markers of class status, and it is difficult to define them as a group in class terms. For example, those who are involved in the horticulture industry spend much of their time engaged in manual and physical labour, but many are also involved with the management, administration and finances of their businesses. Many (particularly the older generations, and especially women) have no formal educational qualifications but they have a detailed and extensive knowledge of horticultural issues. Some Old Mayfield people have inherited businesses and farmhouses, and one family has built a large modern house in the village with the profits from their horticultural nursery.
Some make public displays of their affluence by driving expensive cars and making large monetary donations to village institutions such as the school, church and village hall as well as other local charities. By contrast there are other Old Mayfield people involved in horticulture at a subsistence level who struggle to make ends meet. Many of the younger-generations have sought work in different industries because the minimal remuneration and difficult labour conditions have made the horticulture industry undesirable.

Village residents who have lived in Mayfield for fifteen years or more (but were not born there), and particularly those who invest time in and demonstrate a commitment to organising the village’s social or ‘community’ events are considered to be ‘village people’. Village people do not necessarily have any connection with the village’s horticultural industry, but most are deeply proud of the village’s history and are involved in numerous ways in upholding village traditions. For example, it is mostly village people who are involved in the organisation and running of the Parish council, the British Legion social club, the village hall, the maypole dancing, the annual summer fair and Christmas carols. Like Old Mayfield residents, village people are internally differentiated in terms of class position, however, they are less likely to work on the land and they do not usually have family histories that are interwoven with the horticulture industry.

The third sub-population of villagers is known as the ‘incomers’. Incomers generally have no prior connection with the village and have moved to Mayfield from urban and rural areas from across the UK. They self-consciously identify themselves as ‘incomers’, which actively distances them from the ‘Old Mayfield’ people. This distancing often manifests itself as a class separation. Generally speaking, incomers’ close social networks tend to be with other incomers, and they regularly characterise
Old Mayfield people as being old-fashioned, uneducated, and lower class horticultural labourers lacking knowledge of life beyond the village.

Incomers, though varied in their socio-economic, educational and political backgrounds, are the most likely of the three groups to talk about village life through discourses of ‘community’, and are more likely to view rural living as a lifestyle choice based on ideas about neighbourly friendliness and reciprocity, safety, proximity of the village school to the home (within walking distance), and the use of the countryside for recreation. This group is also the most likely of the three to demonstrate their taste and status through material goods such as fashion, cars and the presentation of their homes, which reflects the middle-class taste and styles displayed in rural lifestyle magazines such as *Country Living* and *Country Life*.

I have revisited the social structure of the village in detail here in order to reiterate how different groups of villagers possess different types of capital, which in turn affects how they perceive Eastern European migrants in different ways. Old Mayfield villagers’ capital is rooted in their knowledge of local history, traditions and place, as well as their knowledge of horticulture. They also know and can recall several generations of other Old Mayfield families: in short, their histories are entwined with the history of the village. Their experience and understanding of the horticultural industry means that on this level, they can identify with migrants who work long hours in physically demanding jobs. Old Mayfield people are likely to observe migrants’ language and food as markers of difference, but they are less likely than incomers or village people to judge them on the basis of fashion and taste.

Village people’s capital is rooted in their social networks, which are created and sustained through their involvement with village social organisations and activities, and also their status as long-term residents in the village. Village people are
also concerned with the maintenance of village traditions and rituals (such as maypole
dancing and the Mayfield wake), and perceive village residents’ involvement with
these events as essential in maintaining a sense of village identity and identification
with place. This means that village people are most likely to explain migrants’ lack of
belonging in the village due to their lack of connection with place and the short-term
nature of their residence. Finally, incomers’ capital is also based in their social
networks, but also in their identity as consumers of a rural lifestyle. Incomers make
classed distinctions about others based on judgements about taste. The incomers’
capital means that they can make distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ taste,
appropriate and inappropriate clothing, behaviours, work, living conditions and
therefore on those bases, who should be included in or excluded from village life.

What unites Mayfield village residents in opposition to Eastern European
migrant workers are these various types of social and cultural capital and knowledge
of how to perform good neighbourliness, ‘community’ and respectability that cuts
across class locations. Their identity as a ‘respectable’ village is constructed
according to a set of rural English ‘decorums’ of whiteness (Hartigan, 2003) related
to engagement in village social activities, the upholding of village traditions,
appropriate presentation of the self and the home, and engaging in social and sexual
relationships with the ‘right’ people. Eastern Europeans do not possess these unique
social and cultural knowledges and consequently they are constructed as Other,
against which village identity and belonging is defined.

Throughout my twelve-month ethnography I recorded a list of traits or
perceived characteristics that are repeatedly drawn upon by Mayfield residents which
are thought to apply to all Eastern European migrants. This list is repeated so
frequently in local discourse that it has come to represent ‘commonsense’ knowledge
about Eastern Europeans, which separates them from local people. According to the residents of Mayfield, Eastern Europeans:

1. Do jobs that local people no longer want to do
2. Are hard workers
3. Do not speak English
4. Keep themselves to themselves and do not want to integrate with local people
5. Live in poor and cramped conditions, and
6. are therefore poor and lower class - they cannot afford to buy homes
7. Send all of their money ‘home’
8. Do not dress respectably or fashionably and therefore lack taste
9. Do not respect women (and are therefore ‘backward’ or old-fashioned in their acceptance of unequal gender relations)
10. Are excessive drinkers of vodka.

Most of these stereotypes employed by the residents of Mayfield are negative. One – being hardworking – is seen as positive, but others are simply ambivalent. This list operates as a way of fixing all Eastern Europeans as Other, and also of positioning them as a threat to respectable, orderly ways of white rural English life. By characterising the migrants in this way, however, we learn nothing about the migrants themselves. What we do learn from the list is what is considered to be white English respectable ways of living, which is implicitly described in relation to what it is not.

In Mayfield, the English villagers’ respectability and class status, which is secured by what Tyler (2003: 396) has called a ‘tacit cultural knowledge’ about how
to fit in to the local system of ‘respectable, desirable, and acceptable ways of living’ confirms their sense of rural belonging in opposition to Eastern European migrant labourers who do not have the necessary cultural knowledge or ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) to fit in with this model of village life. As I discussed in chapter three, in Skeggs’ (1997) and Watt’s (2006) studies, respectability is a notion that working class women and council-house dwellers respectively draw upon to distance themselves from ‘rough’ low-status Others who share the same social and residential space as themselves. By contrast, in Mayfield a discourse of respectability is mobilised as a way of uniting village residents across class divisions and conferring upon them a sense of ‘respectable village identity’ in opposition to Eastern European migrants who are perceived as not respectable, and are thus positioned as outsiders who are incommensurably Other. This distinction is made by villagers on the basis of judgements about migrants’ clothing, hairstyles, language, food, dwellings, labour and poverty as well as cultural stereotypes about ‘backward’ gender relations and alcohol consumption. What emerged strongly in my findings then, was that culture and class status (comprising cultural, social and economic capital) are the foremost bases upon which village residents construct their identity in opposition to Eastern European migrants, and the concept of respectability is central to this process. As I go on to explain in the following section of this chapter, the Mayfield residents combine these classed discourses with racist rhetoric to situate Eastern European migrants as incommensurably Other.
**Different Shades of White**

When discussing my thesis with colleagues and peers at conferences and also in the sociology department at Surrey, people have questioned the extent to which my project is really about race and whiteness rather than simply about class distinctions. I am studying the relationship between two white European groups and the processes through which the dominant white group constructs the subordinate white group as Other, so what has this got to do with race? I would like to address this question here.

In the English countryside and in Mayfield specifically, whiteness is pervasive. According to the 2001 census, over 99% of Mayfield’s population is white (www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk). It has been well-documented that in such white-dominated contexts race becomes invisible; white people do not think that race is something that they possess and they do not consider their lives to be affected or shaped in any way by race (cf. Frankenberg, 1993; Byrne, 2006; Doane, 2003; Chesler et al, 2003). However, just because race - or rather whiteness - can become invisible to white people this does not mean to say that race is not present and is not operating socially, culturally, structurally, or through the repetition of unconscious everyday practices and discourses. Therefore, race is relevant to any study focusing on the social lives of white people. What I have tried to achieve in my study is an analysis of the ways in which the white residents of Mayfield ‘do whiteness’ through their daily routines, their pastimes, social lives and worldviews, the way in which doing whiteness is inextricably linked with discourses about class, and crucially, the way in which white rural English identity is constructed in relation to what it is not – in relation to a white Other.
In chapter six I explored the extent to which Eastern European migrants in Mayfield are racialised. A number of scholars working in the field of race and whiteness studies including Fox et al (2012), Garner (2009; 2012) and Dawney (2008) have argued that white skin does not shield Eastern European migrants in Britain from processes of racialization and the effects of racism. To return to a quote discussed earlier in chapter two, Garner (2009: 48) has argued that minority whites such as Eastern European migrants can be racialised in majority white landscapes such as the English countryside. He explains:

...race is not only to do with colour, but with tying culture to bodies in a hierarchical way... A neat line between ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ is not an accurate reflection of how people always talk or behave. Groups that are ostensibly ‘white’ can therefore also be racialised in majority white countries. In the British context this has historically included Jews, the Irish Catholics and other Eastern European migrants.

Similarly, Fox et al (2012: 681) contend that ‘racialisation does not require putative phenotypical or biological difference; it can also make use of (and/or construct) cultural traits as a basis of differentiation’ (also see Modood, 2005). However, it is not clear when such processes become ‘racial’ or come to be about race, or when they actually rely on ethnicity, culture, and social class to mark Others as different.

Fox et al (2012: 681) also argue that ‘racialisation occurs when the category of ‘race’ is invoked and evoked in discursive and institutional practices to interpret, order, and indeed structure social relations’. In the context of Mayfield, however, I argue that the category ‘race’ is not evoked in the village residents’ discourses about Eastern European migrants and their exclusion from the social life of the village. This is because, for the most part, it is not just their own racial identities that are invisible
to the residents of Mayfield, but also the migrants’. The whiteness of the population in rural Worcestershire is taken-for-granted and thus goes unnoticed.

Due to the invisibility of whiteness in Mayfield, Eastern European migrants are marked as Other by village residents in class and ethnic rather than racial terms. After all, the villagers are engaged in a process of securing their status and identity not in relation to black or postcolonial Others, but in opposition to a new white Other. This is not to say, however, that there are not parallels between the racist rhetoric and discourses used to stigmatise and subjugate black and postcolonial populations and those used to position Eastern European migrants as different, inferior and low-status.

As I have previously discussed, villagers frequently make judgements about migrants’ embodied characteristics such as clothing and hairstyles as well as labour, food and language to exemplify the cultural gulf between the two groups. There is no doubt that these discourses are historically tied to processes of racialisation and racism, but because the Eastern European migrants in Mayfield are white, they are not positioned as ‘racial’ in a straightforward way.

In fact, the migrants’ whiteness only becomes visible to the residents of Mayfield in relation to Others who are not white. In chapter six I focused upon the way that Zoe talked about a mixed-race family who had lived in Mayfield in the recent past, and I also quoted Ruth who believes that local acceptance of migrant horticultural labourers would be different were they not white-skinned. Zoe talked about this mixed-race family, and particularly the children, in explicitly racial terms describing them as ‘lovely brown’ and ‘really black’. Ruth expressed her opinion that if the horticultural labourers in Mayfield were postcolonial rather than white European migrants, there would be a ‘very different feeling’ towards them with ‘more aggro, more hostility’ from village residents. I included these narratives in my thesis.
in order to highlight the way in which Eastern European migrants are not racialised in Mayfield in the same way as Others who are not white, and I have concluded that the Eastern European migrants in Mayfield and its surrounding area are ‘ethnicised’ rather than racialised.

When village residents talk about Eastern European migrants, they do not talk about race, but instead identify alternative markers of difference based on ethnicity, social class and respectability including clothing and hairstyles, language, food, living conditions, poverty and labour. It may be argued that when mobilising these discourses of difference, villagers draw upon racist idioms and rhetoric which are embedded in Britain’s colonial past and postcolonial present, and therefore the distinction between racialisation and ethnicisation is blurred and difficult to define. Yet, in the context of Mayfield, I maintain that it is their ethnicity and lower class position rather than their ‘racial’ identity, which are drawn upon by village residents to situate Eastern European migrants as a different ‘shade’ of white. Village residents recognise that these migrants are white, but they are not quite as white as ‘us’. These processes of ethnicisation combined with the classed distinctions discussed earlier in this chapter shape the degree of multicultural intimacies that are permitted and accepted between Eastern European migrants and English village residents.

**The Idiom of the Working Village and the Need for Migrant Labour**

In her research into the racism experienced by Central and Eastern European migrants in Herefordshire, Dawney (2008: 4) argues that a recurring theme in the literature on rural racism is its ‘characterisation as racism borne out of ignorance rather than familiarity’. Or in other words, ‘the scarcity of visible ethnic minorities in rural
communities means long-term residents’ ideas about ethnic minorities may be based on third party information, from the media and from other people, rather than from contact with ethnic minorities themselves’ (ibid). Dawney suggests that racism in rural areas, which often takes the form of sweeping generalisations and judgements based on stereotypical assumptions, is articulated through ignorance and lack of contact rather than through direct experience of and interaction with different cultural groups. In the absence of such contact and interaction, stereotypical opinions are often informed by popular discourse and tabloid media stories of England being ‘flooded’ or ‘overrun’ with migrants, however such opinions did not emerge strongly in my fieldwork in Mayfield.

The residents of Mayfield’s opinions on Eastern European migrants appeared to me to be formed mainly on the basis of their first-hand experiences and observations of the impact of migration on the local area, rather than wider national debates about immigration or the sensationalist and xenophobic media notions of England being ‘full up’ with migrants. This can be explained, I believe, by villagers’ recognition and acceptance that migrant labour plays an essential role in keeping the village’s horticultural industry afloat. In chapter six I quoted Brian who highlighted the role migrants are playing, not only in sustaining the local economy, but also in preserving the ‘heritage’ and the traditional identity of the village. He explained that without Eastern European labour the land in Mayfield ‘would probably go fallow and the area would lose its distinctiveness’. Thus the villagers’ ‘place image’ of Mayfield as a ‘working village’ is central to their acceptance of Eastern European migrants in the locality. The village has not become gentrified like so many in the neighbouring Cotswolds – it is not a dormitory for second-home owners and commuters, and it is not a tourist destination full of quaint honey-coloured stone buildings. Residents
repeatedly use the idiom of the working village as a reminder of Mayfield’s horticultural past and present, and it also reflects the villagers’ sense that this is the ‘real’ countryside, which comprises farming, enterprise and hard work.

As I explained in chapter six, Eastern European migrants are consistently referred to by village residents as migrant ‘workers’. This emphasises the fact that the migrants are here to work, and because they are employed in the horticultural sector, their presence dovetails sufficiently with the interests and image of the working village. Dawney (2008: 8) demonstrates a comparable finding: she interviewed a Polish farm worker in Herefordshire who ‘spoke of the importance of his employment as a key factor in his being “accepted” into village life’. Similarly in Mayfield, the migrants’ work justifies their presence, while at the same time limiting it: ‘they’ are here to conduct the labour that ‘we’ no longer want to do. Therefore, another reason the village residents do not use the xenophobic ‘England is full up’ discourse is because the migrant workers are not taking anything that village residents want or value. They do not want to work for long hours and substandard wages on the horticultural farms, and they are not competing for housing. The situation would be very different if village residents were struggling to get a place for their children in the village school, or had to wait several days for a GP appointment and attributed such competition for services to the observed presence of more migrants in those settings. For now, however, local services do not appear to be strained by seasonal migrants’ presence and many villagers accept the important role that Eastern European migrants are playing in sustaining the local economy. It is their impact upon the social and cultural landscape of the area that the residents of Mayfield view with rather more ambivalence.
**Multicultural Intimacies**

My thesis has revealed that a number of villagers and migrants do interact at a variety of levels and in a range of spheres in the Mayfield locality, but that there remains an inherent power dynamic between the two groups where a social dichotomy is erected between villager/insider/self and migrant/outsider/other. This dichotomous relationship subsequently informs local discourse regarding the appropriateness of villagers’ interactions and relationships with migrants. Different degrees of intimacy between English villagers and Eastern European migrants are deemed acceptable and even encouraged, or unacceptable and feared. While interactions between villagers and migrants appear to be increasing, the boundary between village ‘us’ and migrant ‘them’ remains.

Once again, these ‘multicultural intimacies’ (Fortier, 2007) are informed by ideas about migrants’ class status and their construction as a different ‘shade’ of white. A certain level of ‘closeness’ between migrants and villagers is tolerated, usually in the form of business-like transactions where money is exchanged for goods or a service. For example, it is acceptable for village people to employ Eastern European migrants to conduct jobs that local people no longer want to do; it is acceptable to rent properties to migrants; and it is even acceptable to sample the cuisine at the new Polish restaurant in Elmbridge (but less acceptable to enjoy it). However, there is a limit to the degree of multicultural intimacy that villagers are willing to tolerate with migrants. As I discussed in chapter seven, elevating the degree of intimacy between villagers and Eastern European migrants to that of friendship, sexual intimacy, or a deeper exchange of cultural values provokes anxiety about the preservation of dominant white, English rural identity.
Understanding Nationality and Rurality through Ethnography

The English countryside provides the social, cultural and geographical context for this thesis. However, I have not devoted a large amount of analytical space to the concepts of ‘Englishness’ or nationality. This is partly because whiteness and social class became the key focal points of my research, but also because in the Mayfield residents’ daily lives, Englishness is implicit rather than explicit, taken for granted, banal. The same could be said for the way in which the rural ‘village’ or ‘community’ is performed, and therefore, an ethnographic approach to the study of belonging and exclusion in English village life has proved important for uncovering the unconscious, ‘commonsense’ and nuanced ways in which nationality and rurality operate as well as the conferring of insider and outsider status.

The ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Mayfield is central to my understanding of the villagers’ interview narratives: it provides a context for the interview data I collected. My observations of the rhythms of village life, the daily minutiae, and the ingrained and unnoticed processes through which the white English villagers of Mayfield construct a sense of collective identity in opposition to Eastern European migrant workers helped me to make sense of the accounts of village life that I was presented with in interviews. Furthermore, my ethnographic fieldwork also revealed the importance of place to understanding articulations of whiteness and class, whereby ‘belonging’ to a particular locale becomes interwoven with the formation of classed and racial identities. As Tyler (2012a: 211) argues, the entwining of race, class and place is fundamental to the formation of white ethnicities and consequently, an ethnographic approach to place is crucial to an in-depth analysis of the ways in which white classed identities are lived and experienced.
My interviews with villagers and migrants, combined with focus groups and participant observation have provided me with rich and multi-faceted insights into the villagers’ and migrants’ daily lives in and around Mayfield. An important conclusion that can be drawn from my research is that Eastern European migrants are constructed as Other by the English villagers of Mayfield through classed discourses. But how are Eastern European migrants Othered in a way that working class English whites, for example, are not? The list of twelve ‘Eastern European’ characteristics which are repeatedly drawn upon by villagers to describe migrants partly answers this question – the assumption being that ‘those’ Eastern Europeans are different to ‘we’ English. But there are also other national and cultural markers that are mobilised to highlight differences in nationality. Food is an important example. In chapter seven I described how Pat, the wife of a horticultural grower, had visited the Polish restaurant in the local town of Elmbridge and had come away with a reinforced sense that ‘we’ English serve food differently to ‘those’ Polish, and that ‘we’ have different tastes to ‘them’. Language is another marker of national difference, and my interviewees often told me that if ‘they’ want to come and live in ‘our’ country then ‘they’ ought to learn ‘our’ language.

The English villagers of Mayfield affirm their national identity not just in opposition to these symbols of Eastern Europeanness, but also through their daily practices and their tacit cultural knowledges that Eastern Europeans do not possess. From understanding the national train-ticketing and postal systems to their command of the English language; from their engagement with popular and consumer culture to the structure of their working week, Englishness is implicit in everything the villagers do. As Billig (1995), Edensor (2002) and Skey (2011) each argue, it is important to attend to the ways in which nationalism and national identity operate in ‘low level’,
everyday, and ‘banal’ ways and so continually remind us of and allow us to interpret our sense of national belonging. Billig argues that ‘national identity in established nations is remembered because it is embedded in routines of life, which constantly ‘remind’, or ‘flag’ nationhood. However, these reminders or ‘flaggings’ are so numerous and are such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operate mindlessly, rather than mindfully’ (1995: 38).

However, the villagers also perform their Englishness in mindful ways. For example, the maypole dancing which takes place twice a year on May Day and at the village summer fair reminds villagers of their local and national traditions and heritage. The thatched roofs and the Tudor architecture along the high street, the maypole itself, the cricket pitch, the crops growing in the fields, the village morris dancers, the singing of Christmas carols on Christmas eve and the annual school nativity play are all reminders of English nationality, culture and rurality. There is a distinct overlapping of ethnic and national identity through these ‘traditions’, symbols and performances, but as Sarah Neal has argued, a ‘constant bleed between ethnic identity and national identity is an unsurprising one given their co-constitutive relationship’ (2009: 56). And so the Eastern European migrant workers are excluded from the social, cultural and historical landscape of the village.

Migrants Talk Back

An original contribution that this thesis makes to existing knowledge about rural inclusion and exclusion is through the juxtaposition of the narratives of the white village majority and the white migrant minority. Although the largest portion of my research was conducted ethnographically in the village of Mayfield, my project can
be considered multi-sited because the focus groups with Eastern European migrants were held on the farms where they worked; near to, but not within Mayfield itself. The focus groups were conducted on these particular farms because I was able to gain permission from the growers and farm managers to conduct my research with their employees. I was not successful in gaining such permission from any of the growers in Mayfield, which serves to highlight how estranged the village and migrant populations are from one another.

Although my research with migrants and villagers was conducted on multiple sites, my findings from each part of the study speak to one another, and both elements of the project are integrated both thematically and conceptually. My inclusion of the migrants’ voice in my study has created, in the context of this thesis, a dialogue between the two groups that does not exist in reality. In chapters six and seven I outlined the processes through which village residents construct Eastern European migrant workers as Other, as ‘not quite white’, based on judgements predominantly made on distant observations rather than through meaningful interactions. In doing so, villagers create a boundary between themselves and migrants whereby migrants become the passive objects of local discourse rather than active participants. In other words, they are talked about but not talked-to, observed but not known.

I did not wish to collude in the process of ‘screening out’ migrants’ presence in Mayfield and the local area, therefore the narratives of a small number of migrants are included in my thesis as a way of addressing this imbalance. Through talking to these migrants I learned about their motivations for migration, their pre-migration lives, how they came to work in rural Worcestershire, their short- and long-term plans, all of which were unique to each migrants’ experience. However, many of the most dominant and recurring topics of conversation centred around the same issues
with which the villagers of Mayfield were concerned such as social networks and relationships, families, the routines of daily life, work and income, travel, food, hobbies and pastimes, and plans for the future.

Contrary to villagers’ perceptions of Eastern European migrants as lower-class, low status Others who are not respectable and thus ‘not quite white’, I observed that the migrants who took part in my interviews and focus groups were ambitious, conscientious and socially mobile young people. Their nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds and motivations for working in the horticulture industry in rural England were diverse. As I explained in chapter eight, for some, the experience of working on an English horticultural farm for the summer is not dissimilar to the British middle-class concept of the gap year or summers spent grape-picking in France which became popular from the 1960’s: the rationale being to work hard, play hard, make friends, have fun, and gain some experience of living and working abroad. For others, working in rural England provides an opportunity to improve their financial stability in order to support their families, pursue education, build homes or travel the world.

While I met individuals who had sought overseas employment as a last resort due to the collapse of local industries, there are migrants who use the experience of working in the Worcestershire countryside to accrue economic, social and cultural capital. The migrants I met during my fieldwork do not reflect the portrait painted of them by the residents of Mayfield. Rather than lacking respectability, many Eastern European migrants hold strong moral and ‘traditional’ values; many are married, have children and families whom they are providing for, and are saving their earnings to invest in property, education and business. While Adam and Patryk’s migration strategies are different to those of the seasonal horticultural workers, they also tell
stories of social mobility through the expansion of their social networks, acquisition of economic and cultural capital and language skills.

Crucially, my Eastern European respondents also present an alternative view of the English countryside. Rather than repeating the stereotype of the unchanging, quaint rural idyll characterised by place-based community and kinship networks the migrants offer an account of rural Worcestershire as driven by capitalism. From this perspective, commerce and the transnational flow of labour are seen to connect the Mayfield locality with the wider European Union and beyond. Rather than evoking an image of rural England as timeless, traditional, peaceful, and characterised by quintessentially English small-scale and local agricultural economies, they describe a countryside whose social, cultural and economic landscape is changing. This includes the adoption of sophisticated digitised and mechanised technologies in both social and business spheres, and a rapid growth in agri-business which is creating demand for a large multi-national labour force.

Making Sense of the Whole

My privileged position as an ethnographer allowed me to move between, and communicate with English villagers and Eastern European migrants in a way that is not commonplace for the residents of Mayfield or the migrants. In doing so I have been able to craft what Marcus (1998: 52) calls an analytical ‘artifice’ where I have brought the multiple sites of village and horticultural farms into engagement with one another in a way which, though conceptually apparent in the context of this thesis, may not be perceptible or obvious in the villagers’ and migrants’ daily lives. On this subject, Marcus (1998: 52) has argued that:
The multi-locale ethnography embodies within itself a comparative dimension, through which, quite independent of the connections linking locales, the latter might be juxtaposed or artificially engaged with one another by the analyst to explore what sort of mutual critical commentary they make upon each other. In some cases, what might be considered incomparable becomes comparable through the analyst’s artifice. Activities and local sites of knowledge blind to each other, might through the analyst’s efforts be brought into engagement with one another to produce new insights. The point then is that multi-locale ethnographies can reveal new opportunities for critical comparative juxtaposition, that otherwise might not have made sense (Emphasis added).

I cannot claim that the research I undertook with Eastern European migrants was ethnographic, however my research project can be understood as multi-sited. While in reality the village of Mayfield and the horticultural farms in its locality may appear to be ‘blind to each other’, I have highlighted the ways in which the two social spaces make a mutual commentary upon one another.

The most important analytical threads or themes which bind the two parts of this thesis together are whiteness, social class and rurality; and secondary to these are ideas about community, social networks and identification with place. The villagers’ whiteness and class status are secured through their local cultural knowledge and competencies, whereas migrants’ white identities are subordinated because they are perceived by village residents to lack the requisite cultural capital. Villagers also secure their status through their social capital, which is achieved through their village social networks and involvement in ‘community’ activities. Once again, migrants lack the necessary place-based social capital, instead maintaining cross-national social
relationships ‘back home’ and elsewhere through regular travel and the use of mobile and internet technologies.

Migrants’ experiences will always be shaped by the locality in which they live and accordingly, Hartigan (1999) and Tyler (2012) have both stressed the importance of place to understanding articulations of whiteness and class, whereby belonging to a particular locale becomes interwoven with the formation of classed and racialised identities. ‘Belonging’ in Mayfield is achieved via the performance of ‘respectability’, which is a classed concept. Despite village residents’ internal differentiation, they can carve out a sense of respectability and thus belonging in Mayfield (in opposition to Eastern European migrants who cannot), provided they demonstrate the appropriate degree of friendliness, neighbourliness, and the associated rural decorums of whiteness. Hartigan (1999: 14) also argues that racial identities are constitutive of place. He contends that ‘racial identities are projected onto social space as a means of identifying individuals and positing the significance of their connection’ to local social orders (1999: 14). In Mayfield, residents’ white identities secure their position in the village; whereas the migrants’ status as ‘not quite white’ means that they do not ‘belong’ in this place.

The Rural: A New Territory for the Study of Whiteness, Migration and Multiculture

The mass migration of non-British nationals does not feature in the histories of many areas of the English countryside, Worcestershire included. Therefore, issues of race, ethnicity, migration and multiculture present rural areas with a set of new challenges. To date, only a small amount of empirical research has been conducted on the
migration of non-British nationals to rural areas. Less still has addressed the experiences of white Eastern European migrants who have moved to various parts of the English countryside including Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk since the expansion of the EU in 2004.

In her study of Eastern European migrant workers in the UK, McDowell (2008: 62) argues that:

A detailed study of contemporary migration from the accession states remains to be undertaken to establish in empirical details the ways in which degrees of acceptable whiteness are constructed and legitimated on the basis of the intersections between white skins and attributes such as gender, nationality and religion.

Here McDowell highlights an existing gap in empirically grounded academic knowledge about contemporary migration from Eastern Europe and the relationships between British and migrant populations. In response to her call for such a study to be undertaken, this thesis has taken a significant step towards achieving this goal. I have established in empirical detail ‘the ways in which degrees of acceptable whiteness are constructed and legitimated’ by the English villagers of Mayfield in response to Eastern European migrants. More specifically, I have explored how different ‘shades’ of whiteness are constructed on the basis of the intersections between white skins, nationality and social class.

It is important to acknowledge at this end point that it is not possible to make generalisations from my findings to all English villages and all Eastern European migrants or to assess the extent to which my research participants’ opinions and experiences are typical. This was never the intention of the study. What this research does provide is a case study anchored in a real place with a distinct social, cultural,
historical and economic identity. Furthermore, it is my hope that the conceptual and theoretical strands of this project will speak to other/future studies in this field. In particular, the ‘shades of whiteness’ theory and the idea that ‘degrees of multicultural intimacy’ exist in rural contexts may be extended in future research into whiteness, class, migration and multiculture in the English countryside.
References


Accessed June 18th 2012.


Appendix
29 July 2010

Dear Helen

A Qualitative Exploration of English Village Life from English National and Polish Migrant Perspectives EC/2010/57/FAHS

On behalf of the Ethics Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the submitted protocol and supporting documentation.

Date of confirmation of ethical opinion: 29 July 2010.

The final list of documents reviewed by the Committee is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summary of the project</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed protocol for the project</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information sheets for participants</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consent form</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaire/interview schedules</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of useful contacts for Offenham Villagers</td>
<td>29 July 10</td>
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<td>Risk assessment</td>
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This opinion is given on the understanding that you will comply with the University's Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research. If the project includes distribution of a survey or questionnaire to members of the University community, researchers are asked to include a statement advising that the project has been reviewed by the University’s Ethics Committee.

The Committee should be notified of any amendments to the protocol, any adverse reactions suffered by research participants, and if the study is terminated earlier than expected with reasons. Please be advised that the Ethics Committee is able to audit research to ensure that researchers are abiding by the University requirements and guidelines.

You are asked to note that a further submission to the Ethics Committee will be required in the event that the study is not completed within five years of the above date.

Please inform me when the research has been completed.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Moulton
Secretary, University Ethics Committee
Registry

cc: Professor S Williamson, Chairman, Ethics Committee
Consent Form

Please read the following statements and tick the box if you consent.

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. Helen has explained to me the purpose of her study, and what her research is about. □
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of Helen's study. □
- I understand that everything I say in the interview will be held in the strictest confidence and that my anonymity will be preserved. □
- I agree that my interview may be recorded on a digital recorder, and will be transcribed by Helen. I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. □
- I consent to my views and words being included in published or presented material provided that my identity is kept anonymous. □
- I understand that I am free to stop the interview at any time without having to give a reason. If I decide to withdraw, my interview will be deleted from the research database. □
- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and consent to being interviewed for this study. □

Name of respondent (BLOCK CAPITALS) ..............................................
Signed ..........................................................................................
Date ..........................................

Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS) ..............................................
Signed ..........................................................................................
Date .............................................
Participant Information Sheet

You have been invited to take part in a research study as part of a student project. Before you decide whether or not you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in my research. The study has been reviewed and has been given a favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

Who will conduct the research?
Helen Moore, PhD Student from the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey.

Title of the Research
‘A Snapshot of Rural England’: Exploring English Village Life from Local and Migrant Perspectives.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?
You will be invited to take part in an informal interview (more like a conversation) about yourself and your involvement in the local community, what you like or dislike about your village, the importance of horticulture to the local community, your feelings about the migration of Eastern Europeans to the --- area, and some broader questions about rural life in Worcestershire.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded on a digital recorder so that it can be accurately transcribed.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because of your knowledge and experience of living in the local area, and because you are likely to have lots of interesting opinions about your experiences of life in Worcestershire.

What is the aim of the research?
I would like to find out about your experiences of living in --- and to find out what village life is like. I hope to discover what you like and dislike about living in your area, and whether you feel that there is a strong sense of community.

My second main aim is to find out whether you feel that the local area has undergone many changes in recent years. More specifically, in light of the number of Eastern European migrant workers who have found employment in the horticultural sector in the area, I hope to discover whether migrant workers are having an impact on farming and on rural life in general.

What happens to the data collected?
Everything you say in the interview will be extremely helpful for my PhD research (I’m not looking for any ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers!). I will use quotes from people I have
interviewed in my PhD thesis, however, everyone will be given a pseudonym so you will be completely anonymous. The data I collect from interviews will make an important contribution to research on contemporary rural life.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**
Confidentiality is guaranteed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Information collected in interviews will not be seen by anyone else. Participant anonymity will be preserved and any people or places mentioned will be given pseudonyms. Neither the village of --- nor the town of --- will be named.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you decide to withdraw from the study you may ask for your interview to be deleted from my records, and I will delete it immediately.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**
No. You are invited to take part on a voluntary basis.

**How long will the interview be?**
There is no set length for an interview. Interviews often take about an hour, but may take longer depending on how much there is to talk about.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
I am flexible regarding the location of interviews. They may be held in a local cafe, pub etc. Or upon mutual agreement interviews may take place at your home.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
Parts of the research may be published in an academic journal or a book, and I may present some of my research at conferences. If any of the research is published, I guarantee that all people and places will remain anonymous and will be given pseudonyms.

**Contact for further information**
Should you have any further questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone or email.

*Telephone: ---*
*Email: h.moore@surrey.ac.uk*

If you have any further queries, require additional information, or are unhappy with any aspect of this study, you may contact my supervisors at the University of Surrey.

*Dr Katharine Tyler (K.Tyler@Surrey.ac.uk, or 01483 686964)*
*Dr Sarah Earthy (S.Earthy@surrey.ac.uk, or 01483 689452)*

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, and I hope you will consider taking part in my research project. *Helen Moore*
You have been invited to take part in a research study as part of a student project. Before you decide whether or not you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in my research. The study has been reviewed and has been approved by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee.

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Helen Moore, PhD Student from the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey.

Title of the Research
‘A Snapshot of Rural England’: Exploring English Village Life from Local and Migrant Perspectives.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?
You will be invited to take part in an informal interview (more like a conversation) about yourself and your life in the --- area. You will be asked about how you came to live and work here, what you like or dislike about the area, and your experiences of migration to the UK.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded on a digital recorder so that it can be accurately transcribed.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because of your knowledge and experience of migration, and of living in the local area, and because you are likely to have lots of interesting opinions about your experiences of life in Worcestershire.

What is the aim of the research?
I would like to find out about your experiences of living in rural Worcestershire and to find out what it is like for European migrants to live in the English countryside. I hope to discover what you like and dislike about living in this area, and if/how you feel that your life has changed since migrating to the UK.

I also hope to find out what relationships between English and European people are like in the area. I am interested to know if community relationships are being forged between European and English people, or if European and English social networks remain separate.

What happens to the data collected?
Everything you say in the interview will be extremely helpful for my PhD research (I’m not looking for any ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers!). I will use quotes from people I have interviewed in my PhD thesis, however, everyone will be given a pseudonym so you will
be completely anonymous. The data I collect from interviews will make an important contribution to research on contemporary rural life.

How is confidentiality maintained?
Confidentiality is guaranteed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Information collected in interviews will not be seen by anyone else. Participant anonymity will be preserved and any people or places mentioned will be given pseudonyms. Local villages and the town of --- will not be named.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you decide to withdraw from the study you may ask for your interview to be deleted from my records, and I will delete it immediately.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
No. You are invited to take part on a voluntary basis.

How long will the interview be?
There is no set length for an interview. Interviews often take about an hour, but may take longer depending on how much there is to talk about.

Where will the research be conducted?
I am flexible regarding the location of interviews. They may be held in a local café, at your workplace, or at the local pub. Or upon mutual agreement interviews may take place at your home.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
Parts of the research may be published in an academic journal or a book, and I may present some of my research at conferences. If any of the research is published, I guarantee that all people and places will remain anonymous and will be given pseudonyms.

Contact for further information
Should you have any further questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone or email.

Telephone: ---
Email: h.moore@surrey.ac.uk

If you have any further queries, require additional information, or are unhappy with any aspect of this study, you may contact my supervisors at the University of Surrey.

Dr Katharine Tyler (K.Tyler@Surrey.ac.uk, or 01483 686964)
Dr Sarah Earthy (S.Earthy@surrey.ac.uk, or 01483 689452)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, and I hope you will consider taking part in my research study. Helen Moore
Outline of Themes to be explored with Research Participants

Interview Schedule 1: --- Villagers

Introductions & Explanation of the Research

• Introduce myself
• Explain research objectives/questions
• Invite participant to ask any questions
• Read through participant information sheet and consent form (if the participant has not already done so) and answer any further questions
• Participant and researcher sign and date the consent form

Theme 1: Histories of Arriving and Living in the Village

Participants will be invited to explain how long they have lived in the village, why and how they came to live there, and where they lived before.

Other themes to explore include the following:

• Whether participants have always lived in the countryside, or whether they have they previously lived in an urban area.
• What was their motivation for moving to the village?
• What do participants like about living in the village, and in the countryside more generally?
• What do participants dislike about living in the village, and in the countryside more generally?

Theme 2: Living in the Countryside

• How important is it to the participant that they live in a rural village? Why?
• What does the English countryside represent to the participants?

Specific themes to be explored here may include participants’ ideas about quality of life, the rural landscape, Englishness, traditions, social ties and friendships.

Theme 3: Community Networks and Social Relationships

This theme will explore research participants’ social relationships and networks in the village and surrounding area. Specific themes to be explored here include the following:

• Does the participant feel that there a strong sense of ‘community’ in the village?
• Is the participant involved in any village clubs, groups, or other village activities?
• To what extent does the participant feel included in, or excluded from village life?
• What are the benefits or drawbacks related to belonging to a small village community?
• Are the participants’ social networks contained within the village, or do they spread into surrounding villages and towns?

Theme 4: Continuity and Change in the Village

This theme will examine the research participants’ views on any changes in the village (and surrounding area) during their residence in terms of the social and cultural make-up of the area. Questions put to the participants will include the following:

• Does the participant think that the village (or the countryside more generally) has changed much during their residence?
• If so, in what ways? For better or worse?

Participants will be asked to consider the increasing number of Eastern European migrants working on the farms on the outskirts of the village. Themes to be explored on this subject will include the following:

• Any changes in the local area as a result of this new Eastern European population.
• Relations between the migrant workers and the villagers/local people
• What do village people feel about the migrants’ presence?
• Do the migrants participate in the social life of the village?
Outline of Themes to be explored with Research Participants

Interview Schedule 2: Migrants

Introductions & Explanation of the Research

- Introduce myself
- Explain research objectives/questions
- Invite respondent to ask any questions
- Read through participant information sheet and consent form (if the respondent has not already done so) and answer any further questions
- Respondent and researcher sign and date the consent form

Theme 1: Migration Histories & Motivations

Specific themes to explore include the following:
- Memories of life before migration to the UK (may include references to families, jobs, where they lived, and whether they lived in a rural or urban area).
- Do they see their migration to the UK as permanent or temporary?
- Relationship to their homeland and continuation of networks across national borders.
- Motivations to come to the UK
- Motivations to come to Worcestershire, and --- area specifically.

Theme 2: Settling in the Worcestershire Countryside

Research participants will be asked about their experiences of settling in the Worcestershire countryside. They will be invited to talk about how they came to find work on local farms, and how they found their present accommodation. Respondents will be asked whether they experienced any difficulties during these processes.

Theme 3: Changes in Lifestyle: Experiences of Life as a Migrant

Research participants will be asked to reflect on how their lives in Worcestershire are different from their lives before migrating from Eastern Europe. Specific themes to explore include:
- Economic circumstances
- Social status/ class position
- Issues related to language
- Social and community relationships
- Happiness

Theme 4: Community Networks and Social Relationships

This theme will address the research participants’ social relationships and networks in the local area. Specific themes to explore include the following:
- Relationships and networks with other Eastern European migrants
- Relationships and networks with other non-Eastern European migrants
Theme 5: Perceptions of English Culture

Specific themes to explore include the following:
• Perceived similarities and differences between Polish and English cultures
• What they like about English culture
• What they dislike about English culture
## Mayfield Interviewee Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Residence in Village</th>
<th>Method/Place of Recruitment</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>Introduced by her mother Ruth</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>Incomer. Living with mother temporarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Mayfield summer ball committee</td>
<td>Two, teenage</td>
<td>Utilities company</td>
<td>Incomer. British Asian. Lives with her white English partner and two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Kate’s salon</td>
<td>One toddler</td>
<td>Jeweller</td>
<td>Schulten. Her father (Jan) was a first-generation Dutch migrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>Film club</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Village Person. Involved with parish council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Incomer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>One, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Incomer. Moved to the area from London to be near grandchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Introduced by partner Linda</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Incomer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Length of Residence in Village</td>
<td>Method/Place of Recruitment</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Village Person. Involved with the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enid</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46 years</td>
<td>British Legion coffee morning</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Village Person. Involved with several social clubs in village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50's</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Horticulture (owns a large nursery in the village)</td>
<td>Incomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Introduced by neighbour Celia</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Old Mayfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63 years</td>
<td>Introduced by Kate</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Horticulture (semi-retired)</td>
<td>Schulten. Migrated to Mayfield from Netherlands aged two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50's</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Introduced myself in village shop</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Incomer. Proprietor of village shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Landlady</td>
<td>Three, primary</td>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>Incomer. On village ball committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Mayfield summer ball committee</td>
<td>One step-child</td>
<td>Employed, unknown</td>
<td>Incomer. On village ball committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Introduced by neighbour Jan</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Old Mayfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduced by neighbour Ruth</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Chiropodist</td>
<td>Village Person. Belongs to maypole dancing club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marj</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>British Legion coffee morning</td>
<td>One, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Old Mayfield. Worked for the Schulten’s for 21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>Two, under 16</td>
<td>Teaching assistant</td>
<td>Incomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>38 years</td>
<td>Introduced by husband Lawrence</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Retired housewife</td>
<td>Village Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>One, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Old Mayfield. Invited me to British Legion coffee morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>Three, primary</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Incomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Introduced by neighbour Brian</td>
<td>Three, adult</td>
<td>Retail managerial</td>
<td>Old Mayfield. Involved in many village committees including Mayfield Wake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Introduced by wife Peggy</td>
<td>One, adult</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Incomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Salon</td>
<td>One, adult</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Incomer. On village ball committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Length of Residence in Village</td>
<td>Method/Place of Recruitment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40’s</td>
<td>Since birth</td>
<td>Salon and Post Office</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Postmistress</td>
<td>Old Mayfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Introduced by Kate at Royal Wedding street party</td>
<td>Two, adult</td>
<td>Employed, unknown</td>
<td>Village Person. Involved with Wake committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60’s</td>
<td>Does not live in village</td>
<td>Introduced by Kate at village school</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Headteacher of Mayfield primary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Since birth. Moved away and then returned</td>
<td>Introduced by Kate. Family friend</td>
<td>One, primary</td>
<td>Freshpak Foods</td>
<td>Old Mayfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Introduced by Kate. Family friend</td>
<td>Three, primary</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Incomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Employment/Nursery</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>District Council</td>
<td>Migrated to the UK after living for several years in the USA where he worked as a Chaplain. Lived in England for 4 years.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patryk</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Freshpak Foods</td>
<td>Lives in Elmbridge with his wife and two children. Lived in England for 5 years.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aija</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iveta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td>Has a two year-old daughter. She and her husband take it turns to work overseas or provide childcare.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Employment/Nursery</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ineta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monika</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>Elmbridge Vale Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td>Returned for three consecutive summers. Goes to nightclub in Elmbridge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandru</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grigor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td>Keen to learn English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorota</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td>Works in Poland, Germany and England.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucyna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td>Farm manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emiliya</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Hillside Nurseries</td>
<td>Returned to Hillside for three consecutive summers. Works as child-minder and in horticultural industry when in Bulgaria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viktor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Meridian Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Employment/Nursery</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damyan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Meridian Nurseries</td>
<td>Earning money for dance and performing arts degree in Bulgaria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bal</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Meridian Nurseries</td>
<td>Permanent resident. Lives in the village with his family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radka</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>Meridian Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnieska</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Meridian Nurseries</td>
<td>Was a hairdresser in Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>