

**Cultural diversity and drama education within an
Australian context**

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Education

January 2019

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

Abstract

Across Australia and internationally, the number of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds entering schools has increased. This has led to a greater complexity in pedagogy, curriculum and student populations (Banks, 2011). This thesis entitled *Cultural diversity and drama education within an Australian context* is a qualitative research project that methodologically involved a reflective practitioner study (Schön, 1983). The researcher developed and taught an educational unit of work entitled *Cultural diversity and drama*. The unit of work comprised eight lessons and was taught to a junior secondary drama class at a coeducational independent¹ school. Central to this study were the experiences of the culturally diverse drama students engaging in the drama curriculum. Through the reflective practitioner's own culturally diverse perspective, this study was also an examination of the drama teacher. As part of the reflective practitioner research, a combination of data was collected that included observation of drama classes, reflective practitioner journal, student journals, field notes, written documents and interviews with drama staff and students.

The key findings of this study revealed that the drama students identified and discussed their own ethnic identities. It was found that trust facilitated the advancement of the unit of work between the reflective practitioner, drama students and drama teacher. The study revealed that embodied learning about cultural diversity enabled the drama students to generate their own contemporary meanings of themselves, others and of Australia. In this study it was found that stories about refugees can effectively engage drama students to understand and enact people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

¹ Independent or private schools are part of the Australian schooling system and governed on an individual basis. They can be affiliated with a particular religion or philosophy.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- (i) This thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Master of Education.
- (ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all material used.
- (iii) This thesis is fewer than 22,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge my principal supervisor Dr. Richard Sallis. Thank you for your expert advice and encouragement. Your insight and support has guided me with clarity and commitment.

I thank and respect the general and specific input of my supervisor, Dr. Christine Sinclair. Thank you to advisory committee chair, Associate Professor Russell Cross for your support. From the very beginning, my sincere gratitude to Associate Professor Kate Donelan.

Thank you to the school, drama students and drama teacher who allowed me to conduct this research project. Your participation is gratefully appreciated.

Thank you to my family and friends for your support. To my late parents Liliana and Gaetano, who have inspired me and forever will. My sincere appreciation to Dino for your belief in me and my children Richard and Gianna for your love and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

1.1. The research project

With more than 300 languages spoken, over 100 religions and more than 300 different ancestries, Australia is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world (Jakubowicz and Ho, 2013). The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that Australia is a culturally diverse nation that has a higher proportion of overseas-born people (26%) than the United States (14%), Canada (22%), New Zealand (23%) and the United Kingdom (13%), making Australia rich in cultural diversity. In the field of drama education, Donelan (2004) contends that “Australian drama educators work in heterogeneous schools and communities that reflect the impact of postcolonial migration, displacement and globalisation” (p. 15).

This thesis is about cultural diversity and drama education and is set in an Australian secondary school. This project is based on a unit of work entitled *Cultural diversity and drama*, where I planned and taught eight drama lessons. The unit of work was developed by myself, informed by the literature and my own understandings and experiences as a drama teacher. This thesis investigates the following central research question:

How can a unit of work on cultural diversity enhance understandings and awareness about drama students from culturally diverse backgrounds in a junior secondary drama class?

1.2. My positioning in this study

The following positions reveal my motivations and interests in this study. They include a personal, artistic, professional and researcher position. In this order, I illuminate some thoughts from each stance.

My grandparents originate from Cyprus and Greece. During the early 1950s, my parents traversed seas to disembark in Australia. My father departed from Messina, Italy. My mother from Port Said, Egypt. I was born in Melbourne,

Australia. The multilingual, multifaith and multicultural experiences encultured in me shaped a complex hybrid identity, an identity that continues to be questioned, challenged, stereotyped, rejected and accepted by me and others. Thus, my pluralistic experiences inform and influence my writing and practice as a teacher, performer and researcher.

Before becoming a secondary school drama teacher, I studied and trained in theatre performance. I applied my craft as an actor and performed in several plays. In 1997, I wrote, developed and performed a solo performance for young people entitled *Dual Identity* that was inspired and informed by my culturally diverse background. The play was performed as Theatre for Young People (TYP), a field of practice in the performance sector (Gattenhof, 2008). For more than a year, I toured the play to rural and metropolitan secondary schools in Victoria², Australia.

As an experienced educator, my methods in teaching have been positioned in the fields of drama education and humanities. Specifically, the “intersections and collisions” between drama education and cultural diversity have long been my interests (Grady, 2000, p. 3). For more than 20 years, I have taught in secondary schools – junior to senior years (12–18 year-olds) – with culturally diverse student populations. In 2001, I briefly exited the school setting to take up a position as Education Coordinator at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, Australia. This involved teaching, developing and managing educational programs and resources for primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors, as well as for government agencies. The education programs and resources addressed issues regarding immigration, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, languages and Australian history. I was in this role for one year before returning to teaching drama and humanities at a coeducational independent secondary school, known for its culturally diverse values and its ethos of the Greek culture and language. While teaching at this school, I was an active member of the state drama teachers’

² Victoria is a state in south-eastern Australia and its capital city is Melbourne.

association, Drama Victoria. I served on the Drama Victoria committee from 2001 to 2006 and was involved in drama conferences, professional development and the journal *Mask*. In my role as committee member, I liaised with Drama Australia, the national association for drama educators and in 2005 wrote the Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines* policy section *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*. In this document I stated that “the presence of young people from such a wealth of cultural backgrounds presents a unique and empowering educational environment” (2005, p. 13).

In 2000, I embarked on postgraduate studies in arts education and the cross-cultural fields. I studied major theories and practices in drama education, together with subjects in cross-cultural communication and cultural diversity. Additionally, I studied a range of qualitative research methodologies. Through action research and reflective practitioner research, I discovered that it was possible to draw on my experiences culturally, artistically, professionally and reflectively. I considered these to be complementary and a way to communicate my ideas about drama education and cultural diversity.

1.3. The need for this study

The connections between cultural diversity and education are increasing. UNESCO (2009) suggests that a growing awareness of the linkages between cultural diversity and education occurred due to developing multicultural societies. Thus, “educational systems are faced with new challenges that require the development of more flexible, appropriate and inclusive forms of education” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 95). Cultural diversity theorists, Banks (2016), Mansouri (2017) and Rizvi (2011) have written widely about the complexity and growing awareness between multicultural societies, young people and education. Rizvi (2011) states that “as our communities become increasingly diverse, educational institutions are required to rethink their policies to better represent the demographic make-up” (p. 180).

In Australia, drama education practitioners, Carter (2010), Donelan (2005) and Kelman (2009) have presented engaging studies about the relationship between interculturalism, drama education and social meaning. Literature that discusses cultural diversity in the context of drama education points to a need for the drama curriculum to be a “powerful site for developing multicultural literacy and intercultural understanding” (Donelan, 2004, p. 15). International drama scholars Ackroyd and Pilkington (1997), Gallagher (2011), Garcia (1997), Grady (2000), Nicholson (2000), Rivière (2006) and Saldaña (1995) have also explored pluralism, ethnicity and globalisation in drama education.

Throughout my years of teaching, I noticed that when I entered the drama classroom, I walked into a space that resonated with diverse languages, ethnicities, religions and multicultural lived experiences. This inspired and motivated me to think about my own culturally diverse background and the pluralistic identities of the drama students that I have taught. My teaching approach was to develop drama units of work that offered a learning experience whereby drama students could dialogue, engage, construct and perform their own and others’ pluralistic perspectives. I aimed for the drama classroom to be open to respect and inclusive of all culturally diverse backgrounds. This study concerns cultural diversity and educational drama. There are few research projects that discuss specifically a unit of work about cultural diversity, and even fewer in the drama field. The need for this study is that it seeks to explore and understand the experiences of culturally diverse students in a drama classroom. It aims to investigate and illuminate my experiences as an Australian drama teacher and researcher with a pluralistic cultural identity. This study is different to many of the previous studies, as it focuses on a unit of work about cultural diversity in the drama classroom. I wanted to embark on this project to gain understanding and develop contemporary meaning from Australian drama students of their experiences regarding cultural diversity in an educational drama context. Furthermore, I wanted to pursue this project to seek understanding and contribute my personal and professional culturally diverse experiences as a drama teacher and researcher in Australia.

1.4. Key concepts in this study

The following concepts are significant to my research. I provide a brief explanation and understanding of these concepts as they are developed through my study. In the literature review, I expand on these definitions and discuss them in more detail.

Cultural Diversity

The concept of cultural diversity is central to my research. It is considered to be complex and at times contested (Jupp, 2001). Cultural diversity is closely linked to other concepts; for instance, multiculturalism, interculturalism, cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD), globalisation and transnationalism. Different writers have different understandings of what cultural diversity is. According to Ang, Brand, Noble and Wilding (2002) cultural diversity is defined by the “social presence of many different cultural and ethnic groups across society as a whole ... of a heterogeneity of cultural practices and values” (p. 19). For Smolicz (cited in Jupp, 2001) cultural diversity means “the coexistence in the same country of a number of ethnic groups, with their different cultural and/or racial characteristics” (p. 769). For the purpose of this study, when I use the concept of cultural diversity I intend to reference the following definition. Cultural diversity means:

The common heritage of humanity. Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind (UNESCO, *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, 2002, p. 4).

The plurality of identities in this study refers to all culturally diverse backgrounds. For instance, in this study when I discuss the concept of cultural diversity it refers to Indigenous, Australian born, migrants and refugees. This allows for discussion regarding cultural diversity to remain fluid and not fixed, as cultural descriptors can be expressed in a number of ways; for example, Chinese-Australian, Italian-Australian, Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal, Chinese/Hong Kong, Australian-Lebanese, to name a few. For this study, cultural diversity includes all ancestries regardless of various hyphenations and cultural descriptors.

Multiculturalism

According to Smolicz and Secombe (2005) Australia, after the Second World War, experienced massive immigration of Europeans, followed two decades later by Lebanese, Vietnamese, South Americans, and later by Bosnians and Timorese and many other groups from Asia, Africa, United Kingdom and New Zealand. Gaita (2011) states that Australian culture in the late 1960s “opened to voices that spoke from roots in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere” (p. 2). Thus, in Australia, multiculturalism emerged as a policy in the early 1970s, “driven by a social justice agenda aimed at redressing immigrant disadvantage” (Soutphommasane, 2009, p. 77). Smolicz and Secombe (2005) state that multiculturalism in Australia “recognises the reality of cultural differences, exemplified by the fact that Australians are not all of one ancestry or all of the same religion ... there is a growing recognition of the presence of the Indigenous inhabitants and the increase of Australians ... particularly from Asian backgrounds” (p. 212).

Interculturalism

According to scholarly literature the concept of interculturalism “means different things to different actors” (Mansouri and Arber, 2017, p. 30). For Donelan (2004) interculturalism “has become a ubiquitous concept and has accrued particular meanings and associations” (p. 20). Mansouri (2017) argues that despite “a recent explosion in the academic and policy literature on all matters ‘interculturalism’, there remains a lack of conceptual clarity around what the term itself actually means” (p. 15). Alfred, Bryam and Fleming (2003) explain that interculturalism means “the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyse the experience and act upon the insights of self and other which the analysis brings” (p. 4). In the UNESCO *Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, interculturalism is “a dynamic concept” and defined as “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (2006, p. 17). For this study, an

intercultural understanding is conceptualised through an Australian educational framework as follows:

Intercultural understanding encourages students to make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to negotiate or mediate difference. It develops students' abilities to communicate and empathise with others and to analyse intercultural experiences critically. It offers opportunities for them to consider their own beliefs and attitudes in a new light, and so gain insight into themselves and others (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA, *Intercultural Understanding*, 2018).

For this study, the meaning of interculturalism is also underpinned by UNESCO policy statements and guidelines; for instance, *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework* (2013), *Education for Intercultural Understanding* (2010) and *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (2009).

Drama Education

The following meanings of drama education inform this study:

Drama is an art form accessible to young people. In education, it is a mode of learning that challenges and supports students to make meaning of their world and enables them to express and communicate ideas in the artform (*Drama Makes Meaning*, Drama Australia, 2015, p. 1).

Drama education ... invites students not only to engage with the dramatic narratives of others, but also to find ways to communicate their own ideas. In drama, intellectual and emotional involvement, with the narratives of others is integral to the learning (Nicholson, 2000, p. 2).

The elements of drama education involve the ability to “suspend our disbelief and bend time and space to create a place for exploratory interactions, dialogues and representations out of which new thoughts, ideas and ways of looking at/seeing the world may emerge” (Ewing, 2015, p. 141). The spontaneous and “live element” is central to drama education (Fleming, 2012, p. 103). O’Neill (2006) attests that “drama has the power to involve us, to touch our imaginations, and to enlarge our sense of self” (p. vii). Hatton (2004) suggests that “the dramas of the

classroom in fact feed the development of students' life narratives" (p. 110). In *Drama and Curriculum: A Giant at the Door*, O'Toole, Stinson and Moore (2009) investigate drama curriculum in Australia and explain that "drama has achieved at least a notional full place among the standard subjects offered within school curriculum, through all the years of schooling" (p. 24). In Australia, Stinson and Saunders (2016) note that in drama:

The content in the curriculum is deliberately left open, with no prescription of specific texts or dramatic forms and styles. Thus, the planned and enacted curriculum in schools is very much in the hands of teachers ... to create courses of study and units of work that are appropriate for their school context and responsive to student needs and interests (p. 98).

According to O'Toole and O'Mara (2007) there are four "*paradigms of purpose*" in drama education: cognitive/procedural – gaining knowledge and skills in drama; expressive/developmental – growing through drama; social/pedagogical – learning through drama; and functional – learning what people do in drama (p. 204 – authors' italics). For Sinclair (2017) the complexity in teaching the arts "relates to the teacher's capacity to manage the dynamic and multiple dialogues of the classroom" (p. 75). Sinclair (2017) affirms that "the dialogic encounters relate to exchanges between the teacher and the students, student to student, student and content, and an internal dialogue between student as learner and student as artist" (p. 75). O'Neill (2006) states that drama educators have varying pedagogies in the drama classroom and "this difference is determined not just by what we know, but who we are and where we have come from" (p. xiii). In Wales' (2009) extensive research investigating the lives of drama educators, she reveals that "a drama facilitator or teacher can manipulate a drama activity or class by empowering the students to open up their ideas, thoughts and feelings" (p. 276).

1.5. The genesis of the unit of work

For this research project, the creation and development of the unit of work *Cultural diversity and drama* evolved from the interrelated fields of cultural diversity and drama education. I will not describe each lesson of the unit of work

in detail; instead, I will discuss the influences that informed the drama unit. The full set of lesson plans can be located in Appendix 5. I created the unit of work, comprised of eight drama lessons, based on literature and the influences by the work of drama practitioners; for instance, Boal (1992), Donelan (2005), Garcia (1997), Grady (2000), Heathcote and Bolton (1995), Kelman (2009), Nicholson (2000), O'Neill (1995), O'Toole and Dunn (2002), Rivière (2006), Saldaña (1995), Taylor (2000) and Winston (1998). The pedagogical and learning aim for the unit of work was to introduce, explore and understand the topic of cultural diversity by “**making** (creating, forming, pretending, directing, designing) drama; **sharing** (performing, presenting, acting, showing) drama; and **observing** (watching, reflecting, responding, critiquing) drama” (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 3 – authors' emphasis).

In addition, my own experience as a drama educator who has taught in culturally diverse schools, along with my interests, collection of multicultural resources and pluralistic experiences shaped and developed the unit of work. The influences and inspiration on me to create this drama unit emerged from my personal and professional motivations. For instance, being born in Australia to parents who migrated in the 1950s, my Australian primary and secondary school years (from four to 17 years of age) contained mixed experiences: being happy, making friends, being stereotyped, being called derogatory names, speaking English as an additional language, instances of truancy and of not feeling like I belonged. Looking back, I reflect on why my teachers, schools and curriculum failed to address the culturally diverse identities in the classroom.

My personal narrative is similar to those described by Smolicz and Secombe (2005) as being “personal case histories of immigrants or their children [who] recall discrimination experienced in schools ... from the past assimilationist era” (p. 212). I also recollect that my schooling did not include the study and discussion of Indigenous Australians. I took it upon myself to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Yet, it concerned me and still does, why I was never taught or encouraged to learn about the First

Australians; rather, the curriculum focus was on learning about the histories and geographies of other countries and cultures. For this study, the unit of work aimed to invite and open up the narratives, voices, feelings and dialogues of drama students from culturally diverse backgrounds. I sought to encourage the students to contribute their own meaning and understandings about Australia as a culturally diverse country and its Indigenous significance.

1.6. The structure of this thesis

This thesis includes five chapters as follows:

Chapter One, provides an overview of the research project and introduces the unit of work applied in this study. It then presents the central research question and my positioning in the study. It also explains the need for this study and defines to the reader key concepts that underpin this research project.

Chapter Two, consists of a literature review and positions the study in the scholarly fields of cultural diversity and drama education. I then link cultural diversity to the field of education with some focus on Australian education, young people, pedagogy and curriculum. An overview of drama education is interrelated to the field of cultural diversity.

Chapter Three, introduces the study's research methodology and design. It details the qualitative approach applied and describes a reflective practitioner researcher. I then explain the selection of the research site, the participants, ethics, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Four, presents the discussion of the emergent themes and outlines the unit of work and its contributions. I then highlight key experiences of the culturally diverse drama students and examine my position as a reflective practitioner researcher and teacher.

Chapter Five, concerns the findings and conclusion of the study. I weave relevant literature together with significant data analysis. Then, I present key questions generated from the study that can be explored for future research. In this final chapter, I revisit the central research question and substantiate the findings of this

study amid existing literature. I then offer recommendations for future studies and address the limitations of my study. I conclude my thesis with a personal reflection of my research project.

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CHAPTER TWO - Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to present a context for my study, position the study within the scholarly field and establish the contributions it will endeavour to make. Located in the key question of this study are two broad fields of discourse and practice linked to cultural diversity and drama education. For the scope of this study, I have chosen literature that has a direct relevance to the Australian context. This review focuses on literature that considers the growing awareness and complexity in the field of cultural diversity. Furthermore, it seeks to explain Australia's commitment to this topic. In the contexts of young people, pedagogy and curriculum, the literature review examines cultural diversity through international, national and local studies. The review surveys literature that connects cultural diversity with drama education. Studies informed by interculturalism in drama education are identified. The review then investigates the development and teaching of units of work regarding cultural diversity in educational drama.

2.2. Complexity and growing awareness in cultural diversity

Increasing awareness of cultural diversity points to globalisation, human mobility and advances in information and communication technologies (Mansouri, 2017). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Report entitled *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, cultural diversity is “complex” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 4). In support of this, Mansouri (2017) explains that in our “increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, multicultural societies are exhibiting new and complex forms of diversity that are creating new opportunities, as well as anxieties” (p. 13).

Studies that chart cultural diversity in Australia are found in scholarly literature, including for example (Ang, Brand, Noble and Wilding, 2002; Jupp, 2001; Kalantzis and Cope, 2000; Mansouri, 2015; Rizvi, 1986; Smolicz and Secombe,

2005). Furthermore, Australian governments, both federal and state, have produced various documents that address cultural diversity (Koleth, 2010). For example; *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* (2003), *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* (1999), *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989) and the *Galbally Report* (1978). Recent literature includes *Multicultural Australia – United, Strong, Successful* (2017) that describes Australia as:

The most successful multicultural society in the world, uniting a multitude of cultures, experiences, beliefs, and traditions ... of more than 300 different ancestries – from the First Australians to the newest arrivals ... our nation is enriched by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the oldest surviving culture on the planet, and the millions of people who have chosen to make a new life here” (p. 7).

The state government of Victoria has produced literature regarding cultural diversity; for example, *Victorian Government Report in Multicultural Affairs 2016-2017* (2018), *Victoria’s Advantage: Unity Diversity Opportunity* (2014) and *All of Us: Victoria’s Multicultural Policy* (2008). Recent literature entitled *Victorian. And proud of it* (2017) states that “diversity enriches us all” yet stresses, that “right now, some Victorians feel uncomfortable by the pace of our changing world” (pp. 10–11). Additionally, the state government of Victoria has underpinned principles of multiculturalism in legislation; for example, in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*. These documents reflect a commitment by scholars and governments to acknowledge cultural diversity, thus indicating the significance of this subject. However, along with advocacy aims, visions and legislation, Australia, as Roose and Possamai (2015) suggest “has faced considerable challenges over the past decade” in terms of multiculturalism (p. 91). For example, a special issue in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (2017, Vol. 38, No. 3) addressed concerns regarding racism, intercultural relations and multiculturalism in Australia (Johns, Noble and Harris, 2017).

2.3. Education and cultural diversity a close relationship

Located in the interdisciplinary fields that link cultural diversity and education are studies regarding, for example, language policy (Lo Bianco, 1995), social justice (Keddie, 2014), multicultural education (Banks, 2016), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010a) and culturally diverse student populations (Nieto and Bode, 2018). Banks (2011) who is widely regarded in the fields of multicultural education in the United States and globally suggests that:

Never before in the history of the world has the movement of diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups within and across nation-states been as numerous and rapid or raised such complex and difficult questions about citizenship, human rights, democracy, and education” (p. 243).

These complexities, as Banks (2011) argues, are evident in the following studies. For instance, in a study by Schacher, Noach, Van de Vijer and Eckstein (2016) that involved adolescent immigrants in German schools, it was revealed that “schools are often ill-prepared and overwhelmed by the cultural diversity of their student populations” (p. 1175). Likewise, a study by Armillei (2015) in Italy, found that with an increase of migrants to Italy, educational policies and practices were reviewed. Thus, in 1995, Italy introduced the concept of “intercultural education” (Armillei, 2015, p. 136).

In a study by Pagani, Robustelli and Martinelli (2011) in Italy investigating cultural diversity in schools with students aged 9 to 18, it was found that school represents an excellent opportunity for positively addressing and valuing cultural diversity and for extending the beneficial effects of positive contacts with culturally diverse individuals (p. 338). Pagani, Robustelli and Martinelli (2011) further found that the data revealed teachers sometimes encouraged immigrant students to talk in the classroom about their experiences as immigrants. Pagani, Robustelli and Martinelli (2011) identified that other students became interested in the immigrant stories, and concluded that this interest had an affective component and a cognitive component and these two components boosted each other.

However, a study by Zembylas (2012) in Cyprus examining how school emotional spaces are racialised and ethnicised through primary and secondary school-teachers and students, found there were feelings of resentment against migrants, minority groups and others. Thus, in the context of culturally diverse classrooms in education, UNESCO (2009) recommends that teachers “become aware of and embrace cultural diversity ... to help learners to develop their capacities, which are themselves culturally rooted” (p. 97). These studies reveal an increasing body of knowledge regarding culturally diverse student populations in schools and demonstrates a growing discussion concerning teaching practices and curriculum in the context of cultural diversity.

2.4. The integration of cultural diversity in Australian schools

Since the late 1970s, Australian state and territory school education systems have put in place a range of policies, programs and parts of the curriculum that specifically address cultural diversity (Chodkiewicz and Burrige, 2013). According to Jakubowicz (2009), “Australia’s cultural diversity has played an integral role in the formulation and implementation of Australia’s education system” (p. 2). In a contemporary context, Casinader (2016) explains that there has been an increase of acknowledgement within Australian systems and schools about the need to recognise the growing cultural diversity of their student populations (p. 257–258). In an Australian study that examined multicultural education policies in Australia, Price (2012) explains that “Australia is in a continual phase of multicultural and diversity education development and will continue to be so for a long time to come” (p. 79). An increase in literature (Forrest, Lean and Dunn, 2016; Halse, 2017; Priest, Perry, Ferdinand, Paradies and Kelaher, 2014) draws attention to the importance of race relations and culturally diverse young people, specifically in Australian schools.

The state government of Victoria has produced various policies regarding cultural diversity in education. For example, more than 20 years ago the *Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools* (1997) affirmed commitment to “cultural inclusiveness, and to the notions of equality, equity, choice and access” (p. 4).

Furthermore, it proposed that “the development of an education system in which awareness and appreciation of cultural and linguistic pluralism become accepted” (1997, p. 7). In 2009, the *Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship: A Strategy for Victorian Government Schools 2009–2013*, introduced concepts of “Multicultural citizenship” and “Global citizenship” as a renewed vision in Victorian schools (p. 4). Similarly, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) suggests that Australian schools are located in “a democratic, equitable and just society ... that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future” (pp. 4–5). In the context of Indigenous education in Australia, there are government guidelines that address Indigenous education; for example, *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*. Recent literature includes *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026*, that notes “Victoria will be a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all” (2016, p. 6). These documents reflect a commitment by the Victorian government to address cultural diversity in education and indicate that Indigenous education is beginning to form part of this commitment.

2.5. Culturally diverse young people in Australia

According to Harris (2015) young people are the most culturally diverse group in Australia. She argues that young people are “the inheritors of the hard-fought ‘recognition and rights’ multicultural politics of their parents’ generation, they have also come of age in a time of global and national political debates about tighter regulation of immigration, border security and citizenship” (p. 155). In Australia, studies concerning culturally diverse young people and migrant youth are developing (Butler, 2016; Harris and Heron, 2017; Jakubowicz, Collins, Reid and Chafic, 2014; Keddie, 2012; Mansouri and Mikola, 2014; Markus, 2017; Purdie and Craven, 2006). For example, in a study that involved culturally diverse youth in the multicultural suburbs of five Australian capital cities (Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney) Harris (2015) found that questions about belonging are “germane to the experiences of young people of immigrant or

refugee background who have grown up in Australia in the past 10–15 years” (p. 155). Harris (2015) concluded that:

Young people position themselves at the forefront of the shaping of flexible and multiple conceptualizations of national belonging, which is the legacy of Australian multiculturalism and testament to its success in the everyday spaces of local diverse communities (p. 165).

In a study by Uptin, Wright and Harwood (2013) that involved 12 former refugee youths and their experiences in Australian high schools, it was revealed that schools are often the first point of contact for young refugees resettling in Australia (p. 125). The data collected included one-on-one semistructured interviews. Uptin, Wright and Harwood (2013) found that the stories by the young former refugees revealed that entering high school was one of the more significant and confronting times for them. The data further revealed that the young former refugees discussed their difference in two ways: “the colour of their skin (blackness) and having an accent” (2013, p. 129). One of the participants in the study, named Gabriella, described her difference as “a black dot on a white paper” and further revealed how much she was confronted by the reactions to her skin colour in her new home (Uptin, Wright and Harwood, 2013, p. 129). Uptin, Wright and Harwood’s (2013) concluding remarks affirm that the “stories told by young people show how schools are not seeing or are unconcerned by the discriminatory and racist behaviours toward them and this is a significant concern” (p. 135). Furthermore, the findings revealed that “Education Departments have extensive policies in regards to diversity and antidiscrimination ... outworking of such policies are unfinished products” (2013, p. 135).

2.6. Pedagogy in multicultural classrooms

The emergence of scholarly studies regarding teachers working in culturally diverse classrooms has, as Santoro (2017) explains, occurred due to the “cultural diversity present in many of the world’s classrooms” (p. 60). Examples of these scholarly studies are found in Moloney and Saltmarsh (2016), Santoro (2013, 2012, 2009, 2007), Vass (2017), Watkins, Lean and Noble (2016) and recently in Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Fox and Paradies (2018). Furthermore, discourse in

culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is evident in the United States and is synonymous with the teaching of culturally diverse student populations and the development of culturally diverse curricula as indicated by Banks (2016), Delpit (1995), Gay (2013, 2010a, 2010b, 2002) and Nieto (2000).

According to Mansouri and Jenkins (2010) teachers in Australia now work within multicultural contexts that challenge their abilities to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds. They contend that “it is a reasonable expectation for students to be taught by teachers who are educated about racial and cultural issues” (Mansouri and Jenkins, 2010, p. 94). Similarly, Kalantzis and Cope (2012) suggest that “educators need to be keen observers of change, because this will keep teaching and schools, up to date and relevant” (p. 61). Likewise, Keddie (2012) believes that teachers and schools must be “responsive to ever-changing shifts in the broader political, economic and cultural landscape” (p. 1296). In addition to literature that examines teaching practices in culturally diverse classrooms, emerging studies in Australia and globally are increasing regarding the training and preparation of pre-service teachers entering contemporary culturally diverse classrooms. For instance, in an Australian context, Mansouri and Jenkins (2010) believe that the teacher education institutions have an “important role to play in this, ensuring that pre-service teachers are taught about cultural diversity, cultural sensitivities, multiculturalism and equity” (p. 94).

In an Australian study by Moloney and Saltmarsh (2016) teacher education students were investigated in the context of their preparation to teach culturally diverse classrooms and their attitudes to cultural diversity within an undergraduate teacher education program. They found that “more than half of the cohort expressed anxiety in feeling unprepared to teach in a CALD classroom” and recommend that “teaching for social justice in the CALD classroom must involve more than a concern for classroom management, delivery of a curriculum, and satisfying local accreditation demands” (p. 88). Similarly, in a study by Watkins, Lean and Noble (2016) that examined pre-service teacher training and the professional learning of teachers in terms of Australia’s increasingly culturally

diverse complex school populations, it was found that a good number of teachers did not undertake any professional learning in this area. Furthermore, they stressed that greater emphasis needs to be placed on examining these issues in Australia. Watkins, Lean and Noble (2016) concluded that:

With schools as important sites in which values and understandings around cultural diversity are formed, it is imperative that teachers possess the necessary professional capacities to assist students in making sense of the multicultural society in which they live ensuring a sense of civic belonging and social inclusion that provide the basis for an equitable and fair polity (p. 62).

This literature demonstrates that educators in classrooms or preparing to enter classrooms, need to develop, teach, understand and address contemporary pedagogical and curriculum practices in response to the culturally diverse student populations and intercultural encounters that presently exist in schools. This study offers insights into teacher practice and student learning that can inform educational organisations about ways of addressing cultural diversity in education.

2.7. Intercultural understanding in the Australian curriculum

According to Donohue-Clyne (1998) the challenge to address cultural diversity in the curriculum of Australian schools was first officially raised by the Schools Commission Report (1975) that stated “the multicultural reality of Australian society needs to be reflected in school curricula—languages, social studies, history, literature, the arts and crafts—in staffing and in school organisation” (p. 280). It is evident that cultural diversity is addressed in the Australian Curriculum³ (2018).

³ The Australian Curriculum sets guidelines and expectations of what all young Australians should be taught. It forms part of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) that develops national curriculum, administration of national assessments and associated reporting on schooling in Australia. ACARA’s strategic directions are set by its Charter and any other written instructions from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council.

To illustrate this, Mansouri and Arber (2017) explain that:

Since the 1970s, multicultural education has been a core feature of the formal school curriculum of Australian states and territories ... In the first national Australian curriculum, introduced in 2013, multicultural education was replaced with the cross-curricula area of intercultural understanding – one of seven ‘general capabilities’ to be cultivated in students during their schooling (p. 36).

According to the recent Australian Curriculum (2018) “Intercultural Understanding”, along with the other six general capabilities, is developed through eight learning areas that include: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education and Languages. In the Australian Curriculum (2018) “Intercultural Understanding” is organised into three interrelated elements, as shown in Figure 1 (on the next page). Within these three elements, several important values inform this research that include:

Recognising culture and developing respect: Students investigate culture and cultural identity, explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices, develop respect for cultural diversity;

Interacting and empathising with others: Students communicate across cultures, consider and develop multiple perspectives, empathise with others;

Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility: Students reflect on intercultural experiences, challenge stereotypes and prejudices, mediate cultural difference.

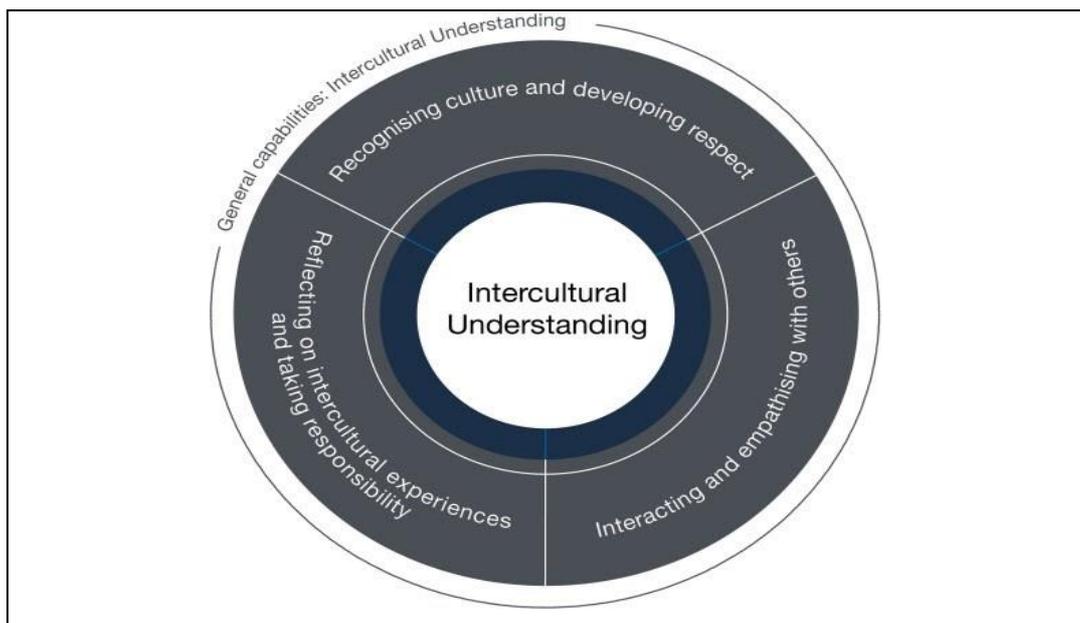


Fig. 1: Australian Curriculum: Organising elements for Intercultural Understanding – Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

There are few studies that address intercultural understanding in the Australian curriculum. This is recognised in one study that is entitled *Doing Diversity: Intercultural Understanding in Primary and Secondary Schools* by Halse et al, (2015) that examined intercultural capabilities as described in the Victorian and Australian curricula for students and schools. The three-year study, conducted across primary and secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia was a multi-method programme of research that involved twelve culturally diverse schools. Halse et al (2015) found that eight key principles of practice emerged as critical for developing interculturally capable students, teachers and schools: principals make a difference; research-based decision-making improves outcomes; strategic use of finances makes a difference; professional learning makes a difference; personal intercultural experiences, including travel, enhance teacher expertise; intercultural capabilities are fostered in reflexive learning environments; a whole school approach is most effective in improving intercultural capabilities; and curriculum innovation is essential (pp. 42–44).

The aforementioned literature supports the need for this study in that it seeks to understand the experiences of culturally diverse students in the Australian

curriculum. Also, it demonstrates that the concept of intercultural understanding is a recent concept in Australian education and little research has been conducted to explore its meaning and significance.

2.8. Culturally diverse discourse in drama education

The intersections of cultural diversity and drama education are central to this study. In surveying the literature in these contexts, studies are located in fields synonymous with cultural diversity; for example, drama and biculturalism (Greenwood, 1999), drama and ethnicity (Grady, 2000), drama as intercultural education (Donelan, 2005), drama and Indigenous young people (Blight, 2012), drama and inclusive education (Raphael, 2013), drama and social justice (Freebody and Finneran, 2016), drama and social inclusion (Piekkari, 2005), multiculturalism in drama (Ackroyd and Pilkington, 1997; Saldaña, 1995), drama and refugees (Balfour, Bundy, Burton, Dunn and Woodrow, 2015; Gallagher, 2011) and drama and additional language (Piazzoli, 2010; Yaman Ntelioglou, 2011). Key texts in the field of educational drama that examine cultural diversity, multiculturalism and ethnicity are found in the works of Johnny Saldaña (1995) in his book *Drama of Color: Improvisation with Multiethnic Folklore* and Sharon Grady (2000) in her text *Drama and Diversity: A Pluralistic Perspective for Educational Drama*.

Previous studies demonstrate that the discourse of cultural diversity in drama education is considered to be important in developing contemporary understanding, practices, dialogues and explorations. For instance, researching in a culturally diverse high school in Canada, Gallagher and Rivière (2007) examined the force of theatre and drama to raise questions about race. The study involved a Grade 12 (17–18 year-olds) drama classroom that explored concepts of racism and privilege using Augusto Boal's (1992) activities. Additionally, in an international study entitled *Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competencies in Education* (DICE) the two-year cross-cultural research study that investigated the effects of educational theatre and drama found that “raising citizens with educational theatre and drama in the curriculum will result in citizens being more

sympathetic towards cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue” (Cziboly, 2010, p. 7).

In an Australian study, drama-based approaches were used to support settlement, specifically to newly arrived refugees settling in Logan, Australia (Balfour, Bundy, Burton, Dunn and Woodrow, 2015). Across a three-year period (2011–2013), the qualitative study drew upon action research and reflective practice methods that involved primary, secondary and TAFE⁴ education sectors. The researchers found that it was important to “open up new dialogues about the learning needs of newly arrived refugee children and the pedagogies that might be used to engage, excite and support” settlement journeys (Balfour et al, 2015, pp. 72–73). Furthermore, the study revealed that there were “successes and failures, but that overall it was a highly positive experience for all involved” (2015, p. 119). In their concluding remarks, Balfour et al, (2015) found that “drama is an empowering and engaging pedagogy that does indeed offer children new ways to see themselves as learners and members of their new community” (2015, p. 119).

Australian scholarly studies by Donelan (2017, 2005, 2004, 2002a, 2002b) demonstrate the importance, awareness and advancement regarding intercultural approaches in drama education. For example, Donelan (2017) advocates that the “arts play a vital role in intercultural learning because they give children the means to connect imaginatively with the lived experiences of people in different kinds of societies past and present” (p. 42). Donelan (2004) raised concern that “there is no mention of drama-based activities at primary or secondary levels” regarding the 2002 national statement on global education entitled *Global perspectives: A statement on global education for Australian schools* (p. 17). Through the lens of ethnographic research, Donelan (2005) investigated the relationship between drama and the intercultural experiences of 40 people in an intercultural drama and performing arts project. The six-month project involved

⁴ In Australia, the acronym TAFE stands for Technical and Further Education. TAFE provides education that is usually post-secondary school. Many TAFE institutions exist in the various states and territories of Australia.

secondary students, a drama teacher and a Kenyan performing artist (2005, pp. 5–6). Donelan (2005) found that “drama can be a powerful mode of intercultural education. The data revealed significant personal, social aesthetic and cultural learning outcomes for many of the participants” (p. 291). Donelan (2005) further found that “Australian drama educators and their students have rich opportunities for intercultural exchange ... and for intercultural interactions within multicultural classrooms” (p. 294). While Donelan’s (2005) study investigated drama and intercultural education it did not apply a unit of work to examine culturally diverse student experiences.

Kelman (2009), like Donelan (2005), also investigated interculturalism in drama education. Kelman (2009) through the use of reflective practitioner research, examined how culturally diverse young people performed their own dramatised stories and explored the processes used to generate these performances. The study involved an inner-city secondary school in Melbourne, Australia during 2004 and 2006. Kelman (2009) like other scholars in the contexts of cultural diversity and drama education (Balfour, Bundy, Burton, Dunn and Woodrow, 2015; Donelan, 2005) considered the cohort of the participants and identified that they were “not a homogenous group ... each had her or his own story” (p. 17). Kelman (2009) found that “the young people’s dramatised stories were significant because they were particular to a local context and embraced young people’s aesthetics and voice” (p. 301). For Kelman (2009) a major finding of the study was “the significance of culturally diverse young people performing their own stories to their own communities in their own voice” (p. 302).

Grady (2000) notes that “there has been little discussion concerning how drama teachers ... actively respond to the vast diversity present in our student populations” (p. 3). Similarly, Garcia (1997) suggested that “little is known about the extent that drama/theatre programs in elementary and secondary schools promote appreciation for cultural differences, and even less is known about their effectiveness” (pp. 88–89). Recent literature by Winston and Lin (2015) suggests

that studies in cultural pluralism and drama education are not abundant and explain that:

It is hardly controversial to propose globalisation as one of the defining concepts of our era ... Theoretical literature examining the implications of globalisation on drama and theatre education is, however, relatively limited (p. 196).

However, according to Nicholson (2000) “living in an increasingly globalized society, drama educationalists have become concerned with how drama might reflect the dynamic cultural landscapes in which young people live” (p. 160). Examples of contemporary discussions regarding cultural diversity, globalisation and cultural identity in the context of educational drama are emerging. For instance, recently in the *Youth Theatre Journal* the issue of race was addressed in a special edition entitled *Race and Theatre: A Special Issue on Race and Youth* (Vol. 31, Issue 2, 2017). In the words of the editors, there are “challenges faced in drama classrooms and community-based theatre programs when they attempt to directly address the thorny, uncomfortable, difficult subject of race” (Young and Murray, 2017, p. 77).

In surveying the literature, the topic of race and racism in educational drama has also been addressed in Australia. For example, the primary aim of an Australian study by Weiss (2007) was to challenge understandings of racism through a drama-based education praxis. In a qualitative methodological approach, Weiss (2007) reveals that the provocation for his research project stemmed from his own experience from a Jewish background living in Australia and his encounters with “a number of incidents of anti-Semitism” (p. 16). Weiss (2007) found that the research “deepened” his understanding of the racism process and enabled him “to challenge racism creatively” (p. 352). This demonstrates that studies and discourses significant to culturally diverse issues in the context of drama education are seen to be important and increasing.

In 2005, Donelan notes that in Victoria, Australia “the orientation of drama programs is starting to change” (p. 50). She suggested that this was due to the

drama teachers' professional association, Drama Victoria⁵, encountering “an increasing demand by drama teachers for professional development and curriculum materials related to cross-cultural drama curriculum” (Donelan, 2005, p. 50). Thus, in the journal of Drama Victoria entitled *Mask*, drama units of work and lessons regarding cultural diversity emerged. For example, *Living the Story through Drama: Two Refugee Stories at the Immigration Museum* (2010), *Cultural Understandings* (2003–2004), *Ways of Being Australian* (2003), *Immigration* (2002) and *Drama in Asia* (2000). Additionally, two special editions entitled *Cultural Diversity* (2004) and the *Drama and Intercultural Perspectives – Asian Theatre* (2002–2003) were developed.

Yet, little is known about the effectiveness and teaching of these units of work and what takes place in drama classrooms when culturally diverse curriculum is explored. Therefore, research is needed to inform and capture the complexities, challenges, meanings and experiences of drama educators and drama students in contemporary heterogeneous classrooms. Furthermore, despite evidence to suggest increasing culturally diverse student populations in Australia, as referenced in the review of literature (Harris, 2015; Mansouri and Jenkins, 2010), there remains a lack of research that concerns culturally diverse students in drama education.

Evidence suggests that the national association for drama educators in Australia, referred to as Drama Australia⁶, commits to cultural diversity and Indigeneity. For instance, two documents that advocate and address culturally diverse principles in drama education are found in the Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education* (2015) and its companion document, the Drama Australia *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guidelines for Drama/Theatre*

⁵ Drama Victoria is an association of drama teachers in Victoria and was established in 1968. Its members include educators and performing arts practitioners. It offers professional development, teaching resources, journals, curriculum and assessment information and networking opportunities.

⁶ Drama Australia is the national body that represents and advocates on behalf of all state and territory drama education associations in Australia and was founded in 1976.

Education (2007). In the Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education* (2015) five fields are embedded in “Equity and Diversity” that include, Cultural and linguistic diversity, Socio-economic status (SES), Disability, Gender and Sexualities. According to the preamble, the Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education* commit to “diversity, equality, equity and access as manifested in Australian society” and stress that “it seeks to engage with contemporary thought and practice, develop understanding and awareness and offer advice to educators on ways to address these issues” (2015, p. 2). Furthermore, the key terms used as “frames of reference” in the guidelines are developed through, equity, inclusiveness, pluralism, diversity and empowerment (2015, p. 2). Despite the significance and importance of all five “Equity and Diversity” fields, this study is primarily informed by the “Guiding Principles for Drama and Cultural and Linguistic Diversity CALD” (Drama Australia, 2015, p. 5).

Carter and Sallis (2016) writers of the Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines for Drama Education* (2015) affirm that the guidelines provide advice in relation to drama and diversity and “is not to *prescribe* what action teachers should take but instead to provide guidance that is theoretically underpinned and reflects current thinking” (p. 80 – authors’ italics). Donelan (2005) notes that the Drama Australia policies offer drama educators a “strong and challenging framework for pedagogical practice” (pp. 51–52).

Existing publications by Drama Australia that address Indigenous understanding and the increasingly globalised school populations reflect contemporary epistemological values. For instance, the Australian Drama Education Magazine (ADEM) published by Drama Australia, produced a themed edition entitled *Drama and Indigenous Perspectives* (2005). The discourse and inclusion of diverse voices, specifically, the Indigenous voices, reveal cultural awareness for drama education in Australia. In the words of Casey (2005), who contributed the framing article to the special edition, she affirms that:

Indigenous Australians and their writings have a complex place within Australian drama [that] presents a range of challenges to any teacher regardless of their own cultural background or experience. At the same time these texts offer an extraordinary opportunity to engage actively with teaching and learning as we negotiate different social, cultural and historical experiences (Drama Australia, *Drama and Indigenous Perspectives*, 2005, p. 6).

In addition, the Drama Australia *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Guidelines for Drama/Theatre Education* state that “drama can play an important role in helping to foster understanding and knowledge of Australian Indigenous people” (2007, p. 7). These examples suggest that drama educators and drama associations in Australia are committed to developing and providing professional development, inclusive curriculum materials and guidelines about heterogeneous cultural practices and values in Australia. This also demonstrates that cultural diversity and drama education is a dyad that concerns and influences drama educators.

2.9. Conclusion

This review of literature has drawn attention to aspects of a large body of scholarly work concerned with cultural diversity. The review demonstrates that the concept and definition of cultural diversity is extensive and contested. The literature review has identified that cultural diversity is a key issue in contemporary Australian education. It has demonstrated how government and education organisations address cultural diversity. The review suggests that our young people are more culturally diverse in schools and their learning experiences are significant to pedagogical and curriculum processes. The review also considers approaches to teaching culturally diverse classrooms. It highlights the challenges, complexities and experiences that teachers have in working across culturally diverse educational contexts. This suggests that there is an area of great potential to be developed in the field of cultural diversity in education and also a need for further research to which this study contributes.

The literature indicates that drama education organisations are addressing cultural diversity through guidelines, professional development and curriculum resources.

However, there is little research about the learning experiences and pedagogical considerations of culturally diverse practices in educational drama. This demonstrates that further research in these interdisciplinary fields is needed. The next chapter discusses the methodological approaches taken in this study.

CHAPTER THREE - Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the qualitative methodological approach and research design of this study. This chapter describes reflective practitioner research through qualitative method literature. The chapter also explains the selection and description of the research site, participants and ethical considerations. It then concludes with the organisation of the data collection, analysis and the development of the emergent themes.

3.2. Qualitative research

For this study, I employed a qualitative research approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) explain that “qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world” (p. 5). Saldaña (2011) suggests that qualitative methodology is an effective way to research “natural social life” (p. 3). In an education context, research through qualitative methodologies “takes many forms and is conducted in many settings” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 2). Qualitative research in education can be “*naturalistic*” because the researcher “frequents places where the events he or she is interested in naturally occur” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 3 – author’s italics).

3.3. The reflective practitioner

In this study, I identified as a reflective practitioner researcher. Prior scholarly studies in reflective practitioner research influenced and motivated this project; for example, Cahill (2008), Duffy (2015), Neelands (2006), O’Mara (1999), Orton (1994), Schön (1983, 1987) and Taylor (1998, 1995). In my study the development of Schön’s (1983) “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” were applied through my teaching and researching practice (p. 54). Orton (1994) suggests that “*reflection-on-action* means thinking about one’s practice, discussing it with others, and reading about aspects of it, in order to plan new, improved action” (p. 93 – author’s italics). O’Mara (1999) states that “reflection-

on-action is thinking about a specific action or event outside of its occurrence” (p. 48). Reflection-on-action is linked to what Schön (1991) refers to as reflection-in-action. Schön (1987) states that reflection-in-action is a time, “variable with the context, during which we can still make a difference to the situation at hand, our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it” (p. 31). Schön (1991) suggests that “much reflection-in-action hinges on the experience of surprise” (p. 56).

My approach to reflective practitioner research was guided through “a discovery of self, a recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction” (Taylor, 1996, p. 27). According to Taylor (1996) “reflective practitioners use their own instrument, themselves, to raise the questions of inquiry [and] draw on their own understanding of human affairs” (p. 40). O’Mara (1999) identifies that reflective practitioners “question who they are and how they operate in their world, and why they see the world as they do” (p. 95). In a drama context, Bräuer (2002) suggests that reflective practitioners examine their experiences as a “mode of instruction, through which they themselves also continue to learn about the educational use of drama” (p. xi). O’Toole (2006) states that “drama teachers naturally reflect upon their practice perhaps more than most” (p. xvii). These features of reflective practitioner research are relevant to my study and methodologically support my central research question. The methodology literature demonstrates that a growing number of contemporary qualitative studies in drama education, are increasingly situated in the reflective practitioner researcher position.

3.4. Selection of the research site

The setting and selection of the research site was significant to this study. For instance, Neuman (1997) asserts that there are three factors affecting the selection of a research site: “richness of data, unfamiliarity, and suitability” (p. 352). Informed by Neuman (1997), I searched for a school with which I was not familiar in order “to see cultural events and social relations in a new site” (p. 352). Furthermore, I required access to a school for the duration of one school term. In

Victoria, Australia, one school term usually is between eight and eleven weeks. Additionally, a condition of recruiting a school site was that the student participants involved of culturally diverse backgrounds.

I committed several months to contacting potential schools via telephone. I pursued 10 schools and discussed my project with the school administration whom I saw as the “gatekeepers” to the principal and the drama teacher. Neuman (1997) states that a “*gatekeeper*” is seen as “someone with the formal or informal authority to control access to a site” (p. 352 – author’s italics). Seven out of the 10 school sites indicated little interest. Three school sites considered my research project; however, two of these schools informed me that my study did not fit in with their school calendar dates. One school remained. This potential research site suited the study because of its vision and philosophy which I further explain later in this chapter. I met with the principal and drama teacher to discuss the project face to face and gained verbal consent. In accordance with The University of Melbourne, Human Research Ethics procedures, I prepared plain language statement letters and consent forms for the parents/guardians, students, principal and drama teacher. An example of the plain language statement and consent form are shown in Appendices 1–2. Along with my signed consent, the forms were all endorsed and signed by the participants. Prior to teaching the unit of work, the drama teacher invited me to observe two of her drama classes. During these lessons, she introduced me to the class and briefly explained the research project.

3.5. The research site – Corner College

I refer to the school that is the site of the research project as Corner College, a pseudonym, because it was positioned on a corner. Located in urban Melbourne, Australia, Corner College was a secular, coeducational independent secondary school for students from Year 7 (12–13 year-olds) to Year 12 (17–18 year-olds). At the time of my research, Corner College had a total of 65 secondary students. This was a unique enrolment number since enrolments in secondary schools in urban Melbourne commonly range between 500 and 1500 or more. Despite the small student population, the students represented a broad range of

socioeconomic backgrounds. Importantly, the school was culturally diverse with a plurality of ethnicities among its staff and students.

Corner College, was founded by an educator, who at the time of my research was the Principal. As per the website, the school's vision and philosophy is to encourage students to accept the right of all members of the school community to express their ideas, beliefs and feelings and to argue their own points of view, to respect opinions and be willing to learn from each other. From my observations, I concurred that the school actively promotes an awareness and understanding of cultural, social and personal values.

The drama room, where the unit of work took place, was referred to as "The Ballroom". It was ornately decorated with features of wall sconces and a 12-foot ceiling. The flooring was parquet. Student tables and chairs were absent. Yet, there was a single desk located to one side of the room, accompanied with a chair. The drama classes I taught were fifty-five minutes in duration and held after homeroom in lessons one and two from 9.20am to 11.10am. The students had their recess break after the double drama lesson from 11.10am to 11.25am. The student timetable consisted of five lessons per day and concluded at 3.10pm. The unit of work comprised eight lessons and related to topics about cultural diversity.

3.6. The researched cohort

The research group comprised of a composite Year 7 and Year 8 drama class with the students aged between 12 to 15 years. In total, there were 19 student participants (three females and 16 males). The drama teacher explained the reason for the composite class as being "to put the Year 7 and Year 8 students together because it was a small school and there wouldn't be enough students to make two separate classes". The students' cultural backgrounds comprised of 50% European, 25% Asian and 25% Anglo-Australian. There were no students in the class that identified as Indigenous Australians. At Corner College, many of the students had not previously studied drama as a subject. However, several students

were involved in after-school extracurricular activities that included dance, gymnastics, amateur theatre and swimming. The drama teacher was female and had more than 30 years of teaching experience. She revealed to me that she was from an “Anglo-Saxon background”. The drama teacher and students were unknown to me before I undertook the research project.

3.7. Ethics in the study

According to qualitative methodology literature (Saldaña, 2011) ethics is regarded as essential. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain that research with human subjects are based on two issues that include: “informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm” (p. 43). For this study, ethics commenced with an application form based on ethical guidelines, administered by The University of Melbourne: Human Research Ethics Committee. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, along with associated issues concerning refugees, immigration and ethnicity, I acknowledged that the content of the unit of work *Cultural diversity and drama* could bring up unhappy memories; for instance, a refugee child who arrived on a boat. Therefore, I examined carefully the ethics involved in my research, asking myself what safeguards I should put in place in the event that somebody had an adverse reaction to the unit of work.

Once the school had been chosen, I consulted with the teachers to select the year level and also the teachers assisted me by suggesting a cross section of students who could be interviewed for the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants. This was stated in the consent letter that was dispatched. In the plain language statement to the parents/guardians I stated that the welfare of the participants was important since the study was to explore sensitive topics and any possible risks would be addressed. I stated that if any concerns, questions or difficulties arose during the research project, I should be contacted or, alternatively, a senior teacher at the school should be contacted and a debrief meeting and discussion would be put in place to ensure the wellbeing of the participants. I considered that it was possible that for some participants and

parents/guardians, English language could be their second language; indeed, they might not speak the English language. Therefore, in the plain language statement, I indicated that if any assistance with translation was needed they should contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)⁷ and the TIS national telephone number was provided in the letter (Appendices 1-2).

In the first lesson, I pointed out that it was not compulsory for the students to share personal stories and that they were invited to speak as they wished. Furthermore, I stated at the beginning of each class what my teaching aims and objectives of the lesson were and I wrote them up on the whiteboard. At the start of every drama lesson and during the two interviews, the audio recorder was placed on a table in a position that was highly visible for all to see. The process I implemented in relation to ethical considerations underpinned a respectful and humanitarian approach for the study.

3.8. Data collection

According to Lofland (cited in Patton, 1990) there are four people-oriented mandates in collecting qualitative data. Lofland states that the researcher must: get close enough to the people and situation being studied to understand what goes on; aim at capturing what takes place and what people say; include pure description of people, activities, interactions, settings; and include direct quotations (cited in Patton, 1990, p. 32). The collection of data for my research consisted of “in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents” (Patton, 1990, p. 10). Table 1, presents an overview of the types of data generated and collected for my study. It shows that I conducted and collected qualitative research.

Table is on the next page.

⁷ The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is provided by the Australian Department of Home Affairs and is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Table 1: Overview of data generated and collected

Date	Description of data generated and collected
Stage one	Introduction and observation
16 July	Researcher introduced to drama students and observed class taught by drama teacher Data: reflective practitioner journal
23 July	Researcher observed drama class and took part in drama activities Data: reflective practitioner journal
Stage two	The unit of work: <i>Cultural diversity and drama</i>
30 July	Lessons one and two: teaching/researching unit of work to the junior secondary drama class Data: reflective practitioner journal, student journals, field notes, written documents, audio recording of class
6 August	Lessons three and four: teaching/researching unit of work Data: reflective practitioner journal, student journals, field notes, written documents, audio recording of class
13 August	Lessons five and six: teaching/researching unit of work Data: reflective practitioner journal, student journals, field notes, written documents, audio recording of class
20 August	Lessons seven and eight: final lessons teaching/researching unit of work Data: reflective practitioner journal, student journals, field notes, written documents, audio recording of class
Stage three	Interviews
27 August	Focus group interview with five culturally diverse students Data: audio recording of interview, reflective practitioner journal, fieldnotes
10 September	Attended an excursion with the drama class and drama teacher, Data: reflective practitioner journal and fieldnotes
8 October	Interview with drama teacher Data: audio recording of interview, reflective journal, fieldnotes

The unit of work *Cultural diversity and drama* was taught across eight drama lessons. To address my research question, I generated and collected data that included: a reflective practitioner journal, fieldnotes recorded in a separate exercise notebook to the reflective practitioner journal, student journals and written documents. Further, two interviews were conducted that comprised one with a focus group with five culturally diverse students and a second with the drama teacher. An audio recorder was used in all the drama lessons and in the two interviews. In order to understand how and why the data was generated and collected for my study, I explain several types of data through qualitative literature as follows.

The reflective practitioner journal

As a reflective practitioner, I reflected in my journal before and after each drama class taught. Taylor (1998) suggests that “it is imperative that the teacher finds a medium where the voices that surround a researched event can be recorded and explored. Logbooks [journals] are often the most important record for collecting such data” (p. 133). The reflective practitioner journal enabled me to process and reflect on my thoughts and feelings. These journal entries formed an integral part of my experiences.

Interviews

For this study, I conducted two interviews: the first one with a focus group of five culturally diverse students whom I had taught, and the second one with the drama teacher. For these interviews, I created open-ended questions in order to unearth valuable information not allowed for in tight questions (Ely, 1991). Appendices 3 and 4 show the sample interview questions for the focus group and drama teacher.

Interview One: Focus group with five culturally diverse students

The first interview that took place was with a focus group that comprised five students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The focus group interview took place one week after the final lesson of the ten-week unit of work in order to provide the students with the time and space to reflect. According to Barbour (2007) the definition of a focus group is complex. The term “focus group” is often used interchangeably with the terms “group interview”, “focus group interview” and “focus group discussion” (p. 2). For the purposes of this study, I have applied Barbour’s (2007) definition: “any group discussion may be called a focus group as long as the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction” (p. 2).

Five students volunteered and expressed interest in taking part in the focus group. The interview was held in a small classroom. We sat behind tables in a circle, facing each other. I placed the audio recorder on the table in the middle of the group and noticed that the student participants were aware of my action. I attempted to create an atmosphere in which the participants would feel free to discuss. Thus, I commenced the focus group discussion using informal conversational tones.

Interview Two: Interview with Mary – the drama teacher

For this study, the second interview I conducted was with Mary, the drama teacher. During the unit of work, Mary occasionally took part in the drama activities and at other times observed the class. During informal conversations, Mary informed me that she had extensive years teaching drama. Mary voluntarily told me that her cultural background was Anglo Saxon. She was articulate in both the interview and the unit of work and she welcomed my opinions and comments. We developed a respectful and intellectual relationship that centred on our passion for drama education and teaching. The location of the interview with Mary took place in a local café near the school. I created a series of topics that guided the interview (Appendix 4). At the end of the interview, I thanked her for permitting me to conduct research in her drama class.

3.9. Data Analysis

According to the literature, data analysis is complex (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). For Neuman (1997) data analysis means “a search for patterns in data – recurrent behaviours, objects, or a body of knowledge” (p. 426). Wolcott (1994) stresses that qualitative field data needs rigorous analysis in order to offer a way to achieve credibility. He further states that the concept of “analysis” is loaded with meaning and attests that “analysis always suggests something of the scientific mind at work, inherently conservative, careful, systematic” (p. 25). My approach to data analysis became “idiosyncratic” and meaningful (Ely, 1991, p. 143). Guided by my research question, I searched for categories and themes. In a qualitative context, when a researcher “organizes the raw data into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts” this is known as “coding” (Neuman, 1997, p. 421). Neuman (1997) explains that “coding data is the hard work of reducing mountains of raw data into manageable piles” (p. 422). I used large poster paper sheets to record the emergent themes. The following examples capture several themes that emerged from the data:

- culturally diverse narratives
- culturally diverse young people creating and expressing Australia’s history
- sensitive issues in drama education
- complex hybrid cultural identities
- role stereotypes in drama education
- racism (both as a topic and as a behaviour)

O’Toole and Beckett (2013) suggest that “you need your data to speak directly to you ... to converse with it” (p. 169). Neuman (1997) states that qualitative data is “more difficult to deal with than data in the form of numbers ... qualitative analysis requires more effort by an individual researcher to read and reread data notes, reflect on what is read, and make comparisons based on logic and judgement” (p. 439).

3.10. Conclusion

The theoretical and methodological approaches of this study have been established to situate and explain the research project in a qualitative frame. This study design underpins the research question and guides the aims of the project. The discourse of qualitative method literature demonstrates the complexities in generating, collecting, organising and analysing qualitative data. In order to understand the study through the lens of a reflective practitioner, I have highlighted literature that addresses reflective practitioner research. The next chapter discusses the analysis of emerging themes and the unit of work *Cultural diversity and drama*.

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CHAPTER FOUR – Discussion

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my teaching and researching as a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). I also capture significant responses from the student experiences in the drama classroom and demonstrate how lessons were altered in the moment, “reflection-in-action” and after having taught the lessons “reflection-on-action” (Schön, 1983, p. 54). This chapter presents critical events from the unit of work. Through the combinations of data collected, that included observation of drama classes, a reflective practitioner journal, field notes, written documents and interviews of drama staff and students, I reveal the emergent findings through thematic sections.

4.2. Cultural diversity and drama – an overview of the unit of work

The following description provides an overview of the educational unit of work that I developed and taught. A detailed set of lesson plans can be seen in Appendix 5. The pedagogical aim for the unit of work was to introduce, explore and understand the topic of cultural diversity by “**making** (creating, forming, pretending, directing, designing) drama; **sharing** (performing, presenting, acting, showing) drama; and **observing** (watching, reflecting, responding, critiquing) drama” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 3 – authors’ emphasis). My aim was also to understand how effective the unit of work would be for young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. In lesson one and two of the unit, I introduced my culturally diverse self as a drama teacher and researcher. I explained the research project and its aims and objectives. The students discussed and brainstormed the topic of cultural diversity in the drama classroom and contributed their own meanings, such as “All of the world standing together”, Acknowledging our differences” and “Singing with one voice”.

In lessons three and four, I further developed the discussion of cultural diversity. A handout of factual information provided stimulus material on reasons why migrants and refugees leave their homelands, for instance natural disasters, a

better life, war/conflict, reunion, love/marriage and job opportunities. Through drama activities and drama conventions such as improvisation, tableau, hot-seat, postcards, ritual and soundscape (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002) the class explored culturally diverse topics, for instance, refugees, belonging and identity. A reading, discussion and drama performances evolved from two picture books. The first picture book presented to the drama class was entitled *A Safe Place to Live* by Bic Walker (2011) about the true story of refugee Bic Walker and her family's journey from Vietnam to Australia. The second picture book was entitled *The Little Refugee* by Anh and Suzanne Do (2011). This story was about Anh Do's family's escape from war-torn Vietnam and his childhood in Australia. These picture books were both narratives about refugees leaving Vietnam to arrive in Australia. They were chosen because the themes in both picture books related to multiculturalism and identity; growing up Asian in Australia and being outsiders trying to fit in. While both books were about leaving Vietnam, I chose these picture books based on the descriptive illustrations and because the narrative was conveyed from a young person's perspective, which would interest junior secondary students. The refugee stories were used as stimulus material and a starting point to launch into the drama activities (Ewing, 2013; Saldana, 1995; Taylor, 2000). The class then explored the significance of "props" in a multicultural context. A suitcase filled with props provided stimuli that encouraged imagination, dialogue, writing and performance. In a handout, entitled *What's in the Suitcase?* students reflected and wrote stories about their props that they had selected from the suitcase (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 169).

During lessons five and six, topics linked to cultural diversity were explored, for instance leaving, culture, ritual and cultural spaces. An improvisation based on these themes was presented. I introduced drama activities for the students to be active and engaged. In these lessons (five and six) I presented drama activities inspired by the work of Brazilian theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal (1992) with reference to the games *Two by three by Bradford* (p. 99) and *Inventing the space in a room* (p. 150). I chose these games because they offered the drama students with a form "to express themselves through theatre" through their own bodies and

voice (Boal, 1992, p. xxx). Students also improvised the theme of migration by reading a poem entitled *Leaving*. The words of the poem were spoken in unison and in groups the students created a chorus. Percussion instruments were also given out and the students developed a soundscape. Students presented their performances to the class. The final lessons (seven and eight) explored the context of ethnicity (Grady, 2000). I introduced and discussed the concepts of language, customs, music, community, place, cultural background, country and stereotypes. Students were asked in small groups to construct their own cultural communities. Scenes were presented and reflection followed through discussion and writing. The conclusion of the unit of work ended with a summary and reflection of previous lessons. Students were given time to ask questions.

4.3. What's in a name, What's in my name?

At the beginning of the first lesson, the drama students greeted me with various emotions. Some smiled and fixed their gaze on me, others looked disinterested and stared out the window. As I walked over to the whiteboard to write the words "Mrs. Ferrara", I heard several students greet the drama teacher, by saying "Hi Mary", "Good Morning Mary". In midair, my whiteboard marker froze. In that moment, I wasn't sure what to write. When I heard the students refer to the drama teacher by her first name, I hesitated to write Mrs. Ferrara. This alerted me to the fact that the school, class and teacher at this school were informal. I changed the position of my white board marker and wrote 'Patrizia'. I faced the class and said "P-A-T-R-I-Z-I-A, it's an Italian name". This received the attention of all the students. Within seconds, my heart pounded fast. I thought about my complete Italian name "Patrizia Giovanna Ferrara". A name, that in the past, had been teased, shortened and changed by my school teachers, strangers, friends and family to Patsy, Pats, Pattie and Trish. I repeated and said my name again "PATRIZIA". The students looked at the board, responded and said, "That's a nice name", "How do you say it again", "Where's it from, what country"? I was surprised they liked my name. The students were interested in my Italian name. This informal conversation indicated to me that the drama students were interested in my personal narrative and keen to discuss cultural identity. This then

motivated me in the moment to change the direction of the class. O'Mara (1999) notes that "practical activity always involves change, varying essentially from instant to instant, moment to moment" (p. 19). I asked the class to stand in a circle and say their name one at a time. With enthusiasm, the students looked at me and one by one pronounced their name. My spontaneous plan to include a *Name Game* activity worked well. It revealed that the students were willing to voice their own name and explore their own identity. As we all delivered and received each other's name, the activity started to build positive energy. The drama class was abuzz with names and smiles. I found that despite what our name sounded like, we supported, trusted and welcomed each other. I felt that the inclusiveness of everyone in the drama classroom was "experienced through the body and senses" that created an "embodied learning" setting (O'Toole, Hunter, Sinclair and Jeanneret, 2017, p. 8). After the *Name Game* activity, the drama students had developed positive physical and mental energy. I decided to continue on with physical activities. The following fieldnotes highlight the teaching approaches I took.

Let's open up the circle ... please move backpacks you have a pencil at the end of your foot and rotate your foot ... reverse ... bend those knees

Give your body a shake ... in drama we call this a neutral position

Fantastic, very good, excellent what I want you to do now is a spinal roll.

(Fieldnotes: July)

As I reflected on the action that took place in the class, I thought about my name and how it triggered my emotions about my own schooling and the memories of year seven and how teachers found it difficult to pronounce and write my Italian name Pa ... Pa ... Pa ... I thought about why teachers changed my name to Patsy. This motivated me to investigate further. That evening, I searched the filing cabinet for evidence. I located my year seven report card and stared at the name. I questioned, what's in a name? what's in my name? This revealed that what's in my name is my ethnic identity. I questioned even further. Why did my year seven teachers change my name from Patrizia to Patsy? Why did they call me Patsy? The reflections, emotions and questions continued. Why did they change my

name? Was it hard to pronounce? Was it because it was an Italian name? Didn't my teachers like me?

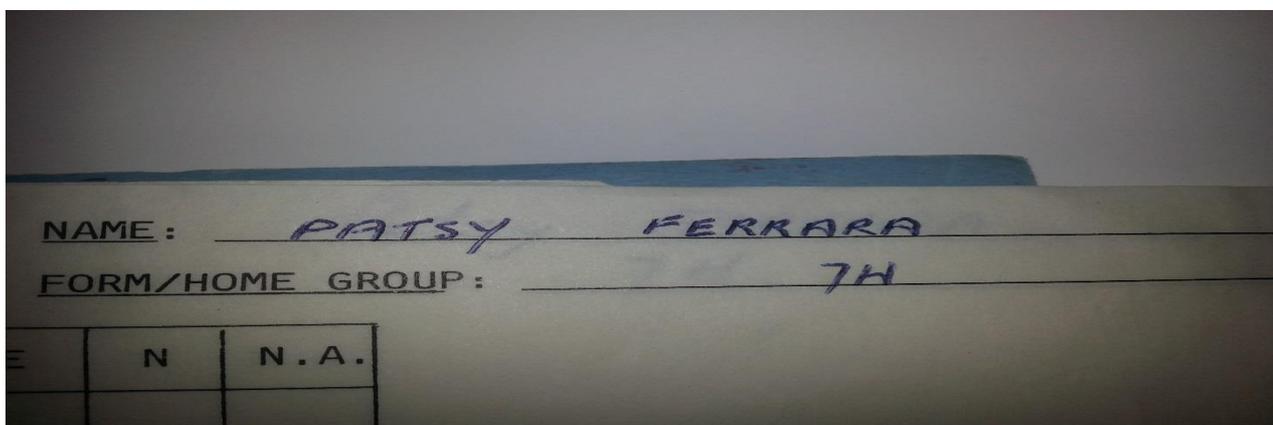


Fig. 2: This year seven report card is dated 7th of December, 1983. It consists of 12 subjects. With the exception of Mathematics, that reads Name: Patricia Ferrara, all eleven subjects reveal name of student to be Patsy Ferrara.

I thought about the *Name Game* activity in class. I felt the drama students positively welcomed my name. They embraced all the vowels and consonants without changes, without difficulty in pronunciation. This suggested that what's in a name, is more than an alphabet. I found that a name is idiosyncratic, emotive and an embodiment of cultural identity. As a visiting drama teacher at the research site, I felt that my Italian name and my culturally diverse background was valued and accepted. That evening, I wrote about the *Name Game* activity in my reflective practitioner journal.

Today is the first time a secondary class heard my first name and it felt awkward. I wrote down 'Patrizia' on the board and then I said it aloud to the class "Patrizia". The drama students liked my name.

(Reflective practitioner journal data: July)

During my first double lesson (Lesson One and Two) I introduced my research project to the class and wrote on the whiteboard "Cultural diversity and drama education within an Australian context". I commenced the class with the following comments.

I would like to share with you the title, no secrets, the research project I'm doing is drama and cultural diversity within an Australian context ... I chose this topic because for many years I have had a passion in this area as

a drama teacher ... I'm a performer as well...I recently did a commercial on television, but I've done more acting in theatre

(Transcription of class one and two, data: July)

Nam the Chinese-Australian student interjected my words and slowly asked “which commercial”? This made me stop and pause. I felt my words were fast, I felt anxious. I took long deep breathes and relaxed my shoulders. I scanned the faces of the drama students and looked back at Nam with a smile and answered “Oh, it was a TV commercial and my character was a nurse”. I looked around the class and saw faces staring at me and it appeared that they were enthused and interested in my words, my expression and my voice. I felt the drama students gave me respect and trust and this encouraged me to communicate my words, thoughts and feelings about cultural diversity and to take a risk. I continued to talk in the knowledge that the students accepted me into their drama classroom not only as a visiting drama teacher and researcher, but also as a person from a culturally diverse background. This became a turning point for me, I felt accepted into the drama classroom for who I was.

That evening, I listened to the audio recording and cringed. As I transcribed the words, I became embarrassed. I regretted that I was talking fast. I regretted that I was talking about myself. I felt vulnerable to the questions directed at me. I listened, cringed and typed some more. In view of my feelings, Nicholson (2002) notes that “accepting or taking risks in drama and elsewhere, often makes people feel vulnerable; they are stepping outside of the familiar” (p. 84). Thus, the completed transcript became my novel for the night. I read and reread the words. This revealed, I was nervous talking to the students and unfamiliar in the environment. I wanted to talk about cultural diversity, but I found it to be a complex subject to discuss with young people. This made me reassess my next lessons to think about slowing down my words and teaching the unit of work by taking a risk into the unfamiliar environment.

4.4. Exploring cultural diversity and drama education

My aim in lesson one was to introduce and discuss the concept of cultural diversity. I approached the lesson with no set handouts because I wanted to involve the drama students in conversations about cultural diversity and generate a list of words, phrases and thoughts (Grady, 2000). I started with the following comment:

Can I have everyone's attention, facing the board, you might need to move ... I would like to brainstorm what cultural diversity means to you ... in a moment I'll give out poster paper.

(Transcription of class one and two, data: July)

Informed and inspired by Grady's (2000) approach to drama lesson planning that encourages "a variety of activities", I prepared the first lesson equipped with coloured markers and large white sheets of paper, which I referred to as poster paper (p. 158). My intention was to include aspects of "drama-related writing ... and drawing" to explore the issue of cultural diversity (p. 162). I also approached teaching the unit of work in the knowledge that "drama engages the whole person – the intellect, the emotions, the imagination, the body" (Bird, Donelan and Sinclair, 2017, p. 112). I prompted the class with the following questions:

What does cultural diversity mean to you?

When you think of cultural diversity, I'm talking about diversity of people's background, ethnic backgrounds, multiculturalism, ethnicity or ethnic backgrounds, what comes to mind?

(Transcription of class one and two, data: July)

Without hesitation, the students responded and called out the following words, "Intelligence, cultural, cultural, cullllttttuuuurallllll". I further commented "I heard it on radio this week, they were talking about Adam Goodes, not playing this weekend ... Adam Goodes, the Aboriginal football player, culturally diverse people ...". A student interrupted my words and said "racism" other students continued to call out "acceptance of other cultures, discrimination, different cultures in one place". In the moment, I was engaged and inspired by the young voices and the spontaneous discussions. This made me forget to write the list on

the whiteboard. I continued and asked questions, “thinking about your own cultural background, what comes to mind?” There was a long pause. I noticed that several students looked down, making no eye contact with me. I felt that I had said something to offend. I thought about the question “thinking about your own cultural background, what comes to mind?” I felt that the question could have been confrontational because I stressed the words “your cultural background”.

The students sat in silence. My action because of this was not to continue with the discussion. I concluded and said “Okay, do we want to leave it there ... yes let’s leave it there”. Due to the students sitting in silence not wanting to talk about their cultural background in front of the class, this made me lose track of my thoughts. The classroom became tense and awkward. I then heard the voice of a student say “can we draw”. She looked at the markers and poster paper on the floor and pointed to them and further expressed “can we draw about cultural diversity”. This prompted me to regain focus, I established eye contact with the drama students and confirmed the following “yes, markers, poster paper, draw and brainstorm about cultural diversity”. Because of this student response, wanting to draw about cultural diversity, I changed from feeling apprehensive to now feeling excited. This made me change the direction of the lesson and ask the class to form groups. In seconds they leapt up with enthusiasm and reached out for the markers and poster paper. The students confidently moved into their own space. I found that the previous silence revealed that the students were uncomfortable talking about cultural diversity as a whole group. This was a critical moment that occurred in the lesson. I observed that each group created their own intimate space for the private dialogues taking place. The poster paper and markers were placed at the centre of each group. As I walked around the drama classroom, I observed the drama students engaged in drawing, writing, talking, listening and reacting. This activity was independent of teacher instructions. This revealed that the drama students were keen to develop their own contemporary definition of cultural diversity. I walked over to a group and quietly asked “Can you please explain your drawing of cultural diversity? A student volunteered and spoke in a quiet tone.

Um, we just basically wrote down all the stuff about the invasion, when the English came to Australia and took over and mass murdered all the Aboriginals ...

(Transcription of class one and two, data: July)



Fig. 3: This drawing shows an outline of Australia. The captions, drawings and words in the island of Australia indicates the history of Australia.

I was surprised to hear the words “invasion, English, Australia, mass murdered, Aboriginals” from a young person. I stared at the drawing and saw an outline of Australia, the island of Tasmania was absent. Inside the island of Australia were phrases and words that read; Rasism [sic] is not a good thing, White man, Aboriginal, English Invader, Native Aboriginal, G’day Mate, Black, White, Ha Ha Ha Black, Got Rolled, Rolled Hard. I observed words misspelt and a person coloured in black, holding a spear with the word “Aboriginal”. I saw an image of a swagman with a beard, wearing a cork hat and a speech bubble exclaiming “G’day Mate”! The students continued to engage in drawing and conversation. I stood in silence and did not comment. I felt that the drawings and dialogue revealed that the students were “active meaning makers” of Australian history and of what cultural diversity meant to them (Nicholson, 2000, p. 164). I slowly walked away and approached another group. A student looked at me and offered these comments.

I drew an illustration of a bunch of people of different coloured people holding hands, because I noticed, you know when they do like racial diversity, you know like race ... you know like, it’s not just black and white, but I put everyone in there.

(Transcription of class one and two, data: July)



Fig. 4: A drawing of stick figures joined together by the holding of hands, drawn in various colours.

My gaze moved from left to right to observe the stick figures. The colours in the drawing were bright and stood out, I smiled and slowly walked away. As a drama practitioner, Grady (2000) suggests in order to build an awareness of ethnicity in the drama classroom “have students work independently or in small groups to create pictures of people with various shades of skin color. Challenge students to find “colorful” descriptive words for their pictures” (p. 38). I positioned myself to one side of the room and observed all the groups sitting on the floor talking, drawing and reacting. At the end of the lesson, I asked each group if I could collect the poster paper. They all agreed I could. After the class, I studied the drawings and encapsulated my thoughts and wrote the following:

The students constructed their own concept and meaning of cultural diversity. It was evident that this activity engaged the drama students. I found the lesson developed cultural understanding and awareness, built by conversations and drawings.

(Reflective practitioner journal data: July)

That evening I was keen to look at the collected data. I placed the large sheets of paper on the floor and walked around the images and text. The data revealed detailed drawings and phrases. I found one sentence that grabbed my attention that read “It shouldn’t matter whether you’re black, white or blue with yellow spots. We’re all people”. This revealed to me that for this student, every ethnicity and every human-being mattered. I found that this activity was important because

it provided a space for the drama students to voice, converse, draw and dialogue personal thoughts and feelings about cultural diversity. The significance of this activity suggests that the Australian curriculum offers culturally diverse students with ways to express their own lived experiences and interpretations of the world in which they live. It also reinforced Grady's (2000) approach to drama pedagogy and practice that advocates drama teachers to "structure work in ways that help students reflect on issues related to identity and difference" (p. xiv).

As a reflective practitioner researcher and teacher, this activity motivated me to question and think about my own personal schooling experience, how I was never given this opportunity during my secondary school years to draw, discuss or dialogue how I felt about my own or others' culturally diverse background or about the history of Australia. I felt satisfied and proud that I offered the drama students a space in the curriculum to express their own thoughts and understanding about cultural diversity. As Nicholson (2000) suggests drama teachers are challenged by "what might be included in the curriculum and what might be left out" (p. 164). This revealed to me that cultural diversity is a subject I now willingly teach and talk about in personal and professional contexts. The more I interrogate and discuss my own culturally diverse background or the subject of cultural diversity, the more I feel that my voice, my story, my migrant parents, my teaching, my learning and my research are equal, valid, heard and accepted.

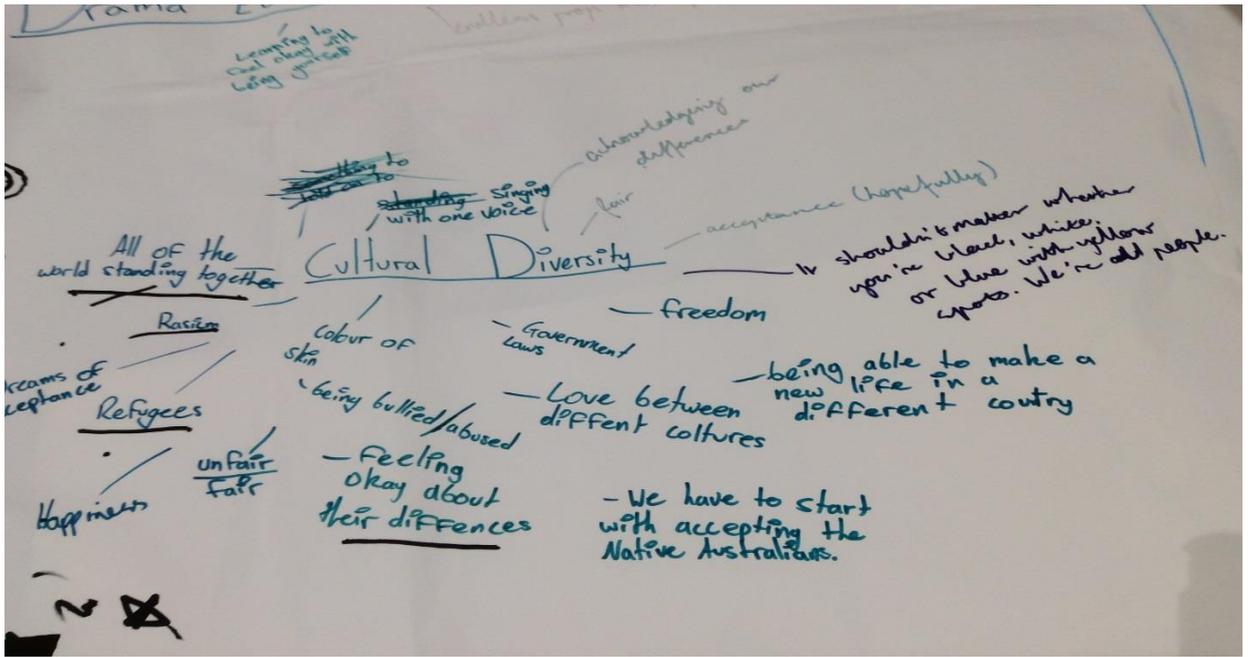


Fig. 5: This group generated phrases around the words “Cultural Diversity”. For example, Racism [sic], Dreams of Acceptance, Refugees, Happiness, unfair/fair, colour of skin, being bullied/abused, feeling okay about their differences, Government Laws, Love between different cultures [sic], freedom, fair, acceptance (hopefully), It shouldn’t matter whether you’re black, white or blue with yellow spots, we’re all people; and, being able to make a new life in a different country.



Fig. 6: This group of five students illustrated five hands. The students used coloured markers to represent skin colours. No words were written. The picture encapsulates the meaning of cultural diversity.

I did not include all the images and text from the poster paper data. I selected data that focused on the concept of cultural diversity. I hesitated to include and show Figure 7 given that it revealed a written response that confronted me. I analysed the words and explored my own interpretations that included, maybe this student did not engage with the topic of cultural diversity and drama or the student may have been hurt, confused or bored with this activity. I felt because of this student response the lesson could have been a failure for this student. I found this to be a critical moment and it demonstrated that for one particular student, this lesson was “a waste of time” and had “nothing to do with drama”. This challenged me as a researcher and teacher and made me question the validity of this study. I posed questions and thoughts to myself:

Why did this student find the lesson a waste of time? How can we discuss cultural diversity and drama? Is a unit of work on cultural diversity relevant to young people? How can culturally diverse topics be taught in drama? How can we learn about culturally diverse students in drama?

(Reflective practitioner journal data: July)

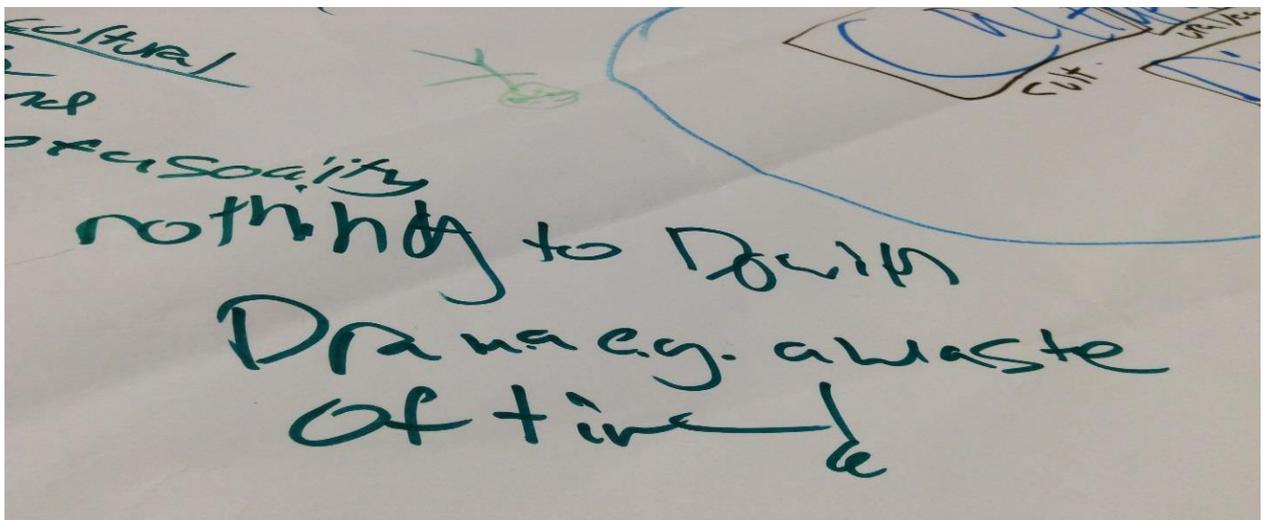


Fig. 7: A student writes the words “nothing to Do with Drama eg. a waste of time!” This comment made me question the unit of work. I was frustrated when I read these words because it was a critical comment toward the relevance of cultural diversity and drama education.

On reflection of the student comment, I felt that the drama unit was important and not “a waste of time”. However, knowing that one student found the lesson a waste of time revealed that it was significant for me as an educator to be

respectful and aware that the views of every participant in this study was valued and valid. As I did not know who wrote this, I had no opportunity to ask this student why they felt that way about the lesson. I was interested and wanted to know more about this comment. After analysing the data, I found that it was important that I accepted and respected all viewpoints. This revealed that my motivations about cultural diversity can be idiosyncratic and may not be important to others. While teaching my next lessons, I became more aware that every student brings with them their own responses and experiences in the drama class. Informed by Grady (2000) this activity offered the students an opportunity to understand “people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds” (p. 35). The drawings, discussions and thoughts by the young people demonstrated that there is sensitivity, complexity and an open ended meaning of cultural diversity. I found because I did not present a textbook about Australian history or handout describing cultural diversity, the drama students themselves embodied learning about cultural diversity and because of this, compelling and original work was created and expressed.

4.5. Migration – an imagined world

In lesson three, I introduced the topic of migration to the drama students and discussed reasons why migrants leave their homeland including the following; natural disasters, land, a better life, war/conflict, reunion, love/marriage, job opportunities, climate, adventure and freedom. These reasons took me back to an event when I was working at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne as a teacher. I recalled taking large school groups on educational tours, in particular, through the Leavings Gallery, which was an exhibition that displayed Australia’s multicultural history. I thought about the students standing in the Leavings Gallery as they listened to my opening words, “What would make you leave your homeland and travel thousands of miles to another country?” I would then gesture to enlarged cursive letters strewn across the walls and project aloud the phrases; land, job opportunities, natural disasters, a better life, adventure, love/marriage, freedom, climate, war/conflict, reunion”. The visiting students would gaze around

the Leavings Gallery to observe still and moving images of migrants leaving their homeland.

I looked around the drama class and repeated the reasons again, “natural disasters, land, a better life, war/conflict, reunion ...”. During this action, I noticed the drama students were wriggling their bodies. It was like they wanted to get up and move around the class, the words I conveyed appeared repetitive and it seemed like the drama students already knew why migrants leave their homeland. It was in the moment, that I realised that the drama students wanted to get up and put the words into action. This motivated me to stop talking and ask the class to form groups to create improvisations based on the issue of migration. My lesson plan was to spend more time in talking about the migration reasons in greater detail, but in that moment, I found my voice was monotonous and the drama students appeared tired of my spoken words. Thus, I got straight into the drama activity.

I asked the drama students to improvise a scene and role-play migrants and passport officers. Informed by Haseman and O’Toole (1986) my aim was for the drama students to enter “an imagined world” that involved “human relationships” (p. 3). The type of improvisation I wanted the drama students to develop involved “rehearsed improvisations ... in performing scenarios where they have time to rehearse their basic ideas” (Lovesy, 2004, p. 78). A brief outline of a scene was handed out to the drama students that indicated a given situation that included a location; the Australian embassy, characters and a scenario; two migrants need to explain to the passport officer that they need to stay in Australia. The length of the scene was to be between five to 10 minutes. Mary took interest in the scene outline and volunteered to arrange the groups. The students appeared pleased and energetic as they moved around getting involved in the drama activity. Each group located to a corner of the drama room and established a space to create and rehearse their improvisations. I did not hand out or encourage the use of any costumes or props as I wanted the drama students to spend more time working through their characters and scene. As the drama students began to improvise, I walked around the space and observed students in role as passport officers and

migrants. From moment to moment, improvised lines were spontaneously delivered that resonated across the room, such as:

I'm the passport officer, here's my table, you're standing out here watching everything.

Hello, I would like a passport from Australia.

Why do you want to migrate to Australia?

Okay, let's start from the beginning.

Next, what's your name?

(Fieldnotes, August)

During the improvisations, I observed in action a group who appeared to transform a small table into a physical barrier for the passport officer to stand behind and stamp passports. The table developed "symbolic significance" that suggested an official location for the passport officer (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 171). It also defined the space between the passport officer and the migrant. The class sounded loud and at times chaotic. Several students were laughing; the joke was about eating gum. According to O'Toole and Dunn (2002) spontaneous role-play requires patience from the teacher as not every student can "switch on belief when they enter an improvised scene" and at times "laughing and playing around" occurs (p. 6). I did not intervene and observed that after several minutes, the group became focused and started to improvise their scene. After some time, I informed the class that the scenes would be performed to the class, so I announced the following:

Okay, freeze, can I have your attention, I'm going to give you, sorry to interrupt, I'm going to give you five more minutes to rehearse, then we are presenting. I'm going to give you another thing, think about where your audience is going to sit. So, you need to also stage this scene, where are you performing in the space and where is the audience going to sit. Thank you.

(Fieldnotes, August)

As I walked around the room, the drama students appeared happy and looked at me with a sense of achievement. This prompted me to stop the class and say “Who would like to go first”. Alice immediately put her hand up and volunteered, the others in the group reacted and whispered “no put your hand down, not first ... alright let’s do it”. Mary in an excited voice said “Where do you want us to sit?”. Waving her hand, Alice instructed us to sit on the floor toward one side of the class. The other students standing near Alice positioned themselves as the performers opposite the audience and stood in a tableau position. The scene commenced and the audience sat in silence. Alice, in role as the passport officer, stamped her fist on the table and in a loud disgruntled voice projected out the first word “next”. Sam, in role as a migrant shuffled forward and responded with a quivered tone “um, I want a passport”. The passport officer, stared directly at the migrant “so do they all, what’s your name”, the migrant responded back “Lousa, call me Louie”. The passport officer responded back and said “Lousa, wow, your parents must really love you”. The passport officer continued to question the migrant “why do you want to come to Australia”, the migrant anxiously said “it’s too cold in England, I’m from the band One Direction, you know One Direction, you want a selfie”. The passport officer responded back “yeah sure, why not”. The audience reacted with laughter and looked at each other with smiles. The scene continued with a second migrant stepping forward toward the passport officer, the migrant said “I’m from Singapore, I’m a chef”. As the migrants stepped forward to talk to the passport officer, it was evident that the reasons discussed earlier, why migrants leave their homeland, were now being expressed through the dramatic elements of “*role, focus, tension, climax, transformation of space and objects*” (Bird, Donelan and Sinclair, 2017, p. 110 – authors’ italics). On reflection I came to the conclusion that the drama students actively embodied the topic of migration across various methods of learning that included discussion, improvisation and performance.

After all the groups presented their scene, I incorporated a “reflective phase” that involved “in-role writing” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 23-24). I wanted the drama students to have time to write in character, as I found that the migration

scenes were “strong” experiences that needed “to be reflected on” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 23). I presented the drama students with a handout that was entitled *Journal/Reflection – Migration Scene*. With their handout, the students quietly sat down on their own. With heads down, the drama students appeared to be focused in thought and writing. For 10 minutes, the drama room was in complete silence. It was apparent that the drama students were writing in-role and were in deep reflection. The journal entries revealed the following:

The cold in Syberia [sic] is usually in winter -30 degrees. The passport officer asked me why I wanted to come here ... I couldn’t take it. I need the heat. I was not welcome and I was rejected. I shall try tomorrow ...

All my life I have been forced to chef at a little restaurant that underpaid me. I was forced to do something that I disliked. Luckily, I had a chance to migrate to the free and warm Australia.

(Data, August).

As the drama students reflected in role and continued writing, I took solace in the silence to the point where I slowed down my walking pace to stand still. I did not want to disturb the class with my words or presence, so I sat on a chair to one side of the room and glanced down at my lesson plan. I held my notes but did not read them. I reflected back to the lived experiences of my grandparents and parents leaving Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Egypt, and thought about their reasons of leaving; political conflict, wanting an adventure, to be reunited with family, love and a proxy marriage. As I sat on the chair, the drama students approached me and volunteered to hand in their work. I reached out and accepted their journal entry.

At the end of the lesson, I felt satisfied that the drama students developed meaning and understanding as they entered “an imagined world” (Haseman and O’Toole, 1986, p. 3). It also showed that the drama students tried “walking in another person’s shoes” to explore a different perspective other than their own (Simons, 2000, p. 25). I reflected on the actions of my pedagogical practice. It was evident from the reactions of the students and of my own feelings, that my teaching

approach of the lesson consisted of too much talking and a repetition of phrases. Informed by this lesson, I made sure that the next lessons did not consist of long periods of me standing and talking to the drama students. Therefore, I planned the next lesson with brief teaching instructions that gave greater clarity in words and action for the drama students to follow. As a reflective practitioner, what I learnt from this drama activity was that the drama students embodied the characters through language, actions and thought to express a contemporary perspective about migration, that involved humour and emotions relevant to the present time.

4.6. Pedagogical approaches to cultural diversity

The week before teaching *Cultural diversity and drama*, I offered the drama teacher Mary, a hard copy of the unit of work. I considered this hard copy as evidence to explain to Mary the aims, objectives and content of what I was going to teach. Mary declined to see or keep a copy of my unit of work. This implied that Mary was very happy to hand things over to me because she had trust in me and didn't need to see my unit or preparation. She enthusiastically engaged in a discussion about drama and I felt that she wanted to hear and see the unit in action rather than read about it. That evening, I reflected and wrote the following.

Mary didn't want a hard copy of my unit of work today. She seemed disinterested in the paper work and didn't want to know about the aims and objectives. She said her drama classes are taught in an "organic" way. I spoke to her about the topic of cultural diversity. She liked that. I get the impression that Mary likes to talk about things. When she looked at the paper in my hand she shook her head and said "No thanks".

(Reflective practitioner journal data: July)

Thinking back at the time I felt that the "public actions" from Mary was an indication that she trusted me with her students and didn't need to read over my unit plan before I actually started teaching the classes (Nicholson, 2002, p. 83). After teaching the unit of work, I found that Mary who had been teaching the same students throughout the year had her own personal perspective regarding the culturally diverse identities of the students. I discovered this during the interview I conducted with Mary, given that her view of the drama students in the context of

cultural diversity did not encapsulate pluralism. When I asked Mary to discuss the drama students she said:

They are not culturally diverse ... we have got a few Chinese students, and we have got people that might be second and third generation ethnic.

(Interview data: October)

I found this to be a critical moment because it showed that Mary and I had taught the same students, yet our pedagogical perspectives were different. According to Grady (2000) in our drama and theatre work there needs to be more “in-depth understanding of and respect for the identity locations that mark us as different from one another ... to look beyond our own ways of viewing the world” (p. xiii). During the interview with Mary, she was relaxed in her discussion and received the questions with confidence. I was interested in her thoughts about cultural diversity. She commented and said:

In Australia we are extremely lucky to have such a big mix of different cultures and not just because people have arrived very recently, but because we have had this since right when immigration began, it’s amazing this diversity so I see it as a huge positive but that is a very open ended question.

(Interview data: October)

I asked Mary about the awareness of her own ethnic background and about others and she said “Oh I just think that it is in built”. She then discussed the school that she taught at.

Well I suppose we do have some language barriers at [Corner College] we have some Chinese students as you know, who ... have very little language ... in drama classes we all become really expert mimes.

(Interview data: October)

As I read the interview transcript, I returned to Mary’s comments about language barriers and wrote about it in my reflective practitioner journal.

Mary should allow Chinese-Australian students more opportunities to use language and read. I wanted to discuss with Mary the success of Nam reading aloud ... *A Safe Place to Live* ... It reminded me of my mother

who had an accent ... We need to be inclusive in the world and not treat language as a barrier. We need to break down these barriers!

(Reflective practitioner journal data: July)

Table 2 presents a vignette that has been constructed verbatim from what actually took place. It illustrates my pedagogical approaches and the introduction of the Australian picture book, *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011). Informed by the drama practice of Ewing (2013), Grady (2000), Saldaña (1995) and Taylor (2000), I introduced *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011) and included aspects of what many drama practitioners refer to as *Storydrama* (Booth, 1994). For Ewing (2013) explains that “*Storydrama* ... involves an adult or older child, reading a picture book ... while providing an opportunity for children to embody the events through dramatising them” (p. 27). Taylor (2000) suggests that “good story books can be a powerful entry point into drama activity” (p. 8). For Saldaña (1995) the use of “story drama, in which literature is used as the framework and springboard for dramatic activities” is a way to explore multiethnic literature (p. xiii).

Table is on the next page.

Table 2. Vignette of the drama classroom

Verbatim discussion between the reflective practitioner and the drama students	Annotations: significance of the conversation
<p>Patrizia: We are going to look at things, materials like books, plays that relate to cultural diversity ... people who have used their own stories, like I did, I used my own story and put it into a play and I toured it to schools ...</p> <p>Sam: is it about your own personal experience?</p> <p>Patrizia: yes, yeah it was autobiographical, the play was about me growing up as an Italian-Australian and ... (student interrupts)</p> <p>Alice: what part of Italy?</p> <p>Patrizia: my father was born in ... (<i>Patrizia walks to the whiteboard and draws an outline of Italy</i>) can everybody see ... does anybody know what that island is called ... (<i>Patrizia points to the south of the country</i>)</p> <p>Students: Sicily, Sicily, Sicily ...</p> <p>Patrizia: Yes, that's right. My father was born in Sicily, in a place called Messina, which is a city ... he migrated to Australia in the 1950s ... seems like a long time ago ...</p> <p>Sam: it really isn't</p> <p>Patrizia: the play was about my father, born in Italy, he was a Carabinieri, does anyone know what a Carabinieri is?</p>	<p>I spoke about myself to the class and the students engaged and wanted to know more.</p> <p>The students became interested in my personal story and wanted me to further discuss specific details.</p> <p>I wanted to reveal the story of my father and tell the class that my parents were migrants and explain to the class how I connected my personal story into performance.</p> <p>I introduced to the class Italian words, an intercultural exchange of another language took place.</p>

<p>C-A-R-A-B-I-N-I-E-R-E...</p> <p>George: I've heard of it ... but nah...</p> <p>Patrizia: my father wore a feathered tall hat and a uniform ...</p> <p>Alice: Police</p> <p>Patrizia: Yes, part of my play was my dad's experience as a policeman in Italy ... I was born in Australia and grew up with parents who migrated to Australia. I told my story in the play. The play was called <i>Dual Identity</i> and if you like you can tell your own story or stories of other's in drama ... that's why I'm excited to talk about cultural diversity and include stories into drama ... this relates well into the next activity... <i>(Sam interrupts)</i></p> <p>Sam: um, my dad's parents, my Nonna was born in Sicily...</p> <p>Patrizia: Wow, that's interesting</p> <p><i>(Patrizia raises the picture book entitled A Safe Place to Live, written by Bic Walker in 2011 and displays it to the class)</i></p> <p>This story is about refugees. What is a refugee?</p> <p>Nam: someone who is leaving their homeland</p> <p>Bill: <i>(Bill calls out in a loud voice)</i> somebody ... somebody ... somebody who's leaving their home not by will and is coming to a different place, because there is a difference between asylum seekers and refugee ...</p>	<p>As a drama educator, I discussed my personal culturally diverse story to the class and I felt that this was well received by the students. They wanted to know more about my personal family experiences. This also revealed that for some students this generated discussion about their own culturally diverse narratives.</p> <p>After hearing my personal story, Sam responded and shared his own personal migration family story to the class.</p> <p>The students engaged in the discussion about the meaning of refugees without fear or failure. They wanted to share their own opinions about refugees.</p>
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<p>Sam: Refuge is just a safe place ... so a refugee is someone who is seeking refuge, it doesn't mean they have to leave their country to seek refuge ... if ... if ... if it's a rainy day and you want to get inside a shop because it's cold then you're a refugee because you're seeking refuge</p> <p>Nick: Well, then you'll probably be kicked out of Australia then</p> <p>Sam: um, under UN law you are legally allowed to take refuge</p> <p>Nick: you research UN law</p> <p>Alice: Eh, it's pretty common knowledge that UN law requires that ... that there are at least humane conditions for refugees, if like their imprisoned or detained.</p> <p>Sam: haven't you read the news that Australia has denied all allegations of ...</p> <p>Alice: (<i>Alice interjects</i>) What I'm saying is that Australia is not bothering to follow those, I'm not saying ... that's what's supposed to happen, but I mean like the UN policy is a nice idea but there's only so much it can do, it can make strident demands but it can't just like invade somebody if it does not like their policies ... there's only so much the UN can do really.</p>	<p>Sam wanted to express his thoughts.</p> <p>Nick's comment identified that the relationship between refugees and Australia is adverse.</p> <p>Sam and Alice responded with a sense of hope and humanity for the plight of refugees.</p> <p>An emotional and tense exchange occurred as the students discussed the concern for refugees.</p> <p>The students linked the topic of refugees to the context of Australia.</p> <p>This exchange revealed that students in junior secondary years are willing to discuss and construct their own meaning concerning refugees.</p>
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(Transcription of class three and four, data: August)

After the class discussion regarding refugees, I presented one photocopied page to each student from the book *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011). I planned the activity by asking each student to read one page aloud starting with page one. I introduced the story with these comments;

Bic Walker is a refugee and an artist. She illustrated and wrote this book *A Safe Place to Live* in 2011. Going around in a clockwise direction let's read one page at a time to the class.

(Transcription of class three and four, data: August).

Alice started to read the first page of the story and said "Once upon a time, my family lived in a place that was unsafe. People were always fighting and there was war everywhere. So we decided we must go on a journey to find a safer home to live". The students were engaged and read the refugee story with sensitivity and compassion. Nam, who had an Asian background, read out his sentence, "Then a large oil tanker came and rescued us ... They gave us food and water and blankets to keep us warm". I became emotional. I found the words increased in meaning when Nam read. He was not confident speaking the English language and he read the words slowly. The other students and I gave Nam an opportunity to read without any interruption or prejudice and this demonstrated that Nam, found comfort to read slowly in his own voice, in his own accent.

Then Nick read the last line and said, "Finally, we were picked up and flew across the world to a safe island called Australia. There was no fighting or war and we were allowed to do what we wanted and go where we wanted. My brother flew his kite high up in the sky. We were as free as the birds". I realised, there was one page at the back of the book that I did not photocopy and hand out. It had text and a photo of the author and illustrator, Bic Walker, so I turned my book to the class and read it aloud, "Bic Walker escaped with her family from Vietnam as a refugee in 1979 when she was 3 years old. This is a true story based on her journey to Australia". I concluded with the last sentence, which was under the photo and said "Picture taken at the refugee camp with her refugee number board".

As I continued to hold the page open, the students leaned forward and stared at the black and white photo of Bic Walker. There was no comment or sound in the drama room, it was silent. The students appeared captivated by the photo. Then the students started to stretch their legs and arms. I observed Alice lie down and stare at the ceiling. In that moment, I wondered what she was thinking, what were her thoughts and feelings about the refugee story? This prompted me to ask the class “what words come to mind about this refugee story?”. The students directly responded and called out words; “refugee, boats, rice, death, sea water, rescue boats, pirates, escape, oceans, sadness, memories”. I continued the questions and asked “what are some good things coming out of the story”? The students called out “freedom, no war, happiness, survival, flying a kite, free, free as a bird”. The students were engaged and responded to my questions. I closed the book and said “Why do you think refugees like Bic Walker want to tell their stories?” Sam, who was sitting next to me, surveyed the class and said “to help spread awareness”. This was a critical moment, that made me feel inspired and emotional. This revealed that a young person like Sam, could announce to the class that stories by and about refugees are important and should be of interest to us all. I took from this that while our discussion focused on refugee stories it suggested that Indigenous Australian stories should also be included in the drama curriculum as a way to more fully understand and reflect upon the history of Australia.

After reading the story and asking questions, I observed the photocopied pages had spread all around the students. I walked around and picked up the pages. This was a gesture from me to offer care and respect to Bic Walker, her story and refugees. As I collated all the pages, I asked the class to form groups to create short performances from the story. There were only a few minutes before the lesson ended. The reading of the book took longer than planned. I changed the teaching instructions to the class. My words were rushed. “Okay you can do statues, a chant, use the illustrations as a tableau, a mime of one minute using a picture from the story, no sound, no words”. I had a sense of urgency. The lesson was about to end. As the minutes passed I called out “Okay, let’s have a tableau in one minute”. The students were moving around the class, some were laughing and

talking. I projected my voice and deepened my tone “Okay, I’m going to countdown from 10 ready 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 ... FREEZE.

Each group remained still. To view all the tableaux⁸, I stood back and swung my body around. I observed a person holding a fishing rod, a boat, a child holding a kite, a pirate, a person reaching out to hold another person and what appeared to be the shape of Australia. This demonstrated that the students were able to recall and represent a “distinctive image” from the picture book (Ewing, 2013, p. 28). After the tableaux were presented, the students shook their bodies and walked around the class. The drama teacher walked up to me and looked at her watch. I felt the closure of the lesson was messy and unfinished. Through the chaos of students exiting the room, I felt there was a positive energy that demonstrated empathy and understanding about refugees. I smiled and waved goodbye. After the class, I sat in a quiet location to reflect on the lesson, the participants, the words, the discussions, my teaching, the learning, the brainstorming, the refugee story and the tableaux. I typed up my fieldnotes, I read and re-read Sam’s words “to help spread awareness”. I developed the following finding. The drama students embodied the stories of refugees and the stories of our culturally diverse selves “to help spread awareness” to build understanding, empathy and respect for each other.

4.7. Ethnic identities in drama education

The culturally diverse participants in this project were a heterogeneous cohort. This is supported in the knowledge that we all have complex culturally diverse identities, as discussed in chapter one of this thesis. In the focus group interview that involved five students, I provided opportunity to discuss ethnicity. I posed this question to the focus group, “How would you describe your country of birth, place of belonging, language, traditions, customs, ethnicity, nationality?”.

Analysis of the data revealed that the five students sitting in a small room were

⁸ In drama education, a ‘Tableau’ plural ‘Tableaux’ refers to “a moment from a drama that has been created or frozen so that it can be examined closely ... to illustrate a particularly important moment in the drama (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 166).

interested and volunteered discussion regarding their ethnicity. A critical moment occurred when they independently considered their culturally diverse self. However, in the beginning there was hesitation. For instance, I asked for a volunteer to start the discussion and posed “Anybody want to start”? The students did not talk. I felt at this point, I had pressured them for a response. In the moment I thought that a written response would be better and less confrontational. I commenced the conversation and said the following:

I will start ... I feel like I belong in Australia because I was born in Australia but my parents were migrants, my father was born in Italy, my mother was born in Egypt ... and so people ask, so are you Italian? Are you Australian? I say that I'm Australian and I have parents that were born overseas. It's my country of birth. I feel it is Australia because that is where I was born.

(Focus group interview data: August)

As I was talking the students looked at me and became interested in my discussion. This revealed they were interested in my ethnic identity. I felt that I engaged the students through my own words and through my own personal narrative. Sam was the first student to talk and said “I was born in Houston but Australia is better”. In conversational tones there was an exchange of discussions that revealed the following:

Bill: Even though I was born in Australia I feel a little bit more towards ... basically all my family are all from Russia, so I feel a bit more Russian than Australian.

David: I feel I belong in Australia. My father migrated from Mauritius, I feel like I belong because of all the music, parties and stuff.

Alice: I used to live in Ireland and whenever I hear Irish music I feel really homesick.

George: My mum was born in Greece we have souvlakis and stuff. Greek food is really good to eat. I find the history of Greece more interesting than the history of France or something that I don't have any links to [sic].

(Focus group interview data: August)

These discussions demonstrate that the students and me as a reflective practitioner, trusted each other in sharing personal feelings, experiences and

thoughts about ourselves. For instance, the words conveyed a personal perspective: “I feel ... my family ... my mum ... my father migrated ... I’m Australian ... my parents ... I was born in Australia ... Greek ... Russian ... Mauritius ... I feel really homesick”. This indicated that we all wanted to explore and discuss our cultural pluralistic selves to each other. It also suggested that we felt comfortable in each other’s company and that we trusted each other with exploring our personal cultural narratives.

The focus group interview provided the students with a freedom to voice and share their own words thus valuable data was generated. The data showed that the students and me were keen to discuss our culturally diverse backgrounds. I felt that in the beginning of the focus group interview, the students hesitated to start with their own personal responses, but once they heard my thoughts it motivated them to exchange and contribute conversation. For instance, David in the focus group interview expressed that “a lot of my friends and neighbours are Greek and Italian and I feel more connected to that even though I don’t have a connection to that”. During the focus group interview, once the students started to discuss their ethnic narratives, I decided it was best to listen and not to interrupt the sentences or the flow of thoughts that were expressed. In that moment, I felt because the words and feelings were personal, I wanted to offer my respect and trust to the students and not interrupt or give back any judgment about their ethnic identity. Because of this choice, I found the discussion deepened and further developed without interruption from the teacher. Although, I did on occasion nod and smile to reassure the students that I was listening and attentive to what was being said. The significance of this exchange indicated to me that the students sought to explain and understand their own ethnic identities within an Australian contemporary context. The focus group interview concluded with the drama students reflecting about the topic of cultural diversity and drama. The students revealed the following:

Alice: I guess I haven’t seen drama doing anything like that, cultural thing.

Bill: I feel that cultural diversity is something that would come up in a different subject like maybe History or English.

George: Drama is probably the least subject I would expect, because I could see it in music, I can see it in art, but I would never had thought drama.

(Focus group interview data: August)

As a reflective practitioner researcher and teacher, the unit of work was effective in various ways. From a pedagogical perspective, the unit of work enabled me to journey through personal and professional experiences that humanised the content and context of my teaching practice. As a result of this, I feel the unit of work and my pedagogical experiences could be an exemplar for other drama teachers to further explore. For the drama students, the unit of work, from the very beginning to the end, challenged them to think about cultural diversity through their personal and culturally diverse experiences. Through the lens of a reflective practitioner, I observed that the level of thinking and learning from student to student differed. Thus, pedagogical guidance and understanding was required from lesson to lesson. Across the varied activities offered in the unit of work, I feel satisfied that every drama student was given an opportunity to contribute their own thoughts and feelings about cultural diversity. The unit of work successfully moved through learning and teaching modes that at times seemed original, chaotic, confronting and challenging. This made researching the fields of cultural diversity and drama education complex and compelling.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the complexities, sensitivities and challenges in exploring the topic of cultural diversity and educational drama. It has revealed the thoughts, experiences and practices of a culturally diverse drama teacher and researcher through the lens of a reflective practitioner. As such, it illuminated the experiences of drama students from pluralistic cultural backgrounds and their understanding and exploration of cultural diversity. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this study and address the research question in light of what emerged.

CHAPTER FIVE – Findings and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter draws together my research findings and concludes the qualitative research project that I conducted. My research project involved a reflective practitioner study (Schön, 1983) of an educational unit of work about cultural diversity to a junior secondary drama class at a coeducational independent school that investigated;

How can a unit of work on cultural diversity enhance understandings and awareness about drama students from culturally diverse backgrounds in a junior secondary drama class?

In this chapter, I weave relevant literature with significant data analysis. I then revisit the central research question, offer recommendations for future studies and identify the limitations of my study. In concluding remarks, I reflect on my experiences of the research project.

5.2. Diverse ethnic identities

A key finding of this study is that the drama students identified and discussed their own ethnic identities. This was evident in the focus group interview and in the drama classes as the students revealed their own narratives about their ethnic backgrounds. Situated in a safe environment and in conversational tones, the drama students described in their own words their cultural backgrounds. As described in Chapter Four, Sam, Bill, David, Alice and George revealed personal narratives of themselves. For example, David expressed that he felt he belonged in Australia and that his father migrated from Mauritius. George revealed that his mother was born in Greece. This supports Fitzpatrick's (2011) study that examined the use of drama through the stories of children in New Zealand, that revealed providing a safe space for children to talk about race, and explore and make sense of their own emerging identities enabled others to understand perspectives of diverse racial-ethnic groups (p. 101). This finding also correlates with Ackroyd and Pilkington (1999) as they suggest that the ethnic identities of

young people is important to examine as “people do not have one fixed identity but a range of cultural identities” (p. 448). This is further underpinned by Wooding (2000) who claims that in a pluralist society ... each of us contains multiple cultures or identities” (p. 90). This finding is significant to drama pedagogy and concurs with Grady (2000) who recommends that drama educators should “actively involve young people in conversations about race and ethnicity” (p. 35).

5.3. Trust in the drama classroom

This study found that trust facilitated the advancement of the unit of work between the reflective practitioner, drama students and the drama teacher. According to Nicholson (2002) “trust” is a key concept in drama education that “can be identified through the public actions of the body – what participants’ say, how they act towards others, and how they relate to each other physically within the specific context of the drama itself” (p. 83). The data generated in the drama classroom demonstrated that, trust was established during the unit of work. For example, evidence of trust in action was demonstrated during the *Name Game* activity, as described in the discussion chapter. This study, like Rivière’s (2006) research project that investigated culturally diverse drama students, found that earning the participants’ trust was important. Saldaña (1995) states that “building trust in the classroom is an essential component of any teacher’s job” (p. 26).

Specific to drama education, Luhmann (cited in Nicholson, 2002) suggests that “relationships of trust are required in order for students to become actively involved in the drama and to accept new challenges” (p. 85). Trust, in this study was important to develop, as the understanding of cultural diversity was complex and open to sensitivity. As Nicholson (2002) suggests that “drama education involves participants in the exploration of feelings and values which are both personally felt and culturally grounded. In a pluralist society ... the process of working in drama may call into question diverse, and deeply felt, social and cultural beliefs” (p. 90). The data revealed that the drama students confidently conveyed their own thoughts and feelings about complex cultural issues regarding

refugees, multiculturalism and Indigeneity, that was built on the “important” (Rivière’s, 2006, p. 11) and “essential” (Saldaña, 1995, p. 26) element of trust. It is evident from the data generated in this study, that the unit of work successfully advanced because of the developed trust between the reflective practitioner, the drama students and the drama teacher.

5.4. Embodied learning about cultural diversity

A positive finding of this study was that embodied learning about cultural diversity enabled the drama students to generate and express their own contemporary meanings and understandings of themselves, others and of Australia. This was demonstrated in Chapter Four, through the varied drama based activities such as the migration scenes, in-role journal writing, drawings and tableaux. In support of this finding, Donelan (2002a) suggests that “intercultural drama curriculum can provide students with embodied, aesthetic experiences” (p. 37). This finding concurs with Saldaña (1995) who suggests that “drama can be used as an art form and a method to provide each participant with personal insight into the multiethnic world in which we live” (p. xii). The data revealed that embodied learning about cultural diversity produced idiosyncratic responses in the context of educational drama. For example, as discussed in Chapter Four, a drama student expressed that they disliked exploring the topic of cultural diversity and wrote “nothing to do with Drama e.g. a waste of time”. Relevant to this finding, is that “there can be no singular approach to diversity in education – other than to acknowledge that a class of 30 students will represent 30 distinct bodies of knowledge, understandings, backgrounds, skills, experiences and insights [that] presents both an opportunity and a challenge” (Raphael and Hunter, 2017, p. 251). The implications of this finding suggests that drama can actively offer young people a forum “to express and communicate many different stories and ways of interpreting contemporary society” (Donelan, 2017, p. 45). The analysed data, revealed that the drama students engaged with “dramatic form to explore, express and embody their ideas in collaboration with others” to create their own meaning of cultural diversity in the drama classroom (Bird, Donelan and Sinclair, 2017, p. 119). This finding concurs with Anderson (2012) who suggests that drama

educators should “reflect more upon the systemic dynamics of embodied learning” for drama students (p. 86).

5.5. Stories from around the world

I found that stories about refugees can effectively engage drama students to understand and enact people from diverse cultural backgrounds. As the data revealed, the reading of the book *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011) was significant and prompted interest and expression about refugees. This was evident when I asked the drama class why refugees like Bic Walker want to tell their stories? Sam, the drama student said to “help spread awareness”. The analysed data revealed that the drama students developed understanding about the refugee characters in the story. The data also identified that the drama students contributed emotive and respectful discussion regarding the sensitive and contemporary topic of refugees. This finding resonates with that of Simons (2000) who suggests that “stories can connect us in metaphor to people around the world, in the past and in the future, helping us to explore what it means to be human” (p. 25). In addition, Cohen (2011) notes that “storytelling is the way the world’s history is revealed” (p. 90).

As discussed in Chapter Four, the tableaux of the refugee story, demonstrated that the drama students were willing to understand and enact the role of a refugee character. This correlates with what Ewing and Simons (2004) affirm that “walking in someone else’s shoes should be regarded as the essence of educational drama” (p. 141). The use of tableau enabled the drama students to focus on a “significant moment in time and to embody the action” of the refugee narrative (Ewing and Saunders, 2016, p.47). The level of engagement shown by the students during the reading and the drama activities concurs with Neelands (2016) who says that “the empathy and willingness to listen to, understand and work with points of view ... different from one’s own position – is key to finding the balance between freedom and restraint” (p. 33). Relevant to this finding was that the unit of work offered “young people opportunities to build connections with people’s stories and experiences, and to imagine, enact and examine the

world from different perspectives” (Donelan, 2017, p. 43). In support of this finding, Sinclair and Donelan (2017) contend that “drama provides a space in the curriculum for young people to imagine and actively engage with human experiences from the past, present and future. It is a place for exploring and remaking old stories and embodying new ones” (p. 107).

5.6. Revisiting the central research question

The central research question of this study was: *How can a unit of work on cultural diversity enhance understandings and awareness about drama students from culturally diverse backgrounds in a junior secondary drama class?*

In summary, the key findings of this study revealed that:

- The drama students identified and discussed their own ethnic identities;
- Trust facilitated the advancement of the unit of work between the reflective practitioner researcher and teacher, drama students and drama teacher;
- Embodied learning about cultural diversity enabled the drama students to generate and express their own contemporary meanings and understandings of themselves, others and of Australia; and
- Stories about refugees can effectively engage drama students to understand and enact people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

These findings substantiate and extend current knowledge in the field of cultural diversity and drama education. For instance, literature in previous chapters of this study, highlight that drama students identify and discuss their own ethnic identities (Ackroyd and Pilkington, 1999; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Grady, 2000) as classrooms around the world become increasingly culturally diverse (Banks, 2011; Mansouri and Arber; 2017; Santoro, 2017). Furthermore, relationships of trust in drama education, as identified by Luhmann (cited in Nicholson, 2002) and Nicholson (2002) underpins the finding that revealed trust facilitated the advancement of the unit of work. Current documents, for example the Australian Curriculum (2018) and Drama Australia *Equity and Diversity Guidelines for*

Drama Education (2015), along with previous studies (Balfour et al, 2015; Donelan, 2005; Kelman, 2009) affirm intercultural understanding and awareness in drama education. This supports embodied learning approaches concerning cultural diversity and adds new perspectives for future drama practice. Existing knowledge in the field of drama education, identify that storybooks launch drama activities (Booth, 1994; Ewing, 2013; Saldaña, 1995; Simons, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Thus, stories about refugees can be effective and engage drama students to understand and enact people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The placement of these findings in the fields of cultural diversity and drama education suggests there are similarities to existing literature and reinforces previous, current and future thinking.

5.7. Recommendations for future research and limitations

In view of my study, the findings point to a need for further research into the experiences about drama students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Further investigation into the narratives and identities of drama students from diverse ethnic backgrounds is compelling. As identified in the review of literature, as Australian schools become increasingly globalised, the scope for further studies that investigates pedagogical, curriculum and learning processes in drama education is pressing. This thesis has generated the following key questions for further research that proposes:

1. How can Australian drama educators effectively teach students from culturally diverse backgrounds?
2. What culturally diverse resources exist for drama educators?
3. How can culturally diverse students explore their own narratives, languages, ethnicities and intercultural values in drama and performance?
4. In what ways are intercultural experiences occurring in educational drama?
5. How do culturally pluralistic drama educators explore their own backgrounds?

This was a small-scale study, with limitations in study design, word length, level of analysis and limited to one school site. The study recommends that a bigger scale study of the same educational unit of work could be taught to multiple schools across Independent, Government and Catholic sectors across various localities in Victoria. A bigger scale study could also collect, compare and analyse data from a range of secondary school year levels. I believe this study has activated significant meaning in the fields of cultural diversity and drama education. For a future study, my unit of work about cultural diversity could be given to other drama teachers to teach in their own drama classrooms, and to examine what it would be like when the drama teacher of the school teaches the unit of work.

5.8. Concluding remarks

The central argument developed through this study was that an educational unit of work about cultural diversity alongside the field of drama education produced embodied learning and enhanced culturally diverse young people in Australia, with an awareness to generate their own meanings, histories and stories of themselves and of others. While it was acknowledged that the researched cohort comprised of three females and 16 males, for this particular project it did not appear that gender had an influence on the results. From a pedagogical perspective, I found that the drama unit of work on the topic of cultural diversity was successful as the aims were achieved. It was also successful for the drama students as they engaged in the making, sharing and observing of their own drama. From Mary's perspective, the unit was relevant, however, it demonstrated that as educators our pedagogical perspectives are unique to ourselves and to the student's we teach. Our culturally diverse narratives as educators are idiosyncratic and this to me was critical and empowering. This study has privileged the drama students, drama staff and me as a researcher and drama teacher with opportunities to explore and understand our voices, our culturally diverse selves, our thoughts and our experiences in educational drama.

I have reflected on all the experiences and achievements that have taken place during my research project and discovered, that like my grandparents and parents who had traversed the seas from Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Egypt, I too have traversed my own culturally diverse journey. Through my own cultural heritage, my Australian journey, encountered a group of hybrid explorers that included a drama teacher and 19 young people. Together we navigated from context to context and explored, discovered, created and performed. With no map, no destination and no “theatre, or elaborate sets, or props, or even many special skills” our culturally diverse journey was “fun [and offered] purposeful and meaningful learning” that we embodied and enjoyed, in each other’s company (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 3). I hope there are further culturally diverse journeys that I encounter and navigate sometime soon.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Parent/Student plain language statement

[insert date here]

Dear Parent/Student,

I am enrolled in a Master of Education by Research program with the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) at The University of Melbourne. This involves doing a research project under the supervision of MGSE staff Dr Christine Sinclair and Dr Richard Sallis. It is my aim to conduct the research project in your school, with your class. This research project has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at The University of Melbourne.

The project is called *Cultural diversity and drama education within an Australian context*. The approach to research that I'm using is called qualitative research. This involves taking notes and reflecting on it afterwards. One of the most important ways of understanding how cultural diversity and drama education relate, is to observe how students think and respond to the activities I've planned and try to discover more about what the students think about cultural diversity in class.

If you agree to participate in the research, I will ask you to:

- (1) be included in observations of classroom activities recorded in my journal;
- (2) be invited to be interviewed as part of a focus group with five students in the group
- (3) provide a sample of written or practical work produced in the lessons. This would only be work that is not being assessed.

As you are one of the students in the class where this research project will take place I am inviting you to participate in this project. On the other hand, you may choose to not participate in the research. If this is the case, you will still be involved in all classroom activities, but I will not be making reference to your participation or class work in my journal, or asking you to participate in an interview. There will be no adverse consequences for any student who chooses not to participate in the research. Also, if you do agree to participate, you have the option to withdraw from the project at any time up until I start to analyse the data I collect.

Once you have read this letter with your parent/guardian, could you please sign the attached Parent/Student Consent Form indicating if you would like to take part in the research or not, and then return it to me.

To assist you and your parents in making a decision about your participation in the research or not, here is some more information about the project.

What will happen in the classes?

I will plan and teach at least two lessons a week in your drama class across four weeks that focuses on cultural diversity. The researcher will introduce and discuss literature, including plays and books about cultural diversity and brainstorm issues about Australia's culturally diverse communities. The researcher will ask students to volunteer using drama-based activities their own culturally diverse stories or recount stories of others as they wish. The manner in which the stories are sought will be discussed with the classroom teacher to ensure that the method is appropriate for the particular class members.

In this research project the researcher hopes to better understand the experiences of students from culturally diverse backgrounds within the drama curriculum and how they connect their understanding of cultural diversity in the drama classroom. While I'm teaching the lessons, I'm also reflecting on my teaching of the lessons and reflecting on it afterwards, to get a better understanding of how cultural diversity and drama education relate in the curriculum.

What will the student be asked to do if she/he agrees to participate?

If you agree to participate, in addition to being included in the classroom observations, you may be asked to take part in a focus group interview for 30 minutes at the conclusion of the 8 lessons. This will take place during class time. The researcher will be audio-taping the interview and then transcribing it to have an accurate record of what was said. Students in the research will be invited to provide the researcher with a piece of written or practical work that was created during the lessons, to be included in the researchers' reflective journal. This will not be work that is to be used for assessment.

What will the researcher be responsible for?

Anything you tell to the researcher and share in the research project will be dealt with sensitively and respectfully at all times. The researcher is working under the supervision of experienced researchers at The University of Melbourne and they are considered to be part of the team conducting this research. All of the participants in my research will be given a different name to disguise their real identities in my research report and any future publications or conference presentations produced from this research. Due to the small sample size involving one class of students at this school, there may be implications for protecting the identity of the participants.

The welfare of the participants taking part in this study is important as this study explores sensitive topics and any possible risks will be addressed. If, while participating in this project, you or your parents have any concerns or questions, or experience any difficulties, please contact me (pferrara@student.unimelb.edu.au) or the school (include the name of a senior member of teaching staff at the school here) and arrangements will be made for de-briefing or follow-up to ensure your well-being. Please remember that all participants can withdraw from the project at any time up to the point of data analysis and can also opt out of particular activities or choose not to answer interview questions as they wish.

Your parents can also contact one of my research supervisors (Dr Richard Sallis, sallis@unimelb.edu.au, 8344 8799 or Dr Christine Sinclair, cesi@unimelb.edu.au, 8344 0337) at The University of Melbourne.

When the project is completed, the information I've collected will be held in a secure location in the MGSE at The University of Melbourne for a period of five years. After that it will be destroyed according to the requirements of the University of Melbourne Policy on the Management of Research Data and Records.

If you require any assistance with translation or interpreter services, you can access immediate telephone interpreters through TIS National by calling 131 450. This service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

What you tell and show the researchers will be in confidence and will not be passed on to anyone else, subject to legal limitations.

What are the benefits of doing this project?

The research team are all confident that this project will add to current understandings of innovative ways to teach drama in culturally diverse school settings and will assist me in my understanding of my own teaching practice. It has the potential to be of benefit to many people and places connected with education, including your school. Your involvement in this project will contribute in a real way to its outcomes.

Upon completion of the research project a summary of results and the thesis will be offered to the school.

If you have any questions about this research project, you should discuss them with your parent/guardian. If they need more information they can contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, ph: 8344 2073; fax 93476739.

They can also contact me personally at pferrara@student.unimelb.edu.au

It would be appreciated if you and your parent/ guardian could please read and complete the attached consent form and return it to me at the school office at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Patrizia Ferrara
pferrara@student.unimelb.edu.au

APPENDIX 2: Parent/Student Consent Form

Project title: Cultural Diversity and drama education within an Australian context

Researchers: Patrizia Ferrara

My daughter/son (please insert the name of your daughter/son here)

_____ and I have read the attached letter inviting her/him to participate in the research project to be conducted at my child's school [insert name of school here] and understand and accept the following:

- that her/his participation in the project is voluntary and that she/he has the right to withdraw at any stage and to withdraw any data she/he has supplied (up to the point of analysis)
- that she/he is to be observed in the class taken by Patrizia Ferrara during the unit of work, Cultural diversity and drama, and these classes will be audio-taped and transcribed, as identified in the attached letter
- that she/he may be asked to take part in a 30-minute interview and that these sessions will be audio taped and subsequently transcribed
- that a sample of her/his non-assessable work generated during the lessons may be included in the research data
- that my child will continue to take part in all class activities regardless of whether she/he and I decide that she/he will not participate in the research project and that no notes of my child's involvement in the class will be recorded if she/he chooses not to participate in the research
- that a pseudonym will be used to protect the identity of the school and my daughter/son in any publications or reports arising out of the research
- I have been informed that the number of people participating is quite small and it is quite possible that someone may identify participants.
- that we are satisfied with the legal limitations of confidentiality, the level of confidentiality of the information and the procedure for safeguarding it
- that all data collected will be stored securely for five years at The University of Melbourne and then destroyed in accordance with The University of Melbourne Policy on the Management of Research Data and Records
- that steps have been put in place by the researchers to safeguard the welfare of the students taking part
- If the student chooses to withdraw from the research any unprocessed data will not be used.

I do/do not give permission for my son/daughter to participate in the research project titled *Cultural Diversity and drama education within an Australian context*.

Signed (parent or guardian)

I do/do not agree to participate in the Research project titled *Cultural diversity and drama education within an Australian context*.

Signed (student who will be a participant in the project)

Date:

If you require any assistance with translation or interpreter services, you can access immediate telephone interpreters through TIS National by calling 131 450. This service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

APPENDIX 3: Focus Group Interview Sample Questions

1. How would you describe your
 - place of birth / place of belonging
 - language
 - traditions/customs
 - food
 - art forms (dance, drama, music, books, art) and history.
2. What do you think about Drama as a subject?
3. Explain what the words 'cultural diversity' mean to you, in terms of your ethnic culture?
4. What was the last activity that you attended or participated in that related to your ethnic culture? (For example; festivals, plays, concerts, social gatherings)
5. Think back on all the lessons we did in the unit of work I taught;
 - what is the absolute highlight for you – your favourite moment. Can you describe it?
 - what was your least favourite moment or activity?
6. How do you think the topic of cultural diversity in drama improved your understanding/enjoyment/engagement with your ethnic culture or/and the ethnic culture of others?
7. On a daily basis (at school, home, with friends) how aware are you of your own ethnic culture? (background/heritage) How aware are you of others?
8. How could you or other students connect your/their ethnic culture in the drama classroom?

APPENDIX 4: Drama teacher Interview Sample Questions

1. Explain what the words 'cultural diversity' mean to you in terms of ethnic culture?
2. What does your drama class do to respect cultural diversity and promote equity and tolerance?
3. On a daily basis (at work, home, with friends) how aware are you of your own ethnic culture (background/heritage)? How aware are you of others?
4. How do you select your drama resources (scripts, literature, music) to teach to the class?
5. In the unit of work I taught,
 - What is the absolute highlight for you – your favourite moment? Can you describe it?
 - What was your least favourite moment or activity?
6. How do you think the topic of cultural diversity in drama improved your understanding/enjoyment/engagement with your ethnic culture or/and the ethnic culture of others?
7. How do you implement cultural and linguistic diversity into your drama teaching and curriculum?
8. How do you engage the culturally diverse stories and voices of the students in the drama class?

APPENDIX 5: Unit of Work: *Cultural Diversity and drama*

Lesson 1 and 2

Unit of work aim: Introduce, explore and understand the topic of cultural diversity by “**making** (creating, forming, pretending, directing, designing) drama; **sharing** (performing, presenting, acting, showing) drama; and **observing** (watching, reflecting, responding, critiquing) drama” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 3).

Unit of Work question: How effective is the unit of work for young people from culturally diverse backgrounds in educational drama?

Teaching Resources: *Drama and Diversity: A pluralistic perspective for educational drama* - Drama-related writing and drawing to explore the issue of cultural diversity (Grady, 2000, p. 162).

Games for Actors and Non Actors (Boal, 1992, p. 99).

Materials: Coloured markers and large white sheets of paper.

Questions and phrases to prompt student discussion:

- What does cultural diversity mean to you?
- Culturally diverse backgrounds, multiculturalism, ethnicity

Focus

To introduce, discuss, brainstorm and express the topic of cultural diversity in the drama classroom;

To explore culturally diverse themes; refugees, belonging, identity, language and respect.

Warm up games

- Physical activities standing in a circle: Neutral position, spinal rolls counting 1-10;
- The ‘Hee’ game;
- Two by Three by Bradford game (Boal, 1992)

Class Activities

- Brainstorm the topic of cultural diversity with the drama class. In groups of four, hand out poster paper and coloured markers. Drama students encouraged to write down words, stick figures, pictures to define and discuss the term cultural diversity;
- Choose one or two people to report back to the class about their group ideas of the cultural diversity brainstorm ideas.

Lesson 3 and 4

Focus

To extend the discussion of cultural diversity.

Migrant scenes: handout scene, improvisations and performances.

Discuss what it would be like to come to Australia from another country?

For example; discuss reasons why migrants and refugees leave their homelands, for example; because of natural disasters, a better life, war/conflict, reunion, love/marriage, job opportunities, climate and/or freedom;

Explore the significance of cultural objects.

Refugee stories; *Storydrama* (Booth, 1994) - use as stimulus material and a starting point to launch into the drama activities (Ewing, 2013; Saldana, 1995; Taylor, 2000). Explore and read with the class culturally diverse story books; *The Little Refugee* by Anh Do & Suzanne Do (2011) and *A Safe Place to Live* written and illustrated by Bic Walker (2011).

Explore drama conventions; improvisation, tableau, hot-seat, postcards, ritual and soundscape (*Pretending to Learn*, O'Toole and Dunn, 2002)

Class Activities

- Migration scenes, hand out sheets with scene of a migrant and the passport officer as characters. Drama students to devise an improvisation based on two characters, a migrant and a passport officer. Ask drama students to perform scenes to the class.

- After the migration performance, drama students complete “in-role writing” (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 23-24) journal entry. Collect journal reflections at the end of class.
- Display culturally diverse objects in the suitcase. Drama students to look at them and discuss what they see.
- Hand out sheet *What’s in the Suitcase* related to culturally diverse objects; drama students choose two or three objects and discuss where they might have come from and who they might belong to. Drama students spend time looking at chosen objects and fill out the sheet *What’s in the Suitcase*.
- In groups, perform a short improvisation with the cultural objects as stimulus material.
- Discuss with the class; What/Who is a refugee?
- As a class, read the story of *The Little Refugee* by Anh Do & Suzanne Do (2011). Discuss the illustrations by Bruce Whatley from *The Little Refugee* and explore the themes from the story.
- Read the story of *A Safe Place to Live* written and illustrated by Bic Walker (2011), then discuss the refugee themes and topics from the book. Hand out excerpts of the story to every drama student in the sequence from the start to the end of the book;
- Use the stories to launch into drama activities. Drama students to work in groups and to devise a performance using drama elements; tableau, moving image and/or chant; use words and phrases in the story. Perform to the class.

Reflection

Summarise in discussion how the cultural objects were put into performance and explain the meaning created out of the object/props in a creative performance.

Reaffirm the work of the drama students and summarise the topics introduced of migrants, refugees and cultural objects.

Drama students to reflect and respond to the story and performances based on the book *The Little Refugee* (Do & Do, 2011) and *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011).

Lesson 5 and 6

Focus

To discuss themes related to cultural diversity; leaving, culture, ritual and cultural spaces.

Warm Up

- Class stand in a circle, play game *What are you doing?*
- Standing in a circle, pass the object of a plastic bottle to the next person. Use your imagination and with mime actions, transform the bottle into another object.
- Drama students asked to walk around the room, teacher calls out random numbers for students to form groups of 2, 4, 5...students walk around the room in slow and fast motion.

Class Activities

- Inventing the space in a room; *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Boal, 1992, p. 150). Explain to drama students using 6 chairs and 1 table, students create a cultural environment in the drama room – a church, a house, the museum of the world, etc.
- Teacher in Role (O’Toole and Dunn, 2002, pp. 8-9). A worker of the museum of the world walks around the museum of the world and taps each tableau to talk.
- Have two drama students sit back to back on the floor, looking away from each other. Ask drama students to comment on meanings about the image presented. Then, ask drama students to challenge themselves physically and from this position to stand up together. In this back to back position, drama students to push up to a standing position. Form pairs and ask students to try this physical activity. Students in pairs talk to each other to move from being in a sitting to a standing position.
- The theme of *Leaving* is explored. Give out the hand out sheet *Leaving*. Arrange drama students in groups of four. Each character has a line from the poem *Leaving* given out. Students to improvise and perform the topic of *Leaving*. Small instruments given out ukulele, shakers, triangle, etc. that

can be used in performance. Create a soundscape (O'Toole and Dunn, 2002, p. 171). Perform soundscape as a class.

- Brainstorm the word 'culture' on the whiteboard and write down words generated from the drama students. Students to discuss what culture means in groups. Choose three items from the whiteboard and discuss these in detail. Students encouraged to put these in dramatic form.

Lesson 7 and 8

Focus

To extend the discussion from last class and explore the understanding of what culture means, for example: language, customs, music, country.

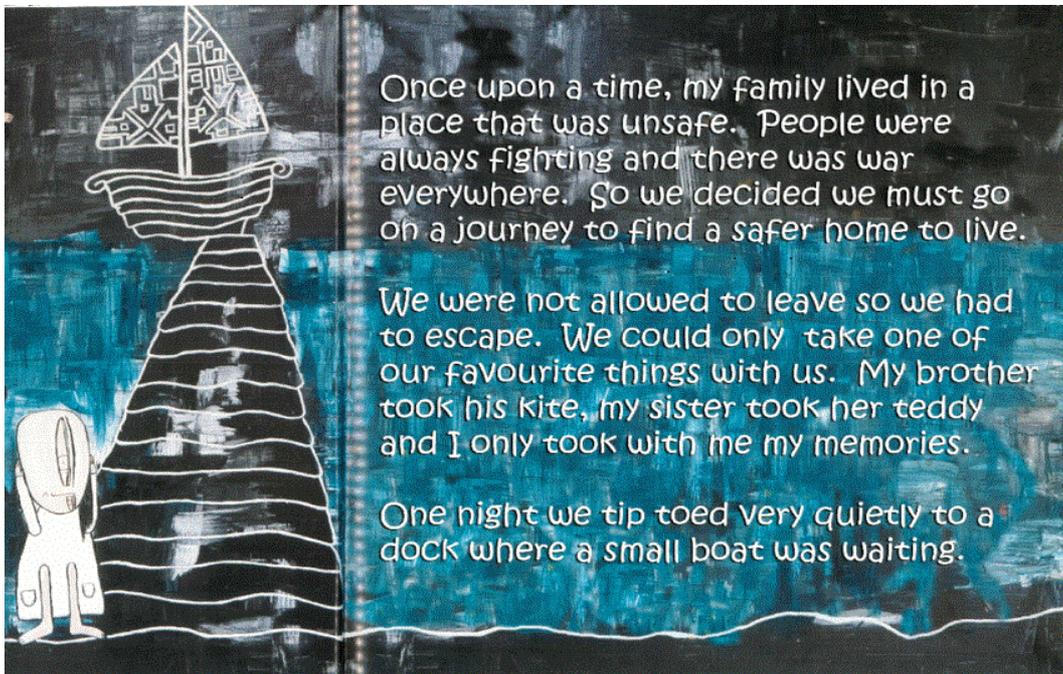
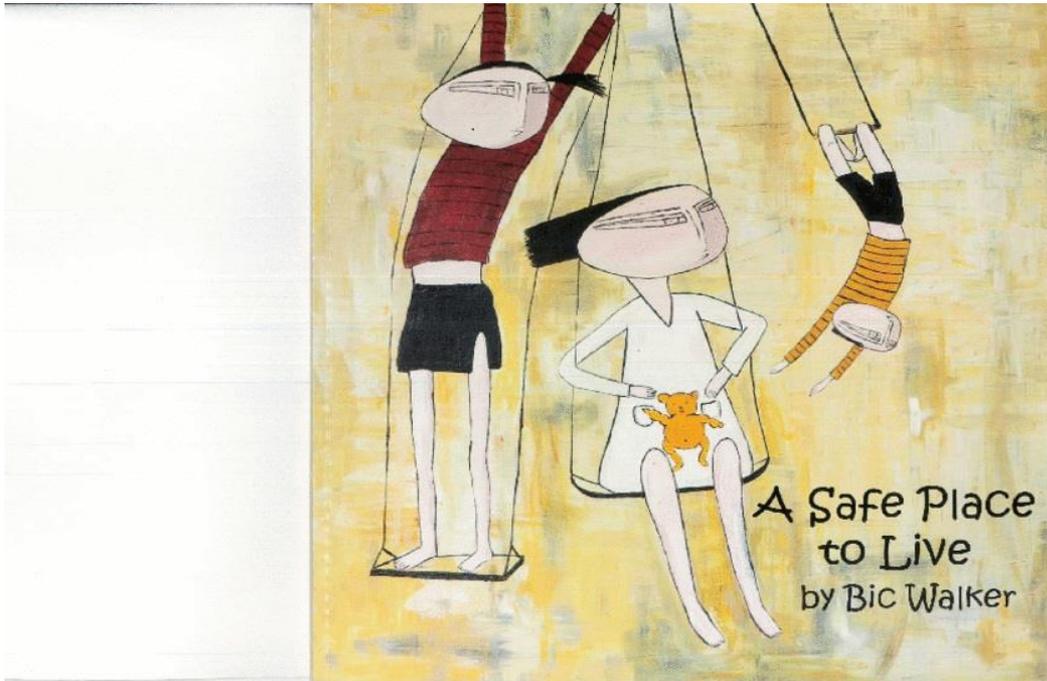
Warm Up

- Chair game – give each drama student a country name, for example, Italy, Australia, Greece, England then repeat and call out the country name. Those in the same country move to swap chairs.

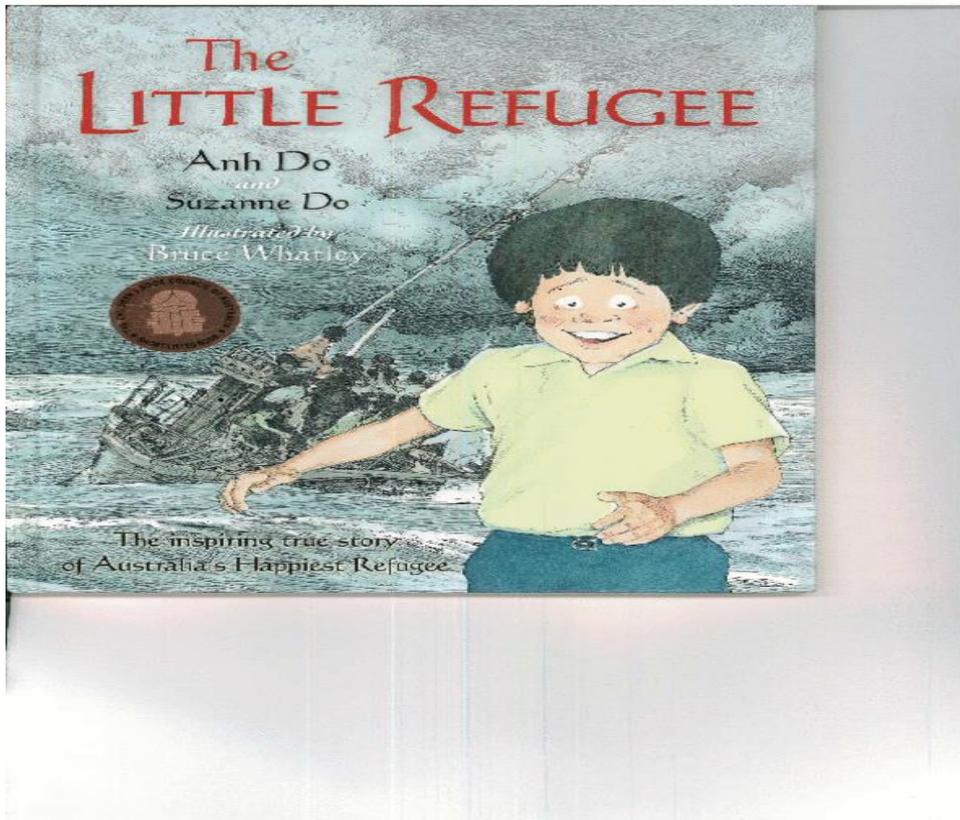
Class Activities

- In groups of four, choose four elements of a cultural community, taken from the list of words that were discussed; language, music, customs, rituals, costumes, chanting, etc. Teacher provides costumes that drama students can use in performance. Groups devise their own cultural performance to perform to the rest of the class.
- Groups to share their performances to the class. After each performance, discuss the characters, situation, attitudes about others, and where these attitudes might come from (Grady, 2000, p. 41).
- Summarise and finalise the unit of work, *Cultural Diversity and drama*, from previous lessons.
- Conclude unit of work with a positive approach. Thank the drama students and share my own thoughts as a drama teacher and researcher. Conclude by asking drama students if they have questions.

APPENDIX 6: Excerpt of *A Safe Place to Live* (Walker, 2011)



APPENDIX 7: Excerpt of *The Little Refugee* (Do & Do, 2011)



I was born in a faraway country called Vietnam.
It's a crazy place - strange food, snakes in bottles,
five people squashed onto the back of one little motorbike!



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