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## Unmasking Albany : Addressing social issues through mask-work with young people in a Western Australian regional centre

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**Unmasking Albany:  
Addressing social issues through mask-work  
with young people in a Western Australian  
regional centre.**

**Fleur Hockey  
Bachelor of Contemporary Arts (Contemporary Performance)**

**This exegesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Bachelor of Contemporary Arts Honours  
(Contemporary Performance)**

**Faculty of Education and Arts  
Edith Cowan University  
November 2008**

## **Abstract:**

My research looked at whether mask-work could be used to address social issues affecting young people in a Western Australian regional centre. It consisted of a case study, where I ran a six day workshop series in two Albany primary schools, with students who had been selected by their school to participate. Throughout the workshops, the young participants each made a full expressive mask, learnt how to perform in different mask styles, developed a character and took part in a small performance at their school. I employed a performance ethnography methodology and utilised methods such as participant observation, structured interviews and student and artist evaluations in the project.

My research touched on two main areas of theory: mask-work and theatre as therapy. After examining the existing literature in these two fields, I integrated aspects of Augusto Boal's concept of theatre as therapy (1979; 1995; 2006) into the use of mask-work in the field of drama therapy. I then used this integrated approach as the basis for my six day mask workshop series. The aim of this integration was to see whether this approach would be successful in working with children who had been identified as having social issues.

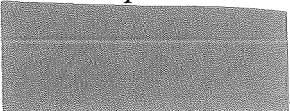
The final presentation of the project has two elements: an exegesis and an exhibition. The exhibition is the creative component of the project, showing filmed footage, photographs, interview transcripts, a display of the participant's masks and the results of the project. The exegesis serves to contextualise the exhibition by providing my interpretation of literature on mask-work and theatre as therapy, and how I integrated this into the workshops.

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## **Acknowledgements:**

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*I would also like to thank all of the staff, students and parents at School A and School B who took part in the project and were generous in their time, effort and feedback. This project could not have been completed without them. I would also like to acknowledge the Western Australian Department of Education and Training for their support of the project in the public school sector.*

*Finally I would like to thank my friends and especially my family for their ongoing love and support during my education. Their help with this project, as always, was greatly appreciated and was a major factor in its success.*

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## Introduction:

What types of social issues are concerns for young people living in regional Western Australia? And can they be addressed through participation in a performance form like mask-work? These two questions guided my performance project *Unmasking Albany*, a workshop based case study which looked at the transformative possibilities of theatre. I used mask-work as a performance strategy<sup>1</sup> in two Albany primary schools to examine prevalent social issues which are concerns for young people in these specific regional contexts.

The aim of the research was to investigate if and/or how mask-work could assist in finding a way to address the social issues of young people living in a regional centre. To achieve this aim I integrated aspects of Augusto Boal's concept of theatre as therapy (1979; 1995; 2006) into the use of mask-work in the field of drama therapy. I then used this integrated approach as the basis for a six day mask workshop series, which I conducted at two primary schools. Throughout the workshops, the young participants each made a full expressive mask, learnt how to perform in different mask styles, developed a character and took part in a small performance at their school. I was able to document the case study through film, photographs, by using participant observation, audio recording interviews and conducting participant evaluations. I used this material to examine the effectiveness of integrating of Boal's theory into mask-work. The resulting material was then developed into the creative component of my thesis, an exhibition titled *Unmasking Albany*, which includes documentary footage of the workshops.

My case study allowed me to work with two Albany primary schools. For ethical reasons, these schools will be referred to as School A and School B throughout this exegesis and the creative project. The students from each school had various reasons for being selected to take part in the workshops (see Chapter Three). It is important to clarify my use of the term 'unmasking' in the project. The purpose of the project was not to expose the children in any way, especially not by revealing which individuals were facing which social issues. I

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<sup>1</sup> I personally developed the term performance strategy, in this context, to describe a performance skill or style which can be applied to a workshop or project setting.

discovered each participant's social issues through structured individual interviews with parents and school staff. This information was not shared with anyone else until it had been de-identified. As the research aimed to discover whether mask-work could help address social issues in young people, the unmasking that was occurring in this project was to do with the form of mask-work; that is exploring the different ways masks can be used apart from in a traditional theatrical setting.

I chose mask-work as the performance strategy for the research, because of the connections it has to the polarities of the human condition. Every mask has a counter mask, an example being the traditional theatre symbol which has the tragic mask alongside the comic. The diverse personas that exist within mask-work allow performers to explore the behavioural boundaries of very different characters. These characters can often be dissimilar to the performer's personality. The beauty of mask-work, as Sally Bailey (2007) believes, is that mask fictionalises a situation, creating a safe emotional barrier between the mask and the person wearing it. It is this barrier which makes the mask a useful tool for therapy within theatre. Within my research, I explored the idea of the mask's intrinsic value: a mask allows a performer to put on a persona different to their own.

Another important part of this research was an adaptation of aspects of Augusto Boal's theory on theatre as therapy. Born in Brazil, Boal believes that theatre can help bring about social and political change by empowering the individual through theatrical techniques. He claims that the individual "...practises in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social)" (1995, p. 44). The application of the theory of mask-work, and of theatre as therapy, is the foundations for the creative aspect of my research.

This exegesis serves to contextualise the creative component of my thesis. It is broken into two parts. Part One focuses on providing a theoretical context for my workshop series by examining the literature on mask-work and theatre as therapy (Chapters One and Two respectively). This section sets out my interpretation of the literature and how I applied this in the design of the workshops.

Part Two of my exegesis focuses on the case study in Albany (Chapter Three). It aims to contextualise the material shown in my creative component, by providing background



information on why I chose Albany as a location. It also sets out the specific schools I worked with, the limitations of the project and how I tried to apply the theory outlined in Part One to the workshop series. Finally, it highlights the key findings of the project. My aim is that this final part of my exegesis will provide the reader with a sense of what the workshop experience was like, which they can then take to the viewing of the exhibition: *Unmasking Albany*.

## Part One

### The theory

*In its original culture nothing had more power than the Mask. It was used as an oracle, a judge, an arbitrator. Some were so sacred that any outsider who caught a glimpse of them was executed. They cured diseases; they made women sterile....some Masks were led on chains to keep them from attacking the onlookers. (Johnstone, 1981, pp. 148-149)*



Figure 1. *Performing in mask at School A.*  
August 2008, Albany

## CHAPTER ONE: The mask

### Introduction

Within the literature I studied for my research, theories are put forward to justify different approaches to the use of mask, and of theatre as therapy<sup>2</sup>. The literature deals with competing claims for these different theories: each theory describes how masks and theatre as therapy work in a way that cannot be reconciled with other theories. This may be due to the fact that the literature does not generalise. Each source of literature documents specific case studies where the practitioner's theory was used. Due to this, the literature rarely looks at mask-work as a whole form, but presents just one way it has been used.

There is a gap within the literature where these different theories overlap. This was in essence what I wanted to explore within my research. Much of the literature I read is written by theatre practitioners using personal case studies, which although it adds weight to the practitioner's work, limits its scope because it relies on a very specific context. I have found this to be a general problem within the literature in the area, as the use of individual case studies serves to justify the practitioner's work rather than building on the literature already in existence. While my thesis also uses a case study, it differs in how I have considered the work of many different practitioners and tried to overlap their theories in the development of the workshops.

### 1.1 A brief outline of the origins of mask

For decades mask-work has been written about extensively in a variety of contexts. One unifying theme within this literature is that the mask comes from a ritualistic heritage, impacting on the way it is used in its various contexts. Kriszta Bodonyi in her video *Mask* (1994) argues that "there has always been a mystic relationship between human and mask...and today masks are still used in magical contexts" (Bagley & Bodonyi, 1994). This idea of the mystical connection between the mask and humans is supported and extended

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<sup>2</sup> The literature that I am referring to looks mostly at expressive masks. I acknowledge that there has been much written purely on the neutral mask from practitioners such as Jacques Lecoq (2002; 2006). This is interesting, but beyond the scope of my project which focuses on expressive masks.

by veteran mask performer Sandra Spieler. She argues that in “mask theatre, we are in line with an ancient and powerful tradition whose roots lie in articulating the mythic mysteries of human existence and the deepest rituals of community life” (2004, p. 32). This locates the origin of mask as being connected to human spirituality and mysticism. It is doubtful however, whether we can locate one specific cultural origin of mask-work.

There is no general agreement amongst theorists as to where and when mask was first used. It can be traced back nine thousand years, through Mexican, Balinese, Japanese, Egyptian, African and many other indigenous cultures (Sheppard, 1990). Mask’s presence in many ancient cultures, at a time pre-dating global contact, indicates that mask-work has a universality which transcends cultural and belief system differences. Bodonyi supports this idea, stating that this universality is due to the fact that “...mask reflects a part of humanity” (1994). This part of humanity is understood by all human beings, no matter what their culture is. However, although many cultures do use mask, the things that are presented through mask-work are often very personal and unique to individual cultures. For example, a mask performance could reflect a culture’s beliefs and traditions, tell a specific local story or mark the celebration of a rite of passage. These are essentially aspects that allow a culture to express how it is different from the rest of the world.

The above points are central to my research, as the universality of mask-work indicates that it is a theatrical form which can potentially have relevance in all contexts. My project used mask-work in regional youth settings, where the participants had little theatrical experience. Therefore, choosing a performance style which the young participants could build a personal connection with was very important, and mask-work had the potential to fulfil this need. Also, mask’s tradition of reflecting personal community beliefs foregrounds it as an apt form for exploring the social issues apparent in this community of young people. I have considered only the origin of masks in general: I will now examine the beginnings of mask-work in theatre.

Most theorists agree that mask was first used theatrically in Ancient Greece. However the reasons behind its use are still debated amongst theatre theorists. The most common view is that mask was used to enhance the actor’s features so that they could be seen at the back of the large Greek amphitheatres where performances were held (Shepherd, 1990). However,

Augusto Boal believes that the mask was created so that there was a definite separation between the actor and their character; that the mask created an ‘other’. Therefore the actor would not be seen to be on stage telling personal truths, because he had taken on another’s personality (2006). This is an idea I will return to in Chapter Two. Since Ancient Greece masks have been used in various theatre contexts, from regimented medieval plays, to the spontaneous Commedia Dell’arte, right up to the modern day community celebrations put on by companies like Welfare State International. While I do acknowledge the rich history of mask-work, my research will focus on mask theory that has been written within the last thirty years. Having briefly explored the origins of mask and mask theatre, we can look at the rituals involved in mask construction and performance.

## 1.2 Construction and performance rituals in mask-work

Many practitioners have documented the appearance of rituals in mask performance and construction. Mask practitioner Keith Johnstone states that “masks are surrounded by rituals that reinforce their power” (1981, p. 149). This idea is extended by Ruth Lechuga and Chloe Sayer (1994), despite their writing from a very different cultural perspective. They discuss in detail the ceremonial use of mask in Mexican regions. They believe that as mask arose from a ceremonial origin it is surrounded by rituals and customs, allowing mask traditions to be upheld even when a mask is not present. This suggests that the ritual behaviours in using mask permit the mask’s power to be sustained under all performance circumstances. Within my research, the connection between mask-work and its rituals became relevant when I planned how to teach the appropriate behaviours associated with mask. I wanted to show the participants how mask-work rituals could increase the power of the mask, but in a way that had relevance to their own experiences.

There are two different categories of rituals involved in mask-work; the first being mask construction. It is important for me to highlight the style of masks I refer to in this exegesis as each style has different attributes and therefore different rituals attached to them. I am concerned with full expressive masks; masks that cover the entire face or head and clearly reflect a character. There is no definitive list of rituals in mask-work. The rituals I present are behaviours that have been documented throughout the literature on the subject, including the work of mask practitioners such as Toby Wilshire (2007), Keith Johnstone

(1981), Deborah Hunt (cited in “The travellers: 2<sup>nd</sup> year contemporary performance disc 1”, 2006), Kriszta Bodonyi (1994) and Christine Shepherd (1990). Mask construction rituals are ambiguous when compared to mask performance rituals, but one practice which is generally agreed upon is that a performer should make the mask they will wear in performance. This is because the act of constructing a mask forges a deep connection between the mask and the performer, the mask becoming a part of the performer long before they first wear it (Shepherd, 1990). The company Welfare State International extends this idea in their handbook (1983), to explore the dynamic of a group all making masks at once. Welfare State uses a lot of mask-work, which they include as a part of the performer’s costume:

Each individual has always devised, and usually made, his own costume....they are created during the evolution of a show. It would be inconceivable for Welfare State to design a piece, then call in someone to make the costumes. This means that costumes in the same show can sometimes look very different from each other....yet because costumes are made together through the same basic process, unity is usually achieved in the common approach to materials. (Coult & Kershaw (Eds.), 1983, p. 116)

This reflects that the process of creating a mask is not just important for the individual, but to the unity of the collective that they may be working with. As to more specific construction rituals, each mask artist has a slightly different tradition, allowing it to be a free and creative process. I wanted to mirror this freedom and creativity in my workshops.

Mask performance rituals are more distinct. They have been discussed thoroughly in the literature, often passionately. These rituals fall under two categories, the first being rituals that keep the mask ‘alive’ in performance. Rituals in this category include: never speaking in mask, never touching while wearing it and never letting the audience see the mask being put on or taken off<sup>3</sup>. These rituals can also be seen as rules or theatrical techniques. I have chosen to still refer to them as rituals as they do reinforce the mask’s power in performance. The second category of mask performance rituals regard the mask performer’s state of mind. Bodonyi believes that the performer must be humble when preparing to wear their mask and that once the performer is wearing the mask, they must establish a silence within it to allow the mask’s character to appear (1994). These are more

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<sup>3</sup> An exception is in Noh theatre where a number of masks are layered over one another, but still the performer’s face is never revealed (Bagley & Bodonyi, 1994).

imaginative ideas, but still contribute to creating an effective performance. It is in the combination of the practical and imaginative mask performance rituals that makes mask-work an intriguing form for an audience to watch.

Mask rituals are not always respected in performance contexts. This is to be expected when there is no definitive code to mask practice. However, by not adhering to the rituals the power of the mask is usually lost (Shepherd, 1990). Mask-work is at least a nine thousand year old art form; its rituals are a means of respecting the origin and history of mask and also providing guidelines for making mask performance work. Mask creates new personas and an alternative reality, which the audience invests their belief in. Perhaps due to this investment, people tend to have adverse reactions to performers not observing the rituals of mask-work. This is why the observation of the mask rituals is important. It allows performers to keep the mask alive on stage. As my research primarily concerns the theatrical mask, it is important to consider the literature written from this perspective.

### 1.3 The theatrical mask: Two key texts

From the literature concerning the theatrical mask, two key sources became important for my research. These are Keith Johnstone's work on mask and trance (1981) and Toby Wilshire's examination of mask's use in theatre (2007). Structured similarly, both texts are written from a teaching artist's perspective. Both authors bring a strong authority to their work, as each has used mask for decades within their practice. Both books examine mask theory, providing examples of mask performance activities and personal case studies to justify their approach to mask. However, Johnstone and Wilshire's approaches to using mask in a theatrical context are vastly different.

In his chapter entitled 'Masks and trance' (1981), Johnstone passionately discusses the connection between mask-work and trance. Johnstone believes that true mask-work involves the mask performer using trance, as "a Mask is a device for driving the personality out of the body and allowing a spirit to take possession of it" (p. 148). He also proposes that when wearing a mask the performer modifies his/her own personality to bring out the characteristics of that certain mask's personality. This means that different performers wearing the same mask will enact the same persona. He justifies this idea by

comparing case studies where separate students behaved similarly when using a certain mask; an example being the character of 'the Waif' (pp. 174-175). Johnstone also talks extensively about the ritualistic power of the mask and the danger of using it in conventional theatre. He states that:

The techniques of 'blocking' the moves has to be abandoned, since at first the Masks move where they want to, and it's no use getting the designer to work out which Masks are to represent which characters. The biggest problem is that the Masks refuse to repeat scenes. (p. 181)

This lack of control over masked performance is problematic for a practitioner who uses mask in the way my workshops aimed to. Johnstone's text is pitched at actors and teaching artists and written in a persuasive but highly personal voice. He supports his statements with examples from his classes, which suggests that his views are well considered and rounded. However, he is fixated on the themes of trance and losing control when in mask. As such, I felt that his perspective should be considered when looking at mask in a theatrical context, but the focus on trance makes Johnstone's ideas controversial to use with children. When I found Toby Wilshire's text, an examination of the theatrical mask which focuses on the entertainment value of masks, I felt that it may be more appropriate to apply to my research.

Wilshire's book (2007) is a practitioner's manual for using mask in a performance context. Wilshire comments on the lack of appropriate literature about the mask in a theatrical setting. He states that his manual's purpose is to purely examine the mask's performance value. In this way, unlike Johnstone, he draws a distinct line between sacred masks and performance masks. However, he does say of entertainment masks that, "...in the transformative power they wield, and the personal connection with their audience, we can see that...masks have their roots in an older and more spiritual age." (p. 14). Wilshire acknowledges Keith Johnstone's approach to mask and trance, stating "Johnstone advocated the use of the trance for unlocking the creative power of both mask and actor, but such a method was deemed unsafe and unsuitable for children." (p. 14). Wilshire does not support the connection between mask-work and trance. He states that "what the mask imposes upon the actor is restraint". This is evident as "anything remotely 'showy' communicates itself as an untruth" (p. 15). This idea of the masked performer needing to be



in control, rather than controlled, is one that extends throughout the text. In contrast to Johnstone, it is Wilshire's view that "the mask is nothing without the actor wearing it." (p. 174) as it holds no power in and by itself.

Wilshire separates sacred and theatrical masks. His account of the latter focuses on the entertainment value of mask-work. Without a ceremonial origin to support it, Wilshire's understanding of the theatrical mask as an object, loses some of its power. The mask becomes more of a tool and less in touch with its symbolic depth. In regards to my research I am more comfortable with Wilshire's concept of mask as opposed to Johnstone's. However, I do acknowledge that the model lacks some connections to the mask's symbolism and power, which are both elements I wanted include in my workshop series design.

Johnstone's and Wilshire's texts apply to separate theatrical extremes of mask-work. Johnstone places more emphasis on the ritual and spiritual influences of the theatrical mask. His methods and theories become controversial, and he argues, risky for children to be exposed to. He also feels that his approach to mask-work, if used too literally in a therapy context, "...could produce some amazing conflicts, and really screw everyone up" (p. 200). On the other hand, Wilshire's separation between sacred masks and theatrical masks potentially diminishes the power of the latter. The territory not covered by either writer, is where these two theorists might overlap, where the symbolic depth of mask can integrate into mask performance without overpowering the experience. For the purposes of working with children, it is within this area of overlap that I positioned my research. It is at this theoretical point that research in the overlapping field of theatre as therapy becomes highly relevant to my project.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Theatre as therapy**

### **2.1 Theatre as therapy: Two key genres**

The field of theatre as therapy has been written about extensively from differing perspectives. Through the process of writing my literature review, I was able to establish that there were two key genres which have arisen out of this field, each having relevance to my research. These two genres are: 1) drama therapy, and 2) Augusto Boal's theory of theatre as therapy. Both are described in a wide range of sources, which I examined to identify the similarities and differences between the genres.

Drama therapy is based on the idea of healing traumatised people by using theatrical techniques. Often a clinical way of looking at the field, most of the literature in this area is written from the perspective of theatre practitioners with an arts therapy degree. Jo Salas is one such practitioner. A co-founder of the Playback Theatre technique (a technique used in drama therapy), Salas studied arts therapy after years of working St Mary's Home for Children in the United States of America. Salas (2007) outlines the practical benefits of arts therapies, such as drama therapy. She argues that "involvement in the arts therapies also has the power to serve more pragmatic and measurable goals such as increasing attention span, improving social behaviour, and enhancing academic performance" (p. 14). However, Salas's text goes beyond a cold, measured assessment of arts therapy. She explains, using case study examples, the very personal way that these kinds of therapies can heal. This brings a personal voice to the text, making it readily accessible for the non-specialist reader. This was important for my research as I am not a trained drama therapist, but am interested in how a non-specialist could use drama therapy in their practice.

Drama therapy is also described in the writings of practitioner Sally Bailey. Bailey (2007) states that "...the focus in drama therapy is on helping individuals grow and heal by taking on and practicing new roles." (p. 164). Jo Salas agrees that "...the emphasis is on the process itself .... the individual client's responses to the challenges of performance." (2007, p. 172). This idea that drama therapy focuses on the individual and their responses is important, as this is what ultimately separates the genre of drama therapy from that of Augusto Boal.

Boal is a celebrated theatre theorist and practitioner. He has produced widely read theatrical literature for over thirty years. Boal outlines his concept of theatre as therapy in various books on the subject (1979; 1995; 2006). He describes how “theatre is a weapon” (1979, p. ix) and proposes that “maybe the theatre in itself is not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a *rehearsal for revolution*” (p. 141). From this idea comes Boal’s technique of Forum Theatre. In Forum Theatre individuals from unhealthy communities or tense political situations are taught theatre techniques to empower their thought processes and action skills. Participants are then encouraged to go back to their communities, use what they have learnt and act as a catalyst for change. This contrasts with the idea of drama therapy, because while an individual is being empowered, the ultimate change will occur in their entire community, not just in the individual.

In his first book *Theatre of the oppressed* (1979), Boal passionately discusses using theatre to free the oppressed. However, he does foreground certain politically oppressed groups above others. This seems contradictory to the essence of his work, which focuses on making all people equal in having the right to speak and face their oppressors. Thankfully, being a reflexive practitioner, Boal acknowledges this within his second book, *The rainbow of desire: The Boal theory of theatre as therapy* (1995). He states that he identifies “...‘loneliness’, the ‘impossibility of communicating with others’, ‘fear of emptiness’” as circumstances which also oppress people (p. 8). Boal explains that “for someone like me, fleeing explicit dictatorships of a cruel and brutal nature, it was natural that these themes should at first seem superficial and scarcely worthy of attention” (p. 8). In this text, Boal accepts that these internal oppressions need to be addressed as much as obvious external oppressions. This strengthens Boal’s concept, making it applicable to a wider audience. This amendment makes Boal’s work more relevant to my research, as the workshop participant’s social issues were not only concrete, visible oppressions characteristic of Boal’s Theatre of the oppressed technique. Subtle issues like a lack of resilience or shyness were also concerns for the participants (see Chapter Three).

In his latest book *The aesthetics of the oppressed* (2006), Boal’s genre develops one stage further. He widens his theory to make all art forms relevant to his theory of therapy. This also includes the process of creating art. Boal believes that all humans are capable of

producing art. This is important, as his theory of theatre as therapy could potentially be relevant and accessible to all. Boal has worked from a narrow perspective, outwards. His first text applies theatre as therapy theory to people who face external oppressions and come from cultural backgrounds like his own. His following work widens the scope of his theory to focus on people with subtle and internal oppressions. His final work widens again to allow all artists, and indeed humans, to apply the theory to their own communities and lives. Boal's work is highly relevant to my research. His ideas on community transformation are aligned with the aims for my project and the development process of his work highlights the importance of being reflexive within this field. Boal sees his theory as being applicable to all humans, so it is appropriate to consider using it in regional school settings that have little exposure to drama. In summary, the literature regarding both drama therapy and Boal's theatre as therapy, allowed me to see the relevance of the genres to my research, although both genres differed. It is important to consider then, how the literature about mask-work and theatre as therapy intersect.

## 2.2 Mask's relationship to theatre as therapy

In general the literature that I analysed locates mask's use in theatre as therapy, as specifically a part of drama therapy. Sally Bailey states that "sometimes a situation is too emotional or intense for a client to encounter in therapy without becoming overwhelmed emotionally. More distance, through fictionalizing a situation... [or] using a technique like puppets, removes the situation a step from reality" (2007, p. 168). Mask-work is a technique that can be used in this way. Jo Salas concurs with this "as with the other arts therapies, drama therapy draws on the whole vocabulary of the art form. Drama therapists use drama games, masks, puppets...and more" (2007, p. 172). Both of these sources locate a place for mask in drama therapy, with Bailey briefly describing why mask is used. However, there is little analysis on the effectiveness of using mask-work in this form of 'theatre as therapy'. My case study aimed to help me fill this gap. Also, mask-work performance is referred to in the literature, but the therapeutic value of mask construction is not. As the workshop participants would construct masks as well as performing in them, I needed to fill this gap. So I turned to the literature surrounding Boal's theatre of therapy.

Boal does not advocate using mask performance in his techniques. In many ways mask goes against his methods, as in his workshops he wishes to create realistic representations of situations through improvisation. There is no place for the other-worldly. Boal uses the phrase ‘social mask’ (1979) as a metaphor for a predominantly negative set of behaviours which can potentially be disempowering. This mask allows individuals to be passive and hide from confrontation. I would argue against this point, saying that social masks do not always have to be disempowering. Boal’s Forum Theatre invites people to improvise solutions to oppressions which are created within a fictional world. This improvisation allows a person to take on a different persona and think outside their normal boundaries or behaviours to reach a solution. Mask-work can be about creating different personas, so Forum Theatre could be perceived as people putting on ‘invisible masks’ (see Chapter Three). This is a way that Boal’s theory could be applied to mask performance.

Boal believes that the process of creating art is important as a tool for therapy (2006). Boal states that: “if I transform clay, potter’s earth, grains of sand, and I make a statue with it, I am creating a work of art, transforming reality. And the fact of transforming the sand into sculpture, transforms me into a sculptor” (p. 84). By sculpting a new reality, the individual is open to the possibilities of sculpting their everyday reality to encourage social change. Here lies a link to the construction of mask, as it is a process of creating art, to Boal’s theatre as therapy. This offers one possible answer to the question of how mask construction can fit into theatre as therapy.

### 2.3 An appropriate methodology: Performance ethnography

In preparing for my research, it was difficult to locate an appropriate methodology to frame it. My research project had two facets: 1) a practical workshop component; and 2) an interviewing and evaluation process. Ethnography, which is loosely defined by Rod Giblett as “observing people in their everyday culture and taking notes from this” (Methodology, n.d., p. 20), seemed relevant but did not completely cover the performative aspects of the workshops. So I researched recent literature to find a methodology for my case study research. I found two texts which pinpoint a variation of ethnography as an appropriate

methodology for theatre artists to use in workshop research situations. This was called performance ethnography.

Phillip Taylor describes the significance of performance ethnography in relation to his concept of 'Applied Theatre', an adaptation of Boal's Forum Theatre (2003, p. 3). He states that "in the arts, there are numerous examples of works that are interested in the power of ethnography to provide comprehensive insights into the artistic processes" (p. 118). In his foreword to Taylor (2003) Tom Barone defines performance ethnography:

Some adaptations of ethnographies moved beyond dramatic scripts shaped out of data gathered in field texts and performed by researchers, to an involvement of the inhabitants of researched communities in the production of plays about local issues for other members of the community. (cited in Taylor, 2003, p. x)

This perfectly described my workshops. I would be entering school communities and students from these communities would make a performance tool (the mask) and develop a performance under my guidance. However, the performance material would be generated by the students. The performance would then be shown to the rest of the school community. At no time would I remove the students from their context or force my own material into their performance. Due to this, performance ethnography seemed appropriate for my research. However, I had only considered performance ethnography from a performance perspective. As my workshops also used theatre as therapy, this methodology needed to be relevant in that area also.

Another useful resource within the literature is the transcription of a round-table discussion between a group of therapists and academics from the field of trauma studies. It is titled 'Social healing and liberatory politics: A round-table discussion' (Schutzman, M., Blair, B., Katz, L., Lorenz, H., & Rich, M, 2006). This text examines the work of Augusto Boal in relation to theatre as therapy and social healing. The discussion was held in Los Angeles, and a major theme was the idea of performance ethnography. Within the discussion, Marc Rich states that:

I think that there's room to talk about ethnography as a potential framework for therapy. If you're going to use a traditional ethnographic model then I think it doesn't make sense. If you're going to use a non-traditional, performative and

reflexive ethnographic model, it becomes a much more viable therapeutic space for both Self and Other. (p. 70)

Lorenz disagrees with this, and argues that there is no evidence to suggest that fieldwork is healing. Rich counters Lorenz's point by saying that "in order to do a critical ethnography, you need people to reflect back to you. This reflexive moment can be deeply therapeutic" (p. 69). Schutzman strengthens his argument by adding that "ethnography is just as much about observation as it is about participation" (p. 70). This transcription is an important text as the participant's debate covers many of the positives and negatives in using performance ethnography in theatre as therapy. Their intellectual critique of each other's ideas forces the participants to clearly articulate and justify their ideas. Within the project workshops, there was a lot of participant discussion and evaluation of the activities we were doing. The students acted but were also the audience for others, providing feedback on their work. This balance between performance and observation links to the positive arguments for using performance ethnography in theatre as therapy projects. This convinced me that performance ethnography was an appropriate methodology to use for my research.

## Part Two-

### The project

*...she (Student 35) is a child that has a lot of trouble in class, yet in this environment with making the masks she absolutely shone. She was organised, she was first finished, she was praised for the way she got on with the job. And she was wanted by others because she was good at what she was doing. (Interviewee 1, personal communication, August 7, 2008)*



Figure 2. Paper macheing a mask together: School A. July 2008, Albany.



## **CHAPTER THREE: The case study**

### **3.1 Choosing a case study frame**

My research project employed a case study method, taking the form of a workshop series. As there are different types of case studies, I need to clarify which model I used. Student.net, an internet site providing academic definitions for students, breaks the general term 'case study' into six sub-types: 1) the illustrative case study; 2) the exploratory (or pilot) case study; 3) the cumulative case study; 4) the critical instance case study; 5) the program implementation case study; and 6) the program effects case study ("Case studies", n.d.). My research falls under the programs effects case study, one which:

...can determine the impact of programs and provide inferences about reasons for success or failure....One approach involves first conducting the case study in sites chosen for their representativeness, then verifying these findings through examination of administrative data, prior reports, or a survey. Another...involves using other methods first. ("Case studies". n.d.)

This definition matched my case study design as my research was about evaluating the impact of my workshops. By adopting research methods like participant observation, participant evaluations and interviews with school staff and the participant's parents, I would discover whether my workshop program was successful in addressing young people's social issues. If it was not successful, the data collected would be analysed to see why the program failed. This choice of case study was also strengthened by the fact that much of the literature I read, regarding both mask-work and theatre as therapy projects, used case studies of this nature in their research processes (Boal, 1979; Boal, 1995; Boal 2006; Johnstone, 1981; Salas, 2007; Wilshire, 2007).

### **3.2 Framing Albany: Choosing a location and participants**

Several factors, both personal and practical, contributed to me choosing Albany as the location for my research. Firstly, I grew up in Albany and secondly I have always been interested in the dynamics of small communities. Growing up with artistic interests, I found that my home town could both nurture and limit my creative pursuits. The art form that I was most interested in was theatre, particularly alternative forms of theatre. I found limited

avenues to explore this interest, so I left to study in Perth. Now, after completing my Bachelor of Arts in contemporary performance, I am aware that theatre can be used in different forms to enable social change. I am interested in how this process might work in a regional community context. As a practitioner, my research is significant because I want to create a theatre program to take to regional communities, one which could help build a healthier social environment. To date, I have found no approach to theatre using mask-work which addresses the concerns of this project. The research will help to inform my practice, and in turn produce higher quality results in workshop programs that I aim to run in the future.

One of the most important considerations in community theatre work is that the theatre practitioner does not impose herself on a community:

A...project happens because a community *wants something* and has imagined that whatever it is they want can be achieved through theatre. In order to create theatre with community members, the theatre director...must pass through the boundary that defines the community. (Diamond, 2007, p. 52)

This is an issue that I was conscious of while developing the plan for my research, and I took a number of steps to address it. Firstly, I am a part of the Albany community. It is where I grew up and I still spend a large proportion of my year living and working there. I was not an artist coming into the community with no prior knowledge of its dynamics. I also know people who work at or attend each of the school settings I ran workshops in. While I do not claim to know everything about how this community works, I am not foreign to it. Secondly, after hearing that I would be completing my honours year focussing on the performance style of mask-work, both of the schools that I worked with approached me and asked if I could run the workshops with their students. These schools identified a need within their school which they felt my research could address. As two separate schools in the community were involved in my project, the research is also significant in the wider context of Albany, as the benefits of addressing social issues in young people could possibly extend beyond the immediate communities involved.

When I chose Albany as the location for my case study I also had to consider what type of regional centre it was. Albany is not an isolated regional area. It is a thriving regional city

currently undergoing some severe structural re-development. Although the young people living in Albany may have limited theatrical opportunities when compared to young people living in urban areas, Albany is constantly growing. I wanted to add to the artistic vibrancy and opportunities for young people in this context. This was the driving factor in selecting Albany for my case study. However, it was not just Albany as a location that I had to consider, but also the two schools that my workshops would run in.

The first group of participants that I chose to work with came from School A; a Level 5 primary school with a twenty percent Aboriginal population. I worked with fifteen students ranging in age from seven to twelve. All but three were indigenous. The majority of participants from this school were identified as being students at educational risk. Through interviews with school staff members and parents I was able to establish that there were a number of social issues that these participants were dealing with: low attendance rates at school, a lack of participation in the classroom, low self esteem and confidence, disruptive behaviour in the classroom, and some were artistically gifted and talented but had limited opportunities to extend themselves artistically.

The second group that I worked with were students from School B. School B's deputy principal describes the school as not having "many problems or absenteeism" and as being in "a leafy green type of a suburb" (Interviewee 3, personal communication, August 14, 2008). There were twenty-three students in this group. Their ages ranged from six to twelve years old. Some of the social issues these students were facing were: being artistically gifted and talented with limited extension opportunities, a lack of resilience, poor confidence or self esteem, victims of bullying or unable to socialize with peers, being painfully shy, and a few students had behaviour problems.

I chose to work with the participants from these two schools for two reasons. Firstly, both schools, although very different, are isolated from alternative forms of theatre because they are situated in a regional centre. The schools would both benefit from having an artist teach mask-work in their school. Secondly, the schools have differing social issues impacting on their participants, but they also had some in common (e.g. poor confidence and low self esteem). I felt that it would be interesting to see the results of the workshops on a range of

both large and subtle social issues and if the results of similar social issues were the same in different school environments.

### 3.3 The shape of the project

Each school took part in six day-long mask workshops. The workshops were broken into two stages, the first being mask construction. I taught the participants the basic steps for constructing their masks and through doing this the group developed a common language. Being the sole facilitator, my time was limited and I encouraged the participants to help each other finish or explain steps of the process to group members who had been absent. This built a feeling of community within the group because it meant that all students needed to pull their weight, be engaged and participate in the workshops so the group could progress forward. Participants of all ages worked together as a team, which helped to improve their communication and socialisation skills. The students were asked to have complete creative control over their masks, from the initial design to the final decoration. At the end of the construction process, the participants had ownership of their mask as they were involved in every stage of its construction. This was particularly important for School A who had students who did not participate in the classroom as in this situation they had to take part. The mask construction stage of the workshops was designed include aspects of the theory discussed in Chapters One and Two. Boal discusses the therapeutic value in creating art as it empowers the individual and allows them to shape a reality they wish to see (2006). I took this idea and applied it to the mask construction workshops by letting the participants have creative freedom wherever possible. Each participant also made their own mask which fulfilled the mask construction ritual which where a performer must make the mask they will perform in. This design worked and set up the second stage of the workshops well.

Mask performance was the second stage of the workshops. This included the participants undertaking mask training, creating characters, performing in their masks and evaluating their progress. I also integrated aspects of Boalian and mask-work theory into my design of the mask performance workshops, the ways of which I have outlined below.

To aid in teaching the appropriate use of mask in performance, I distilled the performance rituals of mask (see Chapter One) into three rules: 1) no speaking in mask; 2) no touching the mask when wearing it and; 3) no putting on the mask or taking it off where the audience can see you. These rules helped to teach mask technique and tradition to the participants. I used the idea of super heroes to make these rules relevant to the children. We discussed why superheroes do not get changed in the middle of the street and decided that it was because they had secret identities to keep. We then drew parallels between these secret identities and the identities that their mask characters gave them and discussed how the three rules could help to keep their identities secret. The participants responded well to this and were generally very good at adhering to the three rules.

Invisible masks is a concept that I adapted from Augusto Boal's 'Forum Theatre' (1995, p. 184). It is one physical example of how I integrated Boal into mask-work. Boal describes Forum Theatre as "proposing to a group of spectators, after a first improvisation of a scene that they replace the protagonist and try to improvise variations on his actions." (p. 185). Invisible masks operated on the same principle. The group of participants would think of a fictional situation with conflict in it. It had to be a situation that could realistically happen to them. After an initial improvisation of the scene the participants who had acted as the audience were asked to think of a way of behaving that could be applied to a character in the scene or a new character they could introduce, which would improve the situation. The participant would then be asked to 'put on' this character or way of behaving in the scene, wearing it as an invisible mask. In this way the participants explored a technique of theatre as therapy while still using the form of mask-work. This slightly different way of approaching Boal's technique was very effective and one participant from School B said that she had used the technique to help resolve a fight that had occurred with her brother (Student 11, personal communication, August 4, 2008). This was a reflection of how the Invisible masks could be applied to real life and it was positive that the participants started to make that link.

Each of the mask performance workshops began and ended with an opening or closing circle. In these circles participants were asked to pick, from a selection of emotive masks, the mask which reflected what they were feeling like at the time. This strengthened the feeling of community in the groups, allowing students to see how their peers were feeling

and to consider the appropriate ways to engage with them on that day. The circles also helped the participants to evaluate their progress in the project. Overall, due to all of the elements outlined above, the design of the workshops worked extremely well.

### 3.4 The exhibition

The exhibition is vital to my overall project as it is a visual representation of the workshops and the findings of the project. Initially, the exhibition consisted of a documentary film of the workshops and a display of the student's masks. By using visual stimuli I felt it would be easier to reflect what the workshop process was like and also show the project's results. However, the documentary film was the main focus of the exhibition.

I planned for the documentary film to include footage shot during the workshops, photographs, audio interviews and a narration linking these materials together. It would act as a binding body for the various data I had collected during the project. However, I encountered problems when I began the editing process. It soon became obvious that constructing a full documentary in the time frame I had was wildly unrealistic. The footage I had was not sufficient to cover all that my exegesis expected it to cover; to make the documentary logical. More material was needed. The film footage and the need for more footage was hijacking the creative project, when it should have been an integrated part of the exhibition. These considerations led me to change the design of my exhibition, so that material other than film footage could speak of the project, its process and results.

My exhibition will now integrate the different materials I gathered during the workshops, in the form that I collected them. The student's masks will be on display to show the high quality art work that was produced during the workshops. There will be a television playing looped footage of the participants constructing and performing in their masks as well as an edited version of their and the school staff's final evaluations. There will also be displays of photographs of the process. The exhibition room will have displays on tables dedicated to different sections of the research: mask construction, mask performance, findings of the project and the social contexts of the schools involved. These displays will each have photographs, excerpts of letters and interviews that are relevant, and explanations of each area of interest. The audience will be able to move freely amongst these displays and

absorb the material in which ever order they like. This combination of various documentary materials, presented in a way that shows the process and the product of the workshops is a much more fitting form for the creative project to take. It more clearly reflects the atmosphere of the workshops and my findings for the project.

### 3.5 Limitations

There were a few limitations which impacted on the project. The most significant was the matter of time. I had six day-long workshops with each school. This gave me approximately thirty hours to get each student to make a mask, to teach them performance theory, to choreograph and perform a short show and to evaluate the process. This meant that we were constantly fighting the clock. The project could not be extended because of the school's timelines and the parents' concerns about their children missing out on too much school work. It was also impossible to make it an after school activity as the funding for materials was sponsored only for in-school work. I felt that a longer workshop period would have been extremely beneficial. In the interviews, school staff and parents reflected this as well. However, in the end everything did get completed.

During the workshops, I conducted interviews with school staff and parents to help track how the project was affecting the participants in their school and home environments. These interviews were structured and lasted for approximately fifteen minutes for each individual. I had originally planned to perform a series of three interviews at the beginning, middle and end of the workshops. I also wished to interview as many people as possible. Due to limitations on time and the interviewee's availability I had to condense my questions into one interview which would still produce the necessary information. In the end this saved me and my interviewees a lot of time. I interviewed a third of the parents and the deputies at each school. Some teachers also provided feedback informally. More interviewees would have been ideal in strengthening the information I was able to gather. However, I interviewed every person who was willing to be interviewed and returned their permission slips in time. This was just a challenge of the project I had to deal with.

Another limitation was the school environment. Although the advantages of working in the school far outweighed any disadvantages, there were some obstacles to overcome. Firstly,

there were a number of interruptions during the workshop process e.g. nation-wide science testing, swimming lessons and school Olympic celebration activities. This meant that some students were absent for stretches of time during the workshops. This was unavoidable, but made the short amount of time that we had even shorter. Also, the size of the groups meant that we lost time if participants were not a hundred percent committed to each activity.

Another limitation was the little production help I had with the filming and photographing of the process. I had to leave a camera running while I taught, take photos sporadically or enlist the help of the students or staff members. Due to this, the documentation has a unique view of the project, as the students recorded the things that they felt were important, which I might have missed otherwise. The students did lack filming technique, which gives the filmed material a sense of the excitement and enthusiasm the participants showed. This adds to the material but at times is awkward to watch.

Performance is an ephemeral form. It is hard to recapture the students' excitement at creating their masks; the look on their faces as they brought their peers and parents to view their day's work; their concentration as they planned their costumes and paint colours. The film does not capture this fully. No amount of documentation can recreate the experience. But being a part of that process was enough to show me the power behind this kind of work, and I trust that this will shine through in the exhibition.

### 3.6 Findings: A brief outline

There are a number of key findings for the project, which are outlined below. The exhibition will include a detailed display of the project's findings; more information and supporting evidence will be found there.

One of the most evident results of the project was an increase in School A's attendance levels. The school provided me with a table of attendance statistics for each participant throughout the project and in the weeks following it (see table Appendix A). The average attendance before the project started was 72.4%. During the three week mask project the average attendance level was 90%. Eight students had 100% attendance during the three week period. Some participants showed individual increases of nearly 20%. Four weeks



after the mask project finished, the student's average attendance was at 86.2%, and at the end of term it was 84.5%. Despite a drop off, the student's average attendance at school increased over the term by more than 12%. The mask project was only one strategy used in the school to target the attendance issue, but the deputy principal did feel that the project was an important contributing factor in the improvement (Interviewee 2, personal communication, August 14, 2008). The participant's low attendance rates at school can be viewed as a large external social issue; typical of issues addressed through Boal's Theatre of the oppressed technique. By combining Boalian techniques with mask-work, the project used the concept of the universality of mask referred to in Chapter One. This engaged the students, allowing them to benefit from the theatre as therapy techniques embedded in the workshops. This reflects that a project like this can be used as an incentive to encourage children with attendance problems to come to school.

In my interviews with parents, many noted an improvement in their children's self esteem and confidence whilst doing the workshops. For example, there was a student at School B whose mother identified as having low self esteem that was affecting his progress in the classroom. His mother, in her interview, said that:

I was speaking to (the classroom teacher) the other day. He (the student) will always say something is half empty...like in maths he will always say I got one wrong, but now he will say that I got them all right except for one. So it is obviously giving him a positive outlook on things. (Interviewee Seven, personal communication, August 6, 2008)

This positive change in perception was further confirmed in the student's final evaluation. When asked if he could have done anything better in the workshops, he replied: "No, that's about as good as I could do because that's the first time I ever done it" (Student Six, personal communication, August 6, 2008). This was a very positive social step forward for him and I noticed an improvement in his socialisation with other participants in the group. Low self esteem can be viewed as a more subtle social issue, yet it was still addressed in the project. This confirms that Boalian techniques are relevant and effective to use in addressing the more subtle, internal issues that the participant's were facing. Once again, the universality of mask allowed a deep engagement of the participants in the workshops which gave the opportunity for the Boalian techniques to have effect. Low self esteem was an issue that affected participants in both school groups, and parents from both schools

noticed changes like this. This is encouraging as it suggests that social issues which are more universal and can affect a broader range of children can be targeted in the same way with a project like the mask workshops. This can be attributed to the universality of mask, which Kriszta Bodonyi (1994) believes is due to mask being a reflection of a part of humanity (see Chapter One). This makes the project useful to use in a variety of school contexts.

Another result of the project was the integration of a student into the school community. A child in Year One at School B was new to the school. She did not know many people and had only a few friends. She thrived in the community environment of the workshops, where students from all year levels worked with one another. Throughout the process she began to speak up and show more confidence. In her interview, her mother stated that:

I think that (she) feels a lot more connected to the school now because she has had a chance to meet with the older kids at (School B), because...we don't know many people, she only knows two or three kids as friends, but now she feels like a part of the school community. (Interviewee Thirteen, personal communication, August 13, 2008)

This reflected how useful the positive approach to creating a community in each group of participants was, and how it can help address subtle issues such as low confidence and a feeling of isolation. The deputy principal of School B supported this by stating that teachers had commented to her that participants who suffered extreme shyness were participating more in their classrooms and speaking up (Interviewee 3, personal communication, August 14, 2008). However, integration into the school community was not the only finding that related to the community approach that the workshops employed.

The most unexpected finding of the project was the strengthening of familial bonds by working in a community style environment. There were family members in the participant groups at both schools: a set of cousins at School A and a pair of brothers at School B. I interviewed the parents at both schools and each noted that the relations became closer by working together in the workshops. For example, at School A one of the brothers went home sick one day and his brother finished his mask up to the required stage so he would not fall behind. This was uncharacteristic of the brother's relationship (Interviewee

Fourteen, personal communication, August 12, 2008). At School B one of the cousins was being bullied and the other cousin stood up for her, whereas he usually would have walked away (Interviewee Five, personal communication, August 15, personal communication, 2008). Both parents pinpointed the mask workshops as the reason for these changes in behaviour. I believe that it was not specifically the work with masks that caused these changes, but the overall approach of the workshops. It was not just working in close proximity that benefited the workshop participants, as the relations already spent a lot of time together, but it was also the way in which they had to work together that was significant. By planning something physical, creating it, communicating as a team and working with others, the group formed a common language based on respect. I feel that working in that kind of environment allowed the family members to interact and bond in a way that they previously had not been able to.

At School B, two parents of artistically gifted and talented children said that they had noticed an extension of their children's talents during the workshops. When asked if she had noticed any positive benefits in the project for her child, Interviewee Ten said that:

Certainly on the creative side. He came home on the weekend and designed and built a cubby made out of paper and cane and that was on a much larger scale to anything he had ever made before, so maybe it was getting him to think more laterally. (Interviewee Ten, personal communication, August 8, 2008)

Another parent noticed a similar change in her daughter. In her interview she stated that:

We've haven't made masks at home, but...I have noticed her making other things...sock puppets, weaving objects, cutting up plates and bits of string and things. Whether she's just taking away artistic ideas that she has got here and applying them to other things at home. That could be happening. (Interviewee Nine, personal communication, August 6, 2008)

Both participants were seven years old. Their similar behaviour at home suggests that the mask workshops were successful in extending their artistic talents and affected their artistic experiments in the home environment.

The findings of the project reached across different types of social issues and are mostly based on the interviews that I conducted with school staff members and the participant's

parents. However, I also drew on my own observations from the workshops and School A's attendance statistics. As noted in the section where I outlined the limitations of the project, I was unable to interview as many parents and staff members as I wished to. However, I do not feel that this detracts from the findings. More interviewees would have provided varied information and may have had different perspectives on the workshops, but they would not change the fact that the people I did interview made positive comments. It is also important to state that there were no negative effects of the project reported in any parent or school staff interview that I conducted.

The findings of the project confirm that by combining aspects of Boalian techniques and mask-work theory, a variety of young people's social issues can be addressed. One of the most significant pieces of theory which supported the findings involved the universality of mask-work. This allowed the performance form to be relevant in different school environments. This engaged the participants, allowing them to benefit from the Boalian techniques of theatre as therapy that were incorporated in the workshops. It also helped to form a community feeling in the workshops which offered many benefits to the participants. It was also evident that the Boalian techniques were relevant to both large external and more subtle types of social issues. These findings are very positive and the next step would be to extend the project over a longer period of time.

## **Conclusion:**

My honours project created a workshop series by integrating differing theories on mask-work and theatre as therapy. By exploring the overlapping area between Keith Johnstone's and Toby Wilshire's approach to the theatrical mask, and considering how the Boalian theatre as therapy and drama therapy genres could be integrated into mask-work, I developed a workshop program that used mask-work as a performance strategy to address the social issues of young people at two Albany primary schools. By using performance ethnography as my methodology for the project, I was able to work with the school communities to devise a mask show for each school's arts night while documenting the workshop process. This documentation is the basis for the creative component of my project, an exhibition reflecting the workshop process and the project's findings.

My project was both complicated and challenging, but overall I deem it to have been successful. Through school staff and parent interviews, I identified the social issues affecting the participants. These ranged from large, external issues such as low attendance rates at school and disruptive behaviour in the classroom, to subtler issues like shyness and low resilience. The interviews also allowed me to determine that during the workshop period there had been changes to certain student's behaviour in the way that they dealt with their social issues. These changes were evidenced in positive responses to the project. For example the students at School A all had an increase in their attendance at school during the mask workshops. Also, some parents of gifted and talented children at School B reported that their children were transferring the mask construction skills to their artwork creations at home. The schools were both pleased with the workshops and felt that it offered social benefits that their school had trouble teaching in other ways. There were no negative effects reported by any parent, student or school staff member. Full details of the findings of the project are included in the exhibition. Although there were limitations and obstructions within the project, the positive results that were achieved indicate that it was successful in achieving its aims.

I began this research because I believed that theatre could be transformative, in a social sense as well as a theatrical one. I feel that performance can be used in different ways to

help address social problems that young children are facing in regional areas. During the workshops, the retention and participation officer from the Albany District Education Office (who provided the funding for the project) came to watch a workshop at School B. Afterwards she sent me a letter in which she stated that: “It was a joy to have witnessed a project such as this taking place. It confirmed that fact that children who are often labelled as disengaged or who have social issues require a differentiated curriculum” (Interviewee Fifteen, personal communication, September 3, 2008). This reflected exactly what I had hoped to achieve in the project. I think that there is definitely more work that could be done to strengthen and extend the theory in this area. My project is a starting point for myself as a researcher, and its results open doors in the areas of performance theory and education. In the introduction to this exegesis I asked whether mask-work could help address the social issues that face young people in regional Western Australian areas. I believe that the project has shown clearly that the answer is yes. My aim now is to encourage others to use performance in more than just a traditional setting on a stage, but as a tool for social change.

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## Appendix A:

### RETENTION AND PARTICIPATION PROGRAM 2008

A RAP Program involving Mask Making was run for the first 3 weeks in Term 3. 14 children were selected for the program and 7 children were identified as below 80% attendance in Semester 1. A key target of the program was to increase attendance for these children. The attendance of these children was then recorded at the end of week 7 in Term 3 and for the entire third term. 6 of the 7 identified children significantly improved their attendance.

<b>Students</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> semester attendance</b>	<b>Term 3 1<sup>st</sup> 3 weeks</b>	<b>Term 3 1<sup>st</sup> 7 weeks</b>	<b>Term 3 in total</b>
Student 24 Year 7 Girl	71%	100%	94%	94%
Student 25 Year 3 Girl	59%	60%	67%	72%
Student 26 Year 2 Boy	56%	77%	79%	79%
Student 27 Year 7 Girl	88%	100%	100%	96%
Student 28 Year 7 Girl	86%	100%	97%	96%
Student 29 Year 7 Girl	67%	69%	74%	69%
Student 30 Year 5 Boy	87%	100%	99%	98%
Student 31 Year 3 Boy	52%	77%	85%	80%
Student 32 Year 7 Girl	94%	100%	100%	100%
Student 33 Year 6 Boy	92%	100%	91%	90%
Student 34 Year 7 Girl	90%	100%	85%	73%
Student 36 Year 7 Girl	89%	92%	85%	88%
Student 37 Year 7 Girl	74%	100%	Left School	
Student 38 Year 6 Boy	76%	85%	65%	63%
Average	72.4%	90%	86.2%	84.5%