

**A Creative Approach to Community Building:
Theatre Making with Culturally Diverse Young People**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the contribution that community-based theatre makes to community building with culturally diverse young people. The study also examines how community-based theatre, as part of the wider field of applied theatre, engages with and operates in the context of community. This is important due to an increasing need to build stronger culturally diverse communities. Certain global events threaten the stability of culturally diverse communities and in a time of high migration levels and increasingly diverse communities, approaches are needed that can respond to these tensions and that can also work to build inclusion. This thesis focuses on a practice-based research project that was conducted with culturally diverse young people in Melbourne, Australia throughout 2012. The project was established and delivered by the author and involved young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds participating in theatre workshops, devising and performing a theatre piece, and facilitating a peer-led theatre workshop. Action research and reflective practice were engaged as the methodology for the research as this approach provided a framework that corresponded to the participatory, youth-led nature of the practice. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with the participants, video footage of the theatre workshops, a reflective journal maintained by the author, and various materials that emerged through the project such as scripts, notes, and discussions. The data were analysed through a process of coding and categorising with patterns emerging to determine key areas of interest. These areas provided the foundation for the arguments within the thesis, resulting in three chapters which examine and discuss the findings from the research. In summary, these chapters can be described as examining the topics of “relationships”, “representation,” and “risk”. The first of these chapters considers the area of relationships in connection to community building by examining the research findings through a psychology framework. Key findings are that community-based

theatre has the potential to reduce discrimination and build inclusive communities through several core areas including cooperation and interaction. It is also noted that the theatrical elements of narrative and embodied engagement enhanced these outcomes, by creating significant opportunities for participants to share information about culture, build trust, and develop connections among group members. The psychology framework offers explicit avenues for these results to be articulated, thus moving the topic of relationships away from the anecdotal and defining the ways in which community-based theatre can contribute to community building. The following chapter focuses on the concept of representation, examining the finding that the research project offered dialogical opportunities for participants to speak “about” and “to” community. In particular the study finds that the theatre-making process created a representational space whereby participants could explore and communicate issues relating to community and self. Furthermore, this led to moments of self-reflection and community dialogue, with the participants using theatrical elements such as narrative and character to define, interrogate, and reflect their reality. The final chapter of the three considers the nature of risk within community-based theatre practice. This chapter asks questions about the ethical considerations that emerged within the project relating to storytelling and the use of participants’ personal narratives that contain elements of trauma. The chapter discusses the risk associated with participants contributing personal narratives to a theatre-making process and notes that this risk must be carefully considered by practitioners. Within the specifics of this research there is also further risk around performing community narratives to community, particularly when community is portrayed in a negative light. The chapter considers the decisions made by the author within the context of the research project and further examines the steps that can be taken when approaching the concept of risk. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a greater understanding of community-based theatre as a community-building tool and that this in turn will assist in building and supporting healthy communities.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) _____

Jennifer Penton

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Relevant Research Outputs

Conference Presentations

Penton, J. (2012). *Representations of community: Creative engagement, inclusion and narrative within a young people's community-based theatre group*. Paper presented at the Creative Communities 3: Risks and Possibilities Conference, September 26-28, Gold Coast, Australia.

Penton, J. (2013). *Narratives of exclusion: Representing community in dramatic storytelling*. Paper presented at the 8th Drama and Education IDEA World Congress, July 8-13, Paris, France.

Penton, J. (2013). *Performing stories: A youth-led approach to talking about racism*. Paper presented at the Reconfiguring Anti-racism: Tolerance, Harmony, Inclusion, or Justice Conference, December 9-10, Melbourne, Australia.

Chapter 1

Defining the Research Journey: An Introduction

The following thesis examines the research topic of community-based theatre and community building with young people in culturally diverse contexts. It documents a research journey that has taken me on an enormous learning curve, one which has shaped the course of my life for the past several years and which will continue to do so in the future. Coming into this process was undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges that I have faced in my professional life and the journey has been littered with obstacles, many of which have tested me and my faith in this work. But looking back I can see the long and wonderful path that I have walked to reach this point. Before the PhD, as an applied theatre practitioner, I searched for a fuller sense of knowledge and understanding about the field, but this was intangible and elusive and I shared the struggles articulated by Taylor (1996) and Gillie Bolton (1999) in communicating the intuitive processes that had been developed over a number of years of practice. I began this research journey wanting to better understand and articulate the research topic, to make unconscious knowledge conscious, and to be able to think, speak, and write about it with more clarity. Now, on the other side of that metaphorical mountain, understanding and knowledge are still as shifting as the fields into which the thesis investigates. However, my thinking is now better equipped to keep up with these shifts. I have a deeper insight into the work, into the contribution it makes, the challenges that it faces, and the questions it raises. The following thesis is the evidence of this journey. It documents the path towards the clarity that I sought. It details the events, challenges, and meaning found within the research project and most importantly, it tells the story of the participants and their own course through this process.

During one of the interviews in the research project, the interviewee introduced the idea of “shining a light on a private space” with the statement intending to positively convey what was happening within the research project. Although the idea of shining a light is potentially problematic – a post-colonial reading of the phrase might suggest that the other is considered “better” once made visible by an outsider’s gaze and it raises questions about for whom these spaces are made visible and whether private, cultural spaces should be illuminated for others to see – the concept of shining a light was spoken with the intention of explaining how “drama is a medium that has the capacity to make the invisible visible” (Cahill, 2010, p. 167). In the process of writing the thesis, it has become clear to me that the idea of shining a light does not only belong to the theatre project, but that it also describes the process of research. In examining a specific element of the world, researchers are seeking to illuminate, to throw light onto areas not previously seen and to share this meaning with others.

One of the challenges in shining a light onto theatre practice is, as Dunn (2010) reminds us, that “drama is a dynamic art form that is visual, verbal and embodied. It is also ephemeral ... drama refuses to lie down so that its nature and structure can be closely examined” (p. 193). It is this challenge that has contributed to the feelings that I have expressed in this introduction – the struggle that is found in articulating intuitive knowledge and in capturing the ephemeral nature of theatre practice. Furthermore, as O’Toole and Bundy (2015) note, identifying, verifying, and reporting on theatre performance “might also kill it – rather like pinning a dead butterfly to examine it and perhaps exhibit the aesthetically pleasing corpse for public view” (p. 3). The challenge in writing the thesis has therefore been to capture the ephemeral spirit of community-based theatre and to report this in a way that keeps the work alive rather than putting its corpse on display. I have kept the idea of shining a light in my mind throughout the research process and I have intended to capture the wider

essence of this in my approach to both the research and to the writing. As the thesis begins, it is my hope that it captures the intangible and ephemeral nature of the work and that it supports the idea of illumination, of shining a light on that which was previously obscured and that through this, something meaningful is able to emerge.

The Introduction, as an opening to the thesis, recounts the foundations of the research. It begins with the research questions and then continues with a summary of the research project, the origins and background of the study, and the need for this research. This is followed by the structure of the thesis and a section on terminology. This begins to create a picture of the research that is then extended by the Literature Review and Methodology chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) before introducing the analysis of the research in the later chapters. The Introduction can therefore be considered as the first building block in defining the journey of the research. It not only introduces the first details about the research: it also offers a foundation upon which the later “blocks” can be placed, thus enabling the full story to be revealed piece by piece as the chapters unfold.

1.1 Research Questions

With reference to the research topic, the following research questions were established as a means of grounding and clarifying the research aims:

Primary research question: How can community-based theatre contribute to community building with young people in culturally diverse contexts?

Secondary research question: What are the ethical issues that arise from engaging in community contexts and how does community-based theatre respond to these?

The above questions create a foundation for the research and guide and support the work that is discussed throughout the thesis. The primary research question identifies the four key elements of the research project as being community-based theatre, community, youth, and cultural diversity and establishes a pathway to interrogate the nature of this work. The questions also respond to the points outlined in this Introduction regarding the origins of the research and the need for this work, and they place the community and the research participants at the centre of the inquiry, thus highlighting the significance of these as part of the project. Furthermore, the research questions are designed to support reflections of my own practice as a theatre facilitator and artist. This is intended to provoke further understanding of the field and to stimulate discussions about best practice within the thesis.

1.2 Introducing the Research Project

The qualitative research discussed in the thesis took the form of a practice-based research project. This project was a community-based theatre group for culturally diverse young people, delivered in Melbourne in 2012. It involved young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds participating in theatre workshops, devising their own theatre piece, and performing this alongside a peer-led workshop. This was planned and developed in partnership with a community youth organisation and I performed the dual role of theatre facilitator and researcher throughout. A core group of seven young participants emerged and these young people took part in the participatory theatre workshops, devised several theatrical narratives, and performed these at a staged reading mid-way through the project. Due to several unavoidable challenges experienced throughout the project, five participants left the project in the period following the staged reading. The intentions for the final performance were subsequently altered multiple times and the project culminated in a devised theatre piece, performed by a single participant at two high schools and followed by a peer-led

workshop facilitated by the performer and another young participant. These details are discussed in full within the Methodology chapter and a table can additionally be found in Appendix A which outlines the progression of the project.

The practice-based approach to research became very important in this study. It enabled a practical interface between the core theoretical elements of the research and opened up opportunities to examine the meeting place where these converged. This approach also acknowledged the strong connection between applied theatre research and practice that is pervasive within the wider fields of applied theatre and community development. As Somers (1996) states, “In drama our research aim is almost always to illuminate practice” (p. 166). It is this relationship between the theoretical and practical components of this study that characterises many of the discussions within the thesis. As a result, it is intended that the thesis establishes a connectedness between these aspects of the study, enabling the dialogues of both theory and practice to inform and be informed by each other, thus developing a detailed and profound insight into this research.

Action research and reflective practice provided the methodological framework for the research. This supported the participatory and youth-led approach that featured within the practical elements of the theatre project. Data collection was carried out in the form of participant interviews, video footage of the theatre workshops, a reflective journal maintained by the author, and additional materials drawn from the theatre workshops. This process was impacted by the challenges that were faced throughout the project and this matter is discussed further within the Methodology chapter. Data analysis was carried out through a process of coding and categorizing, enabling the meaning of the work to emerge.

1.3 Origins and Background of the Research

The research has been born from my professional and academic experience in applied theatre and is the result of several years of self-reflection and questioning into the field. I am originally from the UK and following my introduction to applied theatre during my undergraduate degree in drama at The University of Manchester (UK), I decided to continue my studies and in 2005 I completed a Master's degree in Applied Theatre, supervised by Professor James Thompson. Here I found myself searching for deeper explanations of how, why, and if applied theatre has the capacity to create change within the lives of people, communities, and organisations. This was the start of a journey that has eventually led me to Griffith University in Australia and to this research, where I have continued to interrogate these questions and seek further explanations that can illuminate this work.

My professional practice as an applied theatre practitioner has also developed my interest in working with culturally diverse communities and young people. My experience as an applied theatre practitioner spans a range of contexts that includes prisons, mental health, and education. Between 2008 and 2010 I was employed as the inaugural Outreach Manager for Oldham Coliseum Theatre in the north-west of England, a role which specifically involved working with young people and culturally diverse communities. The context and challenge of working in Oldham is noteworthy here as the town was the site of severe race riots in 2001 (P. Thomas, 2006) between the British South Asian and Anglo-British populations. Although the local council initiated a number of programs and policies to improve community relations within the town, when I started working in Oldham in 2008 it became clear to me that ethnic division was still rife across the locality. As a result, I focused on developing intercultural programs of work that engaged participants – and in particular, young people – from both sides of this ethnic divide. However, I felt that the scope of these

projects did not go far enough towards building lasting and engaged contact or social cohesion. I also wanted to examine fully the successes and challenges of the projects and develop a better understanding of this work. It was ultimately my desire to illuminate this work further and to develop practices that were fully engaged with intercultural community building that led me to commence the PhD and initiate this research.

1.4 The Need for the Research

In designing the research, it became evident that whilst much literature examines the various elements of community-based theatre, community, young people, and cultural diversity that are involved in my research, current studies engage with a combination of only two or, to a much lesser extent, three out of these four contexts. Furthermore, there is often limited interdisciplinary engagement between these four sites of inquiry, an aspect that is discussed further within the literature review. My project provides a new strand of research that closes this gap through the interrogation of all four angles; it is therefore an aim that this study will provide new knowledge that can illuminate this pluralised context.

It is also acknowledged here that research with young people is particularly important. As White et al. (2009) state, “Adolescence is a crucial developmental period especially when one considers the fact that this age cohort includes the next generation of social policy makers” (p. 524). Building on this statement, it is suggested here that research with young people is critical, as such work can potentially impact young people’s developing outlook of the world and their future influence on society. Research into the arts with young people is also particularly pertinent due to the recent defunding of many organisations working with theatre and young people across Australia (Watts, 2015). These cuts have seen the youth theatre sector fall from 21 funded organisations in 2007 to only three in 2016 (Godde as cited

in Watts, 2015), thus demonstrating a failure at a macro level to recognise the outcomes of arts engagement with young people. Within the wider sectors of arts and theatre, budgets have also diminished with the recent loss of over \$70 million of Arts Council funding (Watts, 2015) limiting the industry's capacity to produce work and develop new areas of engagement and participation. Although there is a body of research that examines young people's engagement with theatre, contemporary governmental policy can often appear to overlook this information in favour of budgetary concerns. Thus, research must continue to be generated to strengthen the field and offer new avenues of knowledge that can engage with these contemporary social, political, and cultural dialogues.

Additionally, within the current climate of extensive migration and increasingly culturally diverse communities, there is an ongoing need to explore effective and innovative approaches to building stronger and healthier diverse communities. Although this research project does not specifically state an intention to engage with refugees and asylum seekers, the reality of cultural diversity in contemporary Western society means that young people of refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds and the issues and dialogues surrounding these people inevitably become central to the research. As Harding (2009) states:

In the last decade, the number of individuals seeking asylum has increased and asylum has become a prominent issue, fiercely debated in public by politicians, policy makers and journalists and closely linked to the contemporary concerns about social inclusion/exclusion and national identity. (p. 268)

The sociopolitical narratives surrounding refugees and asylum seekers and the need to engage in community building are also particularly relevant in 2017 due to rising cultural tensions that can be seen across the globe. The year 2015 saw over a million migrants and

refugees enter Europe compared to under 300,000 in 2014, resulting in the tightening of border controls and several countries refusing to accept the quotas that the European Union has set out for the relocation of those seeking asylum (BBC, 2016). This mass movement of people into Europe has seen cultural tensions rise, creating a surge in support for ring wing political parties that support anti-immigration policies (Robins-Early, 2015). Additionally, the prevalence of anti-immigration rhetoric used in Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign in the USA and in the 2016 "Leave" campaign of Brexit in the UK further demonstrates the political significance of this issue. Major incidents such as the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in 2017, in Paris in November, 2015, and the sexual assaults, thefts, and other attacks that occurred in Cologne, Germany during New Year's Eve celebrations in 2016, committed largely by men of North African and Arabic origin, some of whom were allegedly asylum seekers (Hill, 2016), have also fuelled further tensions and negative stereotypes.

Whilst the above incidents present a Eurocentric perspective, the media coverage of these events is global, thus drawing citizens all over the world into a dialogue about these issues. Within an Australian context, cultural tensions can be seen in instances such as the Melbourne siege in 2017, the Lindt café siege in Sydney in 2014, and the violent Cronulla riots in 2005 that occurred between the Lebanese and Anglo-Australian communities in New South Wales (Barclay & West, 2006; Johanson & Glow, 2007). Furthermore, as Donelan (2002) states, "the Australian government's current 'border protection' policy seems to have provoked a pervasive fear of outsiders" (p. 27). Controversial policies such as turning refugee and migrant boats around and conducting offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island in the South Pacific have demonstrated a zero tolerance approach towards those seeking refuge and asylum in Australia; they have also generated much dialogue and press coverage both in favour of and against such policies. It must be recognised that the impact of such actions

inevitably radiates throughout communities across Australia and has an effect upon attitudes towards migrants, the cohesion and inclusion that exists within local communities, and the comfort and wellbeing of those Australian residents of migrant and refugee backgrounds.

In a national survey in 2015, the Scanlon Foundation documented that although 67.2% of survey respondents felt that accepting immigrants from many different countries made Australia stronger, 15% of respondents felt that they had experienced discrimination due to their skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion over the last 12 months – a figure that rises to 21.1% when taken exclusively from respondents of a non-English speaking background (Markus, 2015). Young people and those residing in urban areas with a high immigrant concentration were also amongst the groups that reported the highest rates of discrimination. Furthermore, “for almost three out of ten respondents who reported discrimination in both 2014 and 2015, it was experienced at least once a month; this proportion constitutes close to 5% of the total population” (Markus, 2015, p. 25).

It is possible to conclude from the above discussion that whilst communities are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, cultural tensions, discrimination, and prejudice also remain prevalent – both within an Australian and a global context. As Jan-Khan (2003) states, “we have still not learnt of the differences in diversity, how to manage conflict within communities and the need for broader and evolving representation based on emerging and self-developing identities” (p. 41). There is, therefore, a clear need to establish effective methods of reducing negative effects whilst also developing positive community relationships and interaction. Critically, Billett (2014) also found that young people perceived that being disengaged from their community was harmful. When the above points are taken into consideration, the need for this research is clearly identified. Furthermore, the aim of

developing both academic knowledge and a practical application of techniques further positions this research as a useful and worthwhile inquiry.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The following chapter, *Building the World of the Research: Literature Review*, sets out the core theoretical underpinnings of this study. This chapter examines the four key areas present within the research: community-based theatre (as part of the wider field of applied theatre), community, cultural diversity, and young people. The literature review both establishes the theoretical foundations of the research and introduces the literature that has informed and guided my analysis of the data and the following discussions throughout the thesis.

Chapter 3, *Walking the Ground: Methodology*, continues on from the literature review by outlining the research design. The content of the research project is discussed here and includes information about its planning and delivery. The challenges faced throughout the research project are also presented as is information about the participants, the performance narratives, and ethics. The methodology of action research and reflective practice is then discussed and the ways in which data were collected are also outlined. Following this, the analytic processes of coding and categorising the data are presented, thus building a clear picture of the research project.

The Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology chapters construct a framework that presents the context of the research and the theory that has informed this. Once this has been established there are subsequently three analysis chapters that examine the outcomes of the research and present the core arguments of the thesis. Chapter 4, titled *Making Theatre, Creating Contact: Theatre, Relationships, and Community Building*,

considers how relationships and interactions are developed within community-based theatre and how these can contribute towards a wider community-building agenda. Using a theoretical framework of the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999), the chapter explores the conditions necessary for “effective contact” between diverse groups. In situating theatre within this dialogue, the chapter argues that these conditions can be found within community-based theatre and subsequently identifies ways in which theatre can potentially contribute towards community building. Furthermore, this chapter considers the elements of theatre, such as narrative and embodied engagement, as reaching beyond the rhetoric of effective contact and potentially achieving enhanced community-building outcomes.

Chapter 5, titled “Screaming But You Just Don’t Hear Their Voice”: Theatre, Community, and Representation, examines the potential for community building through dialogue. This chapter examines two different narratives that emerged from the theatre-making process and considers how participants created a representational space whereby aspects of community and self could be explored. As a result, these narratives are considered in terms of their ability to speak “about” and “to” community, hence becoming tools for dialogue and community building. This chapter also considers how participants used the narratives to interrogate and define their reality, thus also enabling aspects of identity to emerge and be communicated.

Chapter 6, titled What’s The Harm? Theatre, Storytelling, and Risk, follows on from the previous discussion of narrative as a dialogical tool and considers the issues of risk that present themselves throughout the process of creating and telling stories. This chapter articulates the ethical questions that emerged within the research project and examines the complex decision-making around these issues. It considers the risks that emerge when

participants develop stories based on personal trauma and moments of pain and additionally explores the risks that are present in performing negative community representations to community. The complex position of the facilitator in negotiating and preparing for such risks is also considered by examining the decision-making from the research project and discussing the steps that can be taken when approaching the concept of risk.

To further support the analysis chapters, Chapter 7 presents a summary of the core arguments and draws together the different threads from within the thesis. Although the analysis chapters attend to the research questions throughout, this concluding chapter presents a response to the research questions with clarity and resolution. Limitations of the research and recommendations for future inquiry are also discussed here, thus bringing the thesis to a close and completing the story of this research.

1.6 Terminology and Language

Questions of terminology have arisen throughout the writing of the thesis and as a result, this section has been included to establish the language used. Most significantly, I have used the term *community-based theatre* to describe the theatre practice examined within the thesis. Community-based theatre is defined by Prendergast and Saxton (2009) as being “rooted in a very particular setting within which contexts, participants and issues are all local” (p. 135). Prendergast and Saxton also use the term to clarify the distinction between amateur theatre groups and applied theatre within community contexts. The concept of applied theatre in a local context corresponds to the research project and community-based theatre has become the term with which I am most comfortable to describe the context of this work. Based on this understanding, community-based theatre, as referred to in the thesis, should also be seen as belonging under the umbrella term of *applied theatre*. Consequently, I

have occasionally used the term applied theatre where it feels appropriate and I have drawn on the literature of both applied theatre and community-based theatre.

The term *community* is also particularly complex, with multiple understandings and terminologies surrounding it. Within the thesis, the term can best be understood as referring to local communities, something which is discussed further in the Community section of the Literature Review. I have used *community building* as the term within the thesis, as this best fits my intentions and the discussions that have emerged. However, as part of the examination of community building here, I have drawn on literature from multiple areas of community theory such as community development, community psychology, community cohesion, social cohesion, community empowerment, conflict resolution, social change communication, and social capital.

Cultural diversity is used throughout the thesis to describe a plurality of ethnicity and cultural heritage. Although the term *culture* can pertain to a variety of meanings, within the thesis it is orientated towards the above understanding. It is acknowledged here that the term *diversity* can mean plurality across several different elements such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age; however, within the thesis it is used exclusively to mean the diversity of culture. The term cultural diversity has also been chosen as it avoids the problematic nature of terms such as multiculturalism.

Furthermore, the thesis draws extensively upon the voices of the participants, using words that largely originate from verbal sources of data such as interviews and video footage of the theatre workshops. It should be noted here that several of the participants had English as a second language and that they all spoke using a colloquial form of language that was informed by their own cultural backgrounds, youth cultures, and individual

identities. As a result, the statements that feature throughout the thesis reflect the colloquial language used by the participants and hence are neither grammatically nor syntactically correct and are peppered with phrases, expressions, and words that would not typically belong in perfectly structured sentences. It must therefore be noted that any “errors” in these statements are intentional and belong to the participants’ own turn of phrase. Furthermore, these should not be considered errors but rather as glimpses of who the participants are and their unique identities.

Chapter 2

Building the World of the Research: Literature Review

The literature review documents the core aspects that have underpinned and guided my work within the thesis. The four dominant concepts of this research – identified from within the research questions as being community-based theatre, community, cultural diversity, and young people – sit at its heart. It has therefore been structured around four sections which individually examine each of these key aspects. Each of these sections will outline the core elements of the specific area and begin to identify the interdisciplinary meeting point that exists between these different sites, an approach that is continued throughout the analysis chapters later on in the thesis.

Particular attention has been paid here to the areas of community-based theatre and community, as it is these concepts that are woven throughout all other considerations within the thesis and which have become central to all aspects – written and practical – of this research. Community-based theatre is recognised as a sub-discipline of the wider field of applied theatre and as such, applied theatre is examined prior to giving focus to the more specific area of community-based theatre. The following section examines community; the meaning of community has been given some focus here as this question occupied much of my initial thought processes in building this literature review and the origins of the research project. This dialogue evolves to encompass a critical discussion of community building and the nature of how community can emerge. Within the following sections on cultural diversity and young people, the literature review explores theories of social identity, intercultural relationship building, and youth participation, and considers contemporary discourses about engaging marginalised young people.

It is also important to recognise here that there are limitations to this literature review. The extensive interdisciplinary site upon which this research is built means that it is not possible to examine each field of expertise comprehensively. Furthermore, there are aspects of the literature that have necessarily been put aside in favour of the more dominant concerns of the project. As a result, by the end of the review the reader will have gained a critical overview of the theoretical underpinnings that have directed this research. Feak and Swales (2009) propose that one must become a scholar before becoming a researcher. This position has been of great significance to me as I attempted to clarify and adopt a scholarly position on the literature in order to understand the field at varying points within my research process. In examining and reexamining the literature throughout this journey, it is my hope that I have achieved this feat of becoming a scholar before assuming a role as a researcher, and that this is reflected in my examination of the literature and in its relationship to the research project.

2.1 Applied Theatre

Applied theatre has often been characterised by definitions of transformation and social change. In response to an often sceptical reception from communities, schools, prisons, aid agencies, and other sites of social development, applied theatre has often turned to claims of transformation and change as a means of justifying its presence. As Balfour (2009a) notes, this is how “a considerable amount of applied theatre markets its social utilitarianism” (p. 350). Initial questions regarding such claims were voiced even in the earlier literature (Ackroyd, 2000; Mienczakowski, 1997). However, drawing on the rhetoric of Boal (1979) who claimed that theatre is a weapon for liberation and revolution, the discipline became influenced by the “central transformative principle” (Taylor, 2003, p. 1).

The legacy of this is that applied theatre and its outcomes were “described in terms closer to an epiphany than to a simple learning experience” (Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2003, p. 312). As Hunter (2010) notes, for those working in other socially conscious disciplines, such as peace builders, there are clear goals, whereas there is no guaranteed outcome with the arts and the hard/soft dichotomy means that much time is spent justifying their role. A quest for “proof” ensued as the field asked how applied theatre could be measured and quantified. As Dalrymple (2006) notes, “the field of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is rapidly becoming highly technical under the influence of donor funding and ‘impact’ is a term that is used to mean something more specific than a general kind of effectiveness” (p. 202).

The challenge of efficacy, whilst there has been much support and advocacy for the need to evaluate the field (Ackroyd, 2000), has led to a long debate within academic literature (Balfour & Poole, 1998; Baños Smith, 2006; Dalrymple, 2006; Etherton & Prentki, 2006; Taylor, 2003; Thompson, 2000). Within a contemporary context, whilst many of these issues remain vibrant and dynamic, the urgency and the emphasis of this discourse has become subdued by the presence of other dialogues. However, the discourse leaves behind a strong legacy that has pushed the field to realise new boundaries. The increasing need to critically examine the outcomes of applied theatre led to inevitable questions regarding the many claims of transformation and change that surrounded the field. Not simply enough to ask *how* the claims could be measured, the question of whether practitioners could justify making such claims became paramount. The assumptions inherent within the transformational discourse began to be rejected by many within the field. As the lengthy and complex process of transformation was reflected upon, the often unrealistic claims of change, intended to encourage donors into funding work, began to require a clarity that was impossible to

provide. As Österlind (2013) states, “it is clear that questions related to evaluation of outcomes for individuals, groups, organizations and communities need to be taken a step forward” (p. 93).

As a result, the language of definition has softened and accommodated new thinking in the field that lends itself to an increasingly self-aware and realistic approach. Nicholson uses the word *orientated* when describing the relationship between applied theatre and social change (Kramer et al., 2006); A. Watson (personal communication, January 31, 2014) from Geese Theatre Company (UK) spoke about applied theatre “contributing to” a process of change; Thompson and Schechner (2004) describe it as “theatre practiced in times/places of crisis” (pp. 14-15); and Somers (2006) states that it “has a job to do” (p. viii). The authority of the transformational discourse has gone and in its place is a language that offers an engagement with, or contribution towards change, rather than the certainty of one. The aims of social transformation may still be there, but the field can now reflect an opportunity for change, should one be possible, rather than false dictates of an impossible certainty.

As the field moves away from the transformational pedagogy the limitations of the work are becoming explicit, thus allowing for the true potential of the work to be fully explored. Whilst previously the radical element was considered to be the capacity to affect change, Balfour (2009a) now suggests that “a radical gesture would be to question the relationship between theatre and ‘change’, to break the assumption that this is an obvious partnership” (p. 355). McDonnell (2005) calls for the recognition of a theatre of little changes, one that focuses on the accumulation of small movements and positive choices within achievable means as opposed to the grand and overarching attempts at social development, present in earlier discourses. Balfour (2009a) reinforces McDonnell’s appeal by stating that “a theatre of ‘little changes’ provides a way to re-orientate what is possible about

the work. It moves away from the need for change rhetoric, impact assessments and strain for verifiable measurements in defining applied theatre” (p. 356). McDonnell and Balfour’s suggested repositioning of the field allows for the development of applied theatre in a new direction that encompasses a genuine sense of its potential and permits an honest dialogue about what this might accomplish:

In resisting the bait of social change, rehabilitation, behavioural objectives and outcomes, perhaps (and it is a small perhaps), applied practice might more readily encounter the accidental, and acknowledge that what applied theatre does is not always linear, rational and conclusive in its outcomes, but is more messy, incomplete, complex and tentative. (Balfour, 2009a, p. 357)

The vision of a field that can wholly inhabit its own strengths is a long way off. However, it must also be recognised that the complex problems inherent within this work are often of an ethical, political (Somers, 2006), and historical reality (McDonnell, 2005) founded within sociocultural and sociopolitical structures beyond the control of the individual applied theatre artist. Once practitioners can admit these limitations of the work, and therefore that their own capacity and responsibilities are also limited, there is the potential to move beyond the transformational claims of the field and into the new territory suggested by Balfour (2009a) and McDonnell.

Nicholson (2010) states that “the different ways in which terminology has been used not only offers insights into how history has been constructed, it also raises questions about the significance of new and contemporary terms” (p. 150). The presence of an applied theatre that recognises its limitations and justifies its boundaries, as opposed to its lack of them, is the result of an extensive and historic dialogue and consequently carries with it questions and

challenges for examining both the past and the future of this work. These ongoing shifts towards a contemporary form of applied theatre are bound to the legacy of the dialogues described within this section and must be understood within that historical context.

2.2 Community-Based Theatre

In continuing the discussion of applied theatre, the sub-discipline of community-based theatre is introduced and established as the form of applied theatre practice which I have focused on within the research. Community-based theatre aligns with the core ideologies of applied theatre, particularly relating to aims of social change, participatory engagement, and creative and aesthetic expression through theatre. Specifically, however, it can be understood as being theatre that engages with community contexts and with community participants. Within this understanding, diverse forms of practice extend to a range of cultural experiences, such as community festivals, traditional cultural events, professionally performed theatre, devised community performances, and issue-based and interventionist programs. Prendergast and Saxton (2009), however, state that, “Community-based theatre most often involves a group of community members coming together to explore and present a performance based on some shared issue or concern” (p. 135). This also places a strong emphasis on an approach that embodies the values of *with* and *by* a community rather than *for* or *to* (Kershaw, 1992). This approach also allows for “the emphasis [to be] creating and performing the stories of communities and community members” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p. 135), thus achieving the specific localness that is required by this work whilst honouring the core elements of applied theatre practice such as participation, empowerment, and aesthetic expression.

However, theoretical definitions and practical applications of community-based theatre are complex, with multiple cross-overs into other areas of applied theatre. For

example, a project run with ex-offenders has links to both prison theatre and community-based theatre; equally, one designed to engage people experiencing mental health issues crosses over between the area of applied theatre and health and community-based theatre, whilst a large-scale project in the community involving several schools might be connected to the field of theatre in education. This often blurs the boundaries between disciplines and requires that resources are drawn from multiple theories, models of practice, and areas of social policy. As Kuppers and Robertson (2007) note, community-based theatre “is a field that draws from so many different disciplines and traditions, and yet is bound by none” (p. 1). As a result, it is possible to see that community-based theatre navigates complex territories where there are multiple meanings, tensions, and agendas at play. Relying on highly contested concepts such as community (Govan, Nicholson, & Normington, 2007) this complex navigation is further heightened; my research has thus necessarily operated within a carefully considered practice that acknowledges and involves these diverse perspectives. A further note to consider here is that as a result of this, the thesis draws on relevant literature from diverse areas of applied theatre practice.

Whilst this diversity lends itself to a dynamic and vibrant practice, it also manifests an elusive and shifting field that is impossible to realise entirely. Perhaps because of this, much of the literature on community-based theatre focuses on anecdotal and reflective examinations of individual practice. Whilst this offers a deep insight into the many vibrant moments of community-based theatre which would otherwise be forgotten, the result is a large body of work describing a vast number of projects, each with a different demographic, social, and geographic context, mode of practice, and project aims. Whilst there are theoretical and practical threads that link these case studies and thus create useful information

and new theories within the field, the vastness of practice means that it is difficult to develop a full representation of this diverse and variegated field.

Another useful clarification to make at this point is the separation between the theoretical fields of community-based theatre and community development. Literature that originates from the applied theatre field tends not to engage too closely with many of the debates, theories, and historical contexts of community and community development. Equally, and particularly within Western literature, knowledge stemming from a community perspective that discusses theatre is often limited in recognising the complexities and intricacies of the aesthetic work. This is reflected in my collection of the literature throughout the wider sections of this literature review. Whilst the literature draws primarily from the applied theatre and community fields, the sources rarely cross over within these sections of the review. This dynamic makes it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of community-based theatre that is grounded in interdisciplinary perspectives and multiple viewpoints.

It is therefore critical to establish an excellent understanding of the specifics of this work, whilst additionally questioning and challenging its borders in order to develop practice and research that are both meaningful and appropriate. Due to the extensive body of work in this field, this section of the literature review discusses the dominant theoretical underpinnings of the work. These areas of discussion not only establish the discourse of the field, but also examine key practical and theoretical considerations that are embedded within the research, such as the value of context and local knowledge, community building, representations of community and self, storytelling, dialogue, culturally diverse communities, and ethical and appropriate ways of working. It is also important to note here that many of these dialogues are relevant to other disciplines of applied theatre. Whilst the following

section focuses on community-based theatre, I recognise the significance of these elements as part of wider applied theatre practice.

2.2.1 The significance of working in community contexts.

Connecting the aims of practice to the context in question is a critical thread identified within community-based theatre literature (Cohen-Cruz, 2006a; Dennis, 2007; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009; Thompson & Schechner, 2004; van Erven, 2001). Despite the scale of theory and practice acknowledged in the above section, the key aspect of context is a recurring factor within this work. Applied theatre that is embedded within the context of a community cannot fail to engage with the specific needs, histories, and narratives of that situation and it is this that binds the process exclusively to that particular community.

Cohen-Cruz (2006a) acknowledges this deep connection between the work and the community and states that the significance of community-based theatre “is about not just the play but the play in its community context” (p. 5). She goes on to argue that the term *community-based* “impl[ies] that theatre is not a self-contained entity but rather gains meaning in a context, integrated in people’s lives” (p. 14). This theory entwines meaning and context together, thus placing the community at the very centre of the practice. This is reflected by van Erven (2001), who makes a particularly poignant statement when he writes that “each new community theatre project, no matter where it takes place, has to make its own unique journey that can never be fully predicted or simply duplicated elsewhere” (p. 244). These statements support an argument for the positioning of context at the heart of the community-based theatre process. The result of this is that the communities themselves must become an integral part of the work, offering experiences, narratives, and knowledge to the creation of theatre that is both

poignant and personal. Furthermore, Blight (2015) notes that this also means that practitioners must adopt “a position of acceptance of the realities of the context” (p. 22).

The specific emphasis on local knowledge as a result of a concentrated focus upon context and participation can be identified as another theoretical link that dominates the literature and surrounding practice of this field (Govan et al., 2007; Horitz, 2001; Newman et al., 2003; Prentki, 2003). Conquergood (2002) defines this knowledge as the difference between “knowing that” and “knowing about” (p.146). By recognising the importance of local information – the knowing *about* – community-based theatre transfers power to the participants and places them in a position of authority and expertise. As Bourke and Hunter (2011) note, “when people are welcomed into a process and invited to collaborate in meaningful ways, they take ownership of the outcomes” (p. 54). This contributes to an environment that is empowering rather than subjugating, the existence of which, as Nwadiwe (2007) explains in the following statement, is critical to such a process.

People-centred development empowers individual members of the community to take active part in generating and disseminating ideas and information for sustainable collective action. In this context, empowerment must be rooted in the knowledge of the people, and in ways of dealing with their environment. (p. 67)

An effective example of Nwadiwe’s (2007) argument can be found in the article by Horitz (2001), *'B-O-U-R-N-E-M-O-U-T-H! Our Town!' Effects on Male Teenagers of Participation in a Community Play*. In his writings on this large-scale community theatre project, Horitz notes that the participants had a strong reaction to their ideas and knowledge being included within the development of the process and the creation of the performance. Through community feedback Horitz was able to confirm that the students had valued the

commitment given to their contributions and felt respected as a result. The students also communicated that they felt this ongoing consultation took on a very practical methodology rather than being an unfulfilled and ideological concept. Horitz's experiences here indicate the beneficial value of operating within a process that respects local knowledge and participants' ideas. This is not simply to develop the richness of the outcome or the facilitation of "communicative democracy" (T. May, 2007, p. 153), but it also needs to exist for the empowerment and ownership of the people involved and the respect that this process delivers to the specific knowledges and contexts that are embedded within the work. However, it must be acknowledged that this process cannot exist as ideology but must be actively delivered within the core of community-based theatre practice.

Another key dialogue within community-based theatre that deserves attention is the permission of entry that is granted to the external practitioner by a community. The aspects of local knowledge and context-specific work have been shown to be a priority within this field. However, this intense focus upon the value of the community introduces questions about the presence of an external facilitator and their position as an inevitable authority, yet one with a distinct lack of local knowledge.

Kujawa (2007), in considering migrant experiences, writes of a "long and treacherous bridge that a stranger and foreigner must cross" (p. 222). The external practitioner, whilst perhaps not quite a migrant, is certainly an uninvited stranger within the local context of the community (Conquergood, 2007). To this cultural outsider, an all-access pass should not be automatically expected on arrival, as participants must be convinced of the cultural stranger's priorities and authenticity before engaging with what can be a difficult process (Hoggett & Miller, 2000). Kujawa's "bridge" therefore becomes a critical journey for a practitioner to take, in order to gain the trust and respect of the community.

Much of the community-based theatre literature acknowledges this importance of gaining permission from the community and recognises the presence of the symbolic bridge that must be crossed in order to be granted access (Balfour, 2009a; Cohen-Cruz, 2006a; T. May, 2007; McDonnell, 2005; Balfour & Somers, 2006; Thompson & Schechner, 2004). However, this process can be lengthy and difficult (Conquergood, 2007; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009), particularly with vulnerable peoples or those who have at first hand experienced the overindulgence of “observers with a ticket out” (Schultz, 2007a, p. 8). The challenge is, therefore, how does a cultural stranger gain access to a community within a framework that can support both the community’s needs (trust, recognition, stability) and those of the external practitioner (funding, time, resources)?

Conquergood (2002) states that boundaries are more like membranes than barriers, suggesting that through the work of both community and practitioner, the membrane can be safely broken, allowing the two worlds to combine. Somers (2006) states that one way to achieve this is to convince participants of the sensitive, ethical, and genuine nature of both the practitioner and the proposed work. Blight (2015) also acknowledges that the work must be developed through relationships and that it requires “the building of trust and understanding within the partnership” (p. 22). T. May (2007), in her practice with Native American communities, states that she explicitly acknowledges her outsider status, relying on the cultural authority of the participants in areas of knowledge and experience that are inaccessible to her. May’s open acknowledgement and the embedded use of the local knowledge around her also serve to mitigate what Balfour (2009a) states are the risks of inappropriate and damaging ways of working, stemming from a lack of cultural understanding.

T. May’s strategy is one that I have found useful within my own practice. From my extensive work with Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in the UK, to projects where a

different kind of cultural knowledge is needed, such as when working with prison inmates or people with mental illness, there has always been a need to seek information and knowledge from the group, to create an authenticity and awareness that I cannot achieve on my own. Cohen-Cruz (2006a) defines this as “‘outsider’ technique ... grounded with ‘insider’ content” (p. 7). Therefore, the process of entry, and the ongoing process once entry has already been granted, becomes a fusion of the skills and knowledge of all parties – community and practitioner – through a process of open dialogue and genuine acknowledgement of the strengths and challenges that each person faces on this creative journey. This approach fosters a reciprocity (Cohen-Cruz, 2006a; T. May, 2007) that enables Conquergood’s (2002) membranes to give way to something else, slowly bridging the gap between outsiders and insiders.

2.2.2 Dimensions of community-based theatre.

Borrowing from the change theory of applied theatre, community-based practice argues that theatre programs can have a profound impact upon a community (Christensen, 2000; Govan et al., 2007; Hoggett & Miller, 2000; Kuppers & Robertson, 2007; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). In addition, there is extensive literature advocating the need for this engagement (Hoggett & Miller, 2000; Prentki, 2009a; Thompson & Schechner, 2004), which is perhaps put most succinctly by Mackay (2009) when he states that increasing levels of social isolation, depression, and alienation provide a compelling case for community participation in the arts.

The focus on community offers an opportunity for this form of theatre to examine critical issues relating to that locality, thus operating within significant and meaningful channels. Govan et al. (2007) claim that this has the potential to shape communities and

challenge social injustices, a point mirrored by Prendergast and Saxton (2009) when they state that theatre “challenges accepted beliefs and histories and works towards new visions of community action and social change” (pp. 135-136). T. May (2007) also argues that community-based theatre is not a preamble to social activism, but rather *is* social action in process. Her reflection (which has echoes of Boal’s [1979] rehearsal for reality) that theatre enables an “impossible future [to be] envisioned” (T. May, 2007, p. 162) is also upheld by Govan et al. (2007) when they note that community begins to navigate the space between what is real and what is possible. Thus an imagining of change (Beswick, 2011; Cahill, 2006, 2010; Donelan, 2002) is mobilised by the participants, creating a world in which ideas and actions can shift from the intangible realm of fiction towards a fixed reality.

Donelan (2002) states that, “the power of drama to provide learning about the complexity of human behaviour lies in the fact that, although it draws from the socio-cultural world, drama represents rather than replicates reality” (p. 31). As Beswick (2011) writes, “this is where the performative and transformative power of the ‘representational space’ comes into play, allowing the performers to re-imagine and produce a space which is hopeful, and which moves away from the representations imposed on them by others” (p. 432). By using genuine participation, a community can determine its own representation (McDonnell, 2005) and reframe their own narratives (Govan et al., 2007) thus rendering opportunities for empowerment and ownership. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) states that acts of representation can affect “the image of one’s position in social space” (p. 134) and Hunter (2008) argues that sites of performance and creative expression can offer a safe space for these acts of representation to occur. It is perhaps therefore the capacity of community-based theatre to engage in aesthetic and narrative representations that enable this practice to engage with a community-building process. Mulligan (2013) also argues that, “representations of

community can bring ... community into conscious public discourse” (p. 115), thus implying that the representational act of theatre can initiate wider awareness and dialogue and identifying that the reach of such an action can therefore extend far beyond the original moment of representation. Importantly, however, Donelan, Kelman, and O'Brien (2006) note the need for reality to feature within the theatrical framework, stating that, “it was important for their play to be ‘real’ – to relate to their experiences of the world. The young people approved of the scenes they created that ‘showed reality’” (p. 64). Likewise, Meyer (2015) also states that “it is important that the problems and content portrayed in drama are recognizable and identifiable for the participants” (p. 173).

By exploring theatrical representations that are linked to both the participants’ reality and an imagined future, community-based theatre not only offers the opportunity for participants to explore aspects of community, but also opens up a pathway for community participants to examine identity and self. Tully (2004) recognises that shifts in identity can come from participation and the development of citizenship. However, the engagement between theatre and identity moves beyond this as “by playing in the fiction we also engage in identity work” (Cahill, 2006, p. 67). Through engaging in fictional frameworks and aspects of role and character work, participants are able to “imagine themselves differently ... mov[ing] beyond a restricted, socially and culturally defined sense of self” (Donelan, 2002, p. 33). Similarly, Alrutz (2013) states that, “to perform/tell our stories is to refashion existing ideology, identity and truth” (p. 51), thus enabling participants to challenge preconceived ideas about their position within social and political space. Govan et al. (2007) also suggest that participation in drama programs permitted participants to expand their sense of identity and relocate themselves in relation to their communities, whilst Woodland (2013) notes that being able to explore a range of emotions through drama enabled participants to move

beyond their typical role. In taking on a character that is different from themselves, participants are also able to step outside of familiar roles and communicate in different ways (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). Cahill (2006) states that it is “through ‘doing’ ourselves (and each other) differently in the drama, we get to stretch our identities to encompass new possibilities in being” (p. 67). J. Butler (as cited in Cahill, 2010) also notes that the fictional framework allows us to “imagine ourselves and others otherwise” (p. 167), which in turn “establishes the possibility that things can be done differently” (Cahill, 2010, p. 167).

In inhabiting this space that moves between the real and the representational, community-based theatre embodies the “simultaneous but separate presence of the real and the fictional world” (Cahill, 2010, p. 160). This requires complex interactions (Hughes, Kidd, & McNamara, 2012) and enables the participants to “reproduce their own reality ... simultaneously existing in two autonomous worlds, the real and the reflected” (Christensen, 2000, p. 169). Dunn (2013) argues that “a simultaneous awareness of the dramatic world and the actual one seems to have enhanced the possibilities for creating connections rather than limiting them” (p. 226). This suggests that the capacity of community-based theatre to both reveal and represent the participants’ lives offers a depth to the work that cannot be achieved by engaging with only one side of the “fiction-reality boundary” (Cahill, 2010, p. 155). As such, community-based theatre can therefore be seen as a way “to investigate rather than to replicate reality” (Nicholson as cited in Cahill, 2010, p. 161).

The coexistence of fictional and real frameworks and the investigation of reality through fictional narratives can also be found within dialogues on storytelling. The role of storytelling is relevant across applied theatre practice, but within community-based theatre “the emphasis is on creating and performing the stories of communities and community members” (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009, p. 135) thus placing “story” and “storytelling” at

the centre of this work. However, in this context the concept of storytelling can embody both fictional narratives and autobiographical stories or personal testimonies. Whilst fictional narratives enable distance from the subject matter (Donelan, 2002), Cohen-Cruz (2005) also notes that “personal stories allow for self-representation” (p. 140), offering participants the opportunity to “represent themselves in theatre, to speak about themselves for themselves” (Nelson, 2011, p. 169). The use of personal storytelling and forms of testimony can particularly be found within contexts where participants have previously experienced trauma, with the storytelling process intended to release or purge the pain of the original events. As Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour (2009) state, “for proponents of a trauma diagnosis ... a person must transform their traumatic memories into narrative memories through speaking about or talking through their past” (p. 33). In contemporary practice, this storytelling approach can be found in a variety of contexts, but is frequently articulated in terms of work carried out with refugees and asylum seekers (Cox, 2008, 2012; Dennis, 2008; Jeffers, 2008; Wake, 2008).

The literature on storytelling also argues a link to the community-based theatre dialogues about community action and change. As Kupperts (2007) states, “storytelling, sharing language and myth-making are the offerings that allow the horizon of community to appear” (p. 36). T. May (2007) argues that theatre gives rise to the knowledge that comes from lived experience and that this has the potential to transcend other forms of information sharing such as debate and deliberation. Cahill (2014) also reinforces the importance of story when she states that, “we use stories to understand the world. We use stories to try and change the world” (p. 23). The significance and purpose of storytelling within a community-building framework can be understood with the help of de Certeau (as cited in Donelan, 2002) who states, “stories cross borders; they are transnational, transhistorical and

transcultural” (p. 28). Kelman (2008) also identifies that the use of story enabled participants to explore values and identity, whilst T. May (2007) notes that stories enable equity within civic discourse. Personal storytelling can also shift into testimony (Cohen-Cruz, 2005) and transform from the personal towards a collective centre (Dennis, 2007). Balfour, Westwood, and Buchanan (2014) also uphold this when they state that the reflective process following personal storytelling “universalises a very specific, personal story – in effect ‘re-story-ing’ this part of their life” (p. 178). Furthermore, Breed (2015) argues that traditional and cultural stories can assist in negotiating contemporary moral, political, and social agendas.

The use of storytelling and performance also provides the community with a voice and a platform where these narratives can be heard (Blight, 2015; Dennis, 2007; Horitz, 2001), an opportunity that can be particularly significant for marginalised or “peripheral” peoples who may not otherwise have a strong voice in society (van Erven, 2001). As Dennis (2007) states, “the place of personal story is often extrapolated as a chance to reclaim *voice*” (p. 355, emphasis in original). This is particularly significant when you consider that “the denial of voice can be perceived as a denial of one’s identity” and that “to have voice is to have legitimacy and integrity” (d’Estrée, 2006, p. 107). Kelman (2008) also notes that in terms of developing both meaningful art and research, “the more this process includes the voices of the [participants], the richer the work will be” (p. 94). This positions participants as “informants knowledgeable about their experiences” (Doná, 2007, p. 212), whose voices act as “*testimony* to lived experience” (McCammon, Saldaña, Hines, & Omasta, 2012, p. 3, emphasis in original). The concept of voice is also a powerful tool for the audience, who experience a “living insight” (Christensen, 2000, p. 176) into the stories and experiences of that community.

In focusing on the concept of voice, community-based theatre also inherently enters into an open dialogue “through which information and ideas are shared among the participants” (Nwadike, 2007, p. 66). Within this capacity for dialogue, there is also an acknowledgement that participants are exposed to and engaged with the stories and voices of others. As Collins (2015) states, “dialogue involves an interactive process whereby we make meaning together, foster understanding and recognise that there are many truths” (p. 119). This is significant not only for the process of maintaining an open dialogue, but also in recognising the existence and value of diverse voices and in expanding individual perspectives. The importance of this is recognised by Nelson (2011) who states that “by coming together ... students became witness to each other’s lives ... and they recognised the significance of that shared understanding” (p. 165). Likewise, Neelands and Nelson (2013) note that “finding empathy with characters and lives that are different is more than the hug of sympathy; it’s a call to action and is essential to healthy polity” (p. 24).

Mayo (2005) recognises that “in the context of globalisation, there has been increasing interest in learning from the experiences of others” (p. 86); Diprose (2003) argues from a community-development perspective that community must acknowledge difference and reject homogeneity if it is to establish a firm foundation. Community-based theatre literature also recognises this need and identifies areas in which the field acknowledges and responds to this call for diverse voices. Prendergast and Saxton (2009) state that practitioners should seek conspectus over consensus, and Kupperts (2007) references the ability of theatre to approach group and individual knowledge, without cancelling out experience. Govan et al. (2007) add to this literature by suggesting that the reciprocal nature of performance enables participants to negotiate competing narratives. In addition, T. May (2007) reveals her profound experiences of a community-based theatre project, stating that theatre provides a

“forum for acknowledging pluralism, for giving voice to stories that represented distinct and discreet knowledge, which, while not shared by all members of a community, nonetheless enriched all members” (p. 162). These arguments provide a critical link to the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference and place theatre within a community-building framework, based upon genuine communication and diverse experiences.

The above discussion positions community-based theatre not only as a form that recognises the value of difference, but as one which is therefore ideally situated to operate within culturally diverse contexts. The dimensions of community-based theatre that are outlined in this literature review can be extensively applied to work carried out within culturally diverse communities. However, there is an additional body of literature that suggests community-based theatre is a particularly significant tool in engaging with specific issues of diversity and intercultural understanding (Blight, 2015; Christensen, 2000; Conquergood, 2007; Donelan, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Hunter, 2005; van Erven, 2001). Donelan (2002) states that, “racism, human rights and social justice are often directly addressed within drama programs” and that stereotypes and discriminatory perceptions “can be countered by the humanising impact of dramatic storytelling” (p. 27). Govan et al. (2007) also state that the narratives that emerge through community-based theatre can reveal and construct social and cultural values, something which is highly significant within a culturally diverse context, particularly one where there are issues such as discrimination and inequality. Van Erven (2001) notes that “community theatre everywhere works at bridging difference” (p. 245), whilst Cohen-Cruz (2006a) also recognises that theatre has a levelling effect in community contexts. Furthermore, research by Fitzpatrick (2011) found that drama provides “a safe space for children to talk about race, and explore and make sense of their own emerging identities, enabl[ing] them to better understand perspectives of diverse racial-ethnic groups” (p. 101).

Christensen (2000) adds to this support when she states that the devising process can allow topics and issues about ethnicity and culture to be discussed; she further notes that cross-cultural narratives and performances can exhibit an insight into different lifestyles, values, and traditions. This insight can promote further awareness of diverse cultural practices and provide a tool whereby these dialogues can be opened and people of all cultures can share experiences and create new opportunities together.

In connection to the concepts discussed above and with particular reference to the idea of diverse peoples working alongside each other to discover new perspectives and ideas, the literature also identifies that one of the key outcomes of community-based theatre is the act of bringing people together (Cohen-Cruz, 2006a; Govan et al., 2007; Hadland & Stickley, 2010; Mackay, 2009; McCammon et al., 2012; Neelands & Nelson, 2013; Prentki, 2009a). This can be understood as being because community-based theatre is “a collective activity in a world where the mass of people lead lives of increasing isolation and fragmentation” (Prentki, 2009a, p. 364). McCammon et al. (2012) found that participants gained a “lifelong human awareness” (p. 9) from participating in drama programs, offering individuals skills such as empathy, understanding human motivations, social interaction, and emotional intelligence. However, most interestingly, participants identified that these skills were mostly gained through working with others rather than learning from the theatrical process. Nicholson (2002) also states that an atmosphere of trust is often cultivated within drama programs, while Neelands and Nelson (2013) note that community-centred skills of cooperation, altruism, trust, and empathy were demonstrated throughout both the ensemble building and the playmaking process. Interestingly, Neelands and Nelson also state that the sense of community that existed amongst the drama participants generated a further sense of power and agency, which in turn strengthened the sense of community and its significance to

the participants. Within a dialogue that frames community-based theatre as a community-building tool, these findings that theatre holds the capacity to build relationships and bring people together can be seen as an important element of this field. The significance of this is reinforced by Wright (2011) who states that, “agency also exists in relation to others with social bonds being a powerful way of knowing ourselves and attributing meaning” (p. 111). Similarly, V. May (2011) notes that “our sense of self is constructed in a relational process in our interactions with other people” (p. 368), whilst Cahill (2002) also recognises that “the presence of a network of relationships and a sense of connection and reciprocity is recognised as an important determinant of wellbeing” (p. 13). Whilst these points are relevant across all aspects of community-based theatre, there is particular significance here when considering practice that operates within culturally diverse communities.

2.2.3 Ethical ways of working: Risk within community-based theatre.

The above section advances an idea that applied theatre is a valuable and powerful tool through which to interrogate issues of community and self and mobilise people into engagement and participation within a meaningful dialogue. However, concepts discussed above such as voice, empowerment, storytelling, and representation must also be considered in terms of their limitations and ethical boundaries to ensure that participants are safeguarded against harm and that the needs of the context are being met in ways which are both ethical and appropriate. Ellis (2007) states that researchers must strive to leave communities and participants better off at the end than they were at the beginning and that there must be an ethic of care. Although this is an ideal approach to community-based theatre, questions must be asked that disrupt and challenge assumed ways of working and which investigate whether Ellis’s statement is being achieved. As Sinclair (2000) notes, “theatre does not rest easily in community hands” (p. 66) and as a result, the theories presented in the above section must be

deeply considered within the reality of community-based theatre where researchers and practitioners may be working alongside vulnerable or marginalised people. This is also highly relevant within culturally diverse communities where participants and audiences may be newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers, or refugees. Whilst community-based theatre might claim to be an effective tool in these communities, the presence of culturally diverse participants calls for a reframing of considerations and reference points (Christensen, 2000).

The theories surrounding context and local knowledge that are outlined at the beginning of the above section must be considered within Christensen's (2000) call for a reframing of reference points. Within the context of culturally diverse communities where people may have migrant, refugee, or asylum-seeker backgrounds, a sense of context or place exists in a very different form and local knowledge embodies a different set of experiences from those that can be found in other communities. Furthermore, concepts such as local knowledge or place may be difficult topics to consider for people who have left their homes under difficult or traumatic circumstances. Whilst the literature of community-based theatre advocates for the work to be situated within the context of the local people, practitioners and researchers must ensure that this is approached with awareness and sensitivity towards the various dimensions that may exist within communities.

Further to this, arguments regarding community empowerment and voice are definitive within community-based theatre literature; however, it must be recognised that such terminologies bear multiple nuances and that careful consideration is required before they are employed within research or practice. Assumptions of "disempowerment" and "silence" are inherent within a dialogue that defines a need for empowerment and voice, particularly one that is developed in the absence of contextualisation. These points become particularly important when research is conducted with marginalised people whom society

often assumes to be disempowered and lacking a strong voice. In this sense, attributing negative meaning to an individual's life in the absence of their own input grates against the values of participation and democracy that community-based theatre claims to embody. Aitken (2009) states that "there can be a tendency ... to assume that 'empowerment' is something that could be achieved in a single setting or human exchange" (p. 504). Whilst Nwadiwe (2007) asserts that "empowerment must be rooted in the knowledge of the people" (p. 67), assumptions of empowerment must be questioned and the complex sociopolitical structures in which participants operate must be taken into account when making claims of achieving voice or empowerment within community-based practice.

Additionally, the theories surrounding community empowerment and voice take on a deeper meaning when working with vulnerable people who have potentially experienced trauma. This is particularly pertinent in the context of personal storytelling and the bearing of witness to traumatic events. As Thompson (2004) notes, "telling stories is important to the work of theatre makers generally but is made ethically complex by the interaction with vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities" (p. 151). Here, the telling of sensitive narratives may not be the course of empowerment that is required, but rather the silence of these (Thompson et al., 2009). Furthermore, as Balfour et al. (2014) note, "if posttraumatic growth is to occur, then safe, exposure-type techniques that protect participants into emotion are important" (p. 176).

The risk of overlooking these points within community-based theatre carries key implications for both participants and practitioners. Cahill (2014) states that "as drama educators and applied theatre artists, we assume the importance of narrative, experiential and embodied ways of knowing" (p. 23); however, within the context of traumatic narratives, Cohen-Cruz (2006b) notes that "telling such stories can inadvertently reinforce such

oppression rather than liberate from it” (p. 24). Furthermore, Bundy (2006b) states that recalling distressing memories can trigger negative responses and even cause flashbacks to the original event and Hassall (2014) notes that “in recreating their own stories, there may be significant mental and emotional health risks posed” (p. 38). Cohen-Cruz (2005) also upholds this when she writes that “given the horrific acts that testimony often bespeaks, what assures that the telling does not merely traumatize the teller, leaving her isolated in the past evoked by the story?” (pp. 142-143).

In addition to this, further concerns are raised about casting participants to perform their own stories of trauma (Hassall, 2014; Leffler, 2012), whilst Cahill (2008) notes that “if [participants] are cast as recipients, victims or perpetrators, then, regardless of the quality of the artistic process or products, they may be re-learning a fundamentally disabling lesson” (p. 24). Greer (2011) also acknowledges that representing people’s lives through performance can expose participants to punitive circumstances, whilst Noble (2005) states that “once aspects of self are released, there is no complete returning to anonymity or confidentiality” (p. 2). Additionally, where one participant might experience empowerment, another may find their sense of weakness and vulnerability reinforced (Leffler, 2012). Furthermore, audience members must be included within these considerations, for whilst those who witness testimony have a significant responsibility (Cohen-Cruz, 2005), it must also be noted that the position of listening is not without its risks (Neumark, 2007).

Consequently, the telling of stories and the representation of both the stories and the participants within theatre must be carefully considered and the complexities of this work acknowledged. In response to questions and concerns such as these, Salverson (2008) states, “I wonder if what is going on is not merely the disturbing tendency to identify victims through the narrow lens of our preconceptions of what it looks like to lose, and how it feel to hurt” (p. 252).

Cahill (2014) also notes that “there is a collective hunger for testimonial theatre” (p. 29) whilst within the context of culturally diverse communities, Doná (2007) writes that “there seems to be a propensity to represent refugees in essentialist ways, the hegemony of trauma as the major articulation of refugee suffering” (p. 221). Balfour (2009b) also states that “applied or participatory projects often seem to get too caught up in the conventional mode of helping a marginalised other ‘find a voice’, which indirectly can lead to contradictions inherent in refugee performance” (p. 2). Additionally, Hassall (2014) suggests that “our preoccupation with real traumatic experience may stem from our greater desire to interpret the reasons for certain behaviours that are completely foreign to our own” (p. 29). As a result, the danger here is not only that “narratives of victimhood are encouraged” (Jeffers, 2008, p. 218), but also that practitioners also risk “relegating the individual to a secondary position in the interest of furthering the social goal” (Cohen-Cruz, 2006b, p. 19).

Although the literature of community-based theatre often frames community and individual representation in a positive light, Doná (2007) recognises that representation has a dual meaning and can refer to speaking of someone or it can mean speaking-for. This is a troubling point when it is considered alongside literature that advocates community-based theatre as providing a platform for voice and working for the benefit of community and participants. Beswick (2011) also notes that if participants “are representing themselves in the ways in which they resent being perceived, then where does an intervention which deconstructs or re-frames popular representations take place?” (p. 431) Similarly, Cahill (2008) states that “if the intervention reinforces identification with existing positions then transformation is unlikely” (p. 21), whilst Henriques Coutinho and Pompeo Nogueira (2009) acknowledge that some work can be seen as endorsing stereotypes. However, Cahill (2006) also argues that “essential to the process of transformative change is the capacity to imagine

things otherwise” (p. 67). “A problem-revealing drama will not on its own build the hope or persistence required to make change happen but rather can lead to passivity and resignation” (Cahill, 2006, p. 68); instead, “the process of re-classification, re-imagining or re-storying is necessary” (Cahill, 2012, p. 422). It is therefore essential to acknowledge that “representation in performance might both empower and weaken” (Greer, 2011, p. 59) and that “without the critical component, stories risk merely reproducing the dominant ideology” (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, pp. 139-140).

Salverson (2008) writes that “theatre is a dangerous witness” (p. 245) and the literature outlined here highlights the need for this warning to be carefully acknowledged alongside an awareness of the complexities that this work brings. As Hughes et al. (2012) state:

These moments raise important questions for research and practice about choices related to telling, including who is listening, what is being told and for what purpose: questions of knowledge and understanding are bound up in relationships of identity, power and memory that have to be carefully negotiated. (p. 205)

However, other questions also need to be raised within this dialogue. Hunter (2005) asks how space can become safe without losing the inevitable tension and creative potential of this work, something that is highlighted when Donelan et al. (2006) note that participants faced significant risks in performing to their peers, but found that sharing their narratives was empowering. However, perhaps most importantly, Christensen (2000) states that the practitioner “should also consider his or her own prejudices and preconceptions” (p. 176). From the case studies that I have witnessed within my own practice, I advocate that the

aspects of community-based theatre explored here can often contribute towards positive outcomes of participatory theatre. However, I am reminded by Hughes et al. (2012) above of the need to be critically aware of my own assumptions, both of the practice and the participants, when navigating such claims.

2.3 Community

Due to the diverse interpretations and multiple disciplines that interface with the notion of community, the literature on this subject is extensive. This section of the review breaks down some of the literature surrounding these meanings and examines the historical and contemporary theories that can illuminate a clearer distinction of community within contemporary society. The review will additionally consider the literature within the framework of the research and will examine the progression of community theories as a means of understanding the field and uncovering the necessary grounding for the research context. This builds a theoretical framework in parallel to that of applied theatre and creates an interdisciplinary examination of the research literature.

2.3.1 Concepts of community.

In my search for the meaning of community it became clear that it has emerged as one of the most prolific terms in modern social discourse whilst also being one of the most uncertain. It has recently enjoyed a considerable reemergence within contemporary society, largely at the behest of communitarianism, a movement based on its resurgence within social policy (Ferlander, 2003). It has since become “a pervasive term within much contemporary political, social and economic commentary analysis” (Mulligan et al., 2006, p. 18); however, its meaning and exact qualities are often overlooked or presented in vague and uncertain terms.

It is perhaps the sheer scale of dense and contrasting analysis into this field that makes its proponents disinclined to be precise in its usage, particularly when it has also become a “useful” term to describe almost any human grouping within modern society. “Like definitions of art, community often seems to be whatever people say it is” (Mulligan et al., 2006, p. 18). As a result, it has come to mean everything and consequently, mean almost nothing (Ferlander, 2003; Mulligan et al., 2006; Walmsley, 2006). This dichotomy of values has led to much critical analysis within the field and exploration for a definitive meaning, or at least a sense of what community truly is. However, the idea is filled with contradictions that confuse and disorientate this search for meaning, a paradox which is eloquently summarised by Brent (2004):

What sort of phenomenon *is* community? What “something” is it that does not appear to have a concrete existence, but which nevertheless has important effects on people’s lives, an idea that disappoints as it does not live up to its promise, but an idea which still has such a strong purchase on people’s thoughts and actions. (p. 214, emphasis in original)

Brent (2004) highlights some useful and engaging contradictions that are further explored within this section. But perhaps what is most interesting is not the contradictions, but rather the unanimous sense that the term *community* is always referred to as something entirely good (Ferlander, 2003). As Raymond Williams notes in his classic text, *A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1988), “what is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organisation (*state, nation, society, etc.*) it seems never to be used unfavourably and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term” (p. 76, emphasis in original). This enduring positivity has led to many people turning towards what is increasingly seen as a traditional and comforting notion. A series of case studies conducted

by Kuecker et al. (2011) came to suggest that there “is something universal and unsurprising about a ‘turn’ to community at times of crisis” (p. 261). However, the result is that community has become romanticised (Shaw, 2008), being described in almost magical terms as having an “evocative power” (Kuecker et al., 2011, p. 251), “a gravitational pull, a magnetic existence” (Brent, 2004, p. 221), and becoming “more like mantras than social goals” (Mackay, 2009, p. 41).

Abstracted terminology, such as that detailed above, has led to many theorists arguing that community is nothing more than a utopian ideal (Bauman, 2008; Brent, 2004; Delanty, 2007; Mackay, 2009). Brent argues that community has become a false reaction to an uncertain reality. Born from fear and anxiety, it features a hope of community rather than a concrete reality. Mackay contributes to this argument by theorising that this turn is prompted by a “fondly imagined community” (p. 42) whilst Hobsbawm (as cited in Delanty, 2007), states that “never was the word ‘community’ used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life” (p. 32). Delanty (2007) even goes as far as stating that “community offers only a comfortable illusion. In this sense then, community was never lost – it was never born”, thus suggesting that “community is impossible” (p. 32).

As globalising forces are changing the traditional landscape of community, the ideals and illusions of the concept are becoming increasingly attractive to cling onto. Without clear analysis, community is in danger of being maintained as an abstract and romanticised utopia. However, the often opposing theories set out within this section also suggest that community, whether myth or elusive reality, is a powerful and evocative term of modern society and one which therefore warrants examination.

2.3.2 Building community.

Three separate factions of thought pervade contemporary discourse on community: that community has largely disappeared – referred to as “community lost”, that it continues to thrive in local settings – referred to as “community saved”, and that a new form of community has emerged based in non-local contexts and focused upon personal networks rather than place – referred to as “community liberated” (Walmsley, 2006; Wellman & Wetherell, 1996). The “community lost” argument builds on the theory that a sense of community declined as the industrial age encroached upon traditional ways of living (Tönnies, 1957). As Wellman and Wetherall (1996) state, “traditional communities were broadly supportive, analysts have also tended to depict them as densely knit solidarities ... by contrast, contemporary communities are relatively sparsely-knit; most members are not connected with each other” (p. 106). Factors such as globalisation (Kuecker et al., 2011, p. 261), the rise of information technology (Ferlander, 2003), and the stresses and time-consuming pursuits of modern life (Mackay, 2009) are also attributed to a decrease in community participation.

The community saved approach rests primarily on “the sheer empirical demonstration of the continued vitality of those urban primary ties which had been pronounced Lost” (Wellman, 1979, p. 1205). However, contemporary acknowledgements of a community saved approach are limited due to the fact that it is now almost impossible to ignore the fact that understandings of community have surpassed the singular comprehension of the traditional, local neighbourhood. Whilst there is an argument that the notions of “localness,” “neighbourhood,” and “place” remain critically important (Mackay, 2009; Wellman, 1996), the theory of community liberated offers an alternative outlook. This argues that contemporary forms of community are increasingly taking shape outside of the local realm.

Within this sphere of understanding, community has not been lost or destroyed by modern forces, neither has it been saved, but instead is liberated from a sense of place and now encompasses the diverse range of social networks present in modern society.

The argument that community is no longer restricted to place, but has been liberated into society, has led to an extensive body of literature regarding the nature and definition of a modern-day community. As a result, there has emerged a division of meanings and community has become a dual notion, encompassing far more than the traditional sense of place, but equally becoming more refined than the generalised term that is often wielded within social policy. Different theorists have attributed varying terminology to describe these opposing sides (Delanty, 2003; Ferlander, 2003; Kay, 2000; Kuecker et al., 2011; Shaw, 2008); however, Wellman perhaps asserts the most useful clarification when he defines community as existing within both spatial *and* social realms (Wellman, 1996).

The spatial realm of community refers directly to community as being centred within a sense of place. This is a community that has physical boundaries rather than social ones (Ferlander, 2003) and is often linked to a traditional or tribal sense of what community is (Mulligan et al., 2006). Mulligan et al. offer a useful definition of spatial community, for which they use the term *Grounded Communities*, as “attachment to particular places and particular people ... relations of mutual presence and placement” (p. 19). As previously discussed, grounded communities are thought to be in decline; however, it is still the recognisable image that often comes to mind when we hear the term community (Congdon, 2004; Ferlander, 2003). As a result, confusion of community with place is often widespread (Brent, 2004; Mulligan et al., 2006; Wellman, 2005).

Community within a social realm presents an alternative understanding of community, one set within interpersonal networks as opposed to place. As technology such as telephones, planes, cars, and the internet have facilitated the rise of social networks beyond local space, the ability to transcend the confines of the neighbourhood has increased (Wellman & Wetherell, 1996). Mulligan et al. (2006) additionally note that “since webs of trust and co-operation can be enacted via highly-mediated forms of communication ... it is true to say that community can be disembedded from the particularities of people and place” (p. 21). As a result, our theoretical and experiential understanding of community is increasingly being developed through social networks rather than spatial ones.

The idea of community as one fused through social networks was famously defined by Williams (1988) as a *community of interest*, a term that prevails over many other definitions. As opposed to a grounded community which is defined by a sense of place, a community of interest is denoted by attitudes or practices held in common (Mulligan et al., 2006). It is, in essence, a connection made through a common link rather than proximity. It is the community of interest that is referred to when we hear of specific groups of people linked together through common interests such as a leisure activity. However, the term has also been used to encompass more generalised and widespread groups of people, binding them together through elements such as faith, nationality, or profession. It is also increasingly applied to groupings of people within the digital world (digital communities), existing in areas such as internet forums, online gaming, and social networking sites.

Whilst community of interest serves as a useful differentiation from grounded community, there are critiques and variations of the theory that require further examination and have implications within the field and throughout this research. Arvanitakis (2008, 2009) challenges the assumption that interest is enough to bring about community building

and suggests that community based on “natural” affiliation is deeply flawed. His central argument is that “authentic” community can only be created through “a process of ‘reciprocated’ desire” (2008, p. 296), hence negating the community of interest and replacing it with a community of desire. Brent (2004), however, notes that this desire must be continually reproduced.

Other theorists have also contributed to this dialogue, suggesting alternative values through which community is formed. Cockburn (2005) argues that community of practice is a more useful term than community of interest as it “assumes there is a shared and agreed task” (p. 330). The notion of agreement provides links to Arvanitakis’ (2008, 2009) idea of desire, again suggesting that autonomy is significant in how communities are formed. Koppers (personal communication, October 4, 2010) argues that connection is the key to building relationships, thus suggesting that a community of connection could also be a viable alternative. Ferlander (2003) suggests that a feeling or sense of community is crucial to the development of community, and Hoggett and Miller (2000) argue for the recognition of collective ways of feeling, suggesting emotional communities.

Furthermore, Delanty (2007) argues that community is built through communication. His theory is largely drawn from the work of Habermas (1984, 1987, 1989, 1998), who argued that communication is the basis of all social action. Delanty continues with this idea and advocates for a “communicative model” (p. 29) of community in which “integration is achieved more by communication than by an already existing morality and consensus” (p. 33). This is reinforced by Ferlander (2003) who states that “community identity is developed through the exchange of meanings in the act of communication” (p. 43). This has great significance for the development of diverse communities where there is often no central consensus due to the existence of different cultures, traditions, ideologies, and faiths.

Delanty's (2007) call for community to be built through communication corresponds to the theory of communication for social change (CFSC) (Baú, 2014; Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2002; Reardon, 2003) which advocates for the central principle of communication to be applied within a process of collective action and social change. Figueroa et al. (2002) state that noticeable features of the CFSC model include the fact that information is shared or exchanged between participants rather than transmitted, so that no participants are passive receivers of information. As a result, the model creates a horizontal and symmetrical relationship between participants rather than maintaining hierarchical structures. A third feature is that the participants' perception and interpretation of information plays an important role within the development of communication (Figueroa et al., 2002). Within the process of community dialogue, Figueroa et al. note that there are distinct steps, leading from the initial "recognition of a problem", to aspects such as "expression of individual and shared needs", creating a "vision of the future", discussing "options for action", and finally developing an "action plan" (pp. 8-9). However, communication and collective action are prioritised at each step, enabling maximum community participation and ownership. Figueroa et al. state that CFSC transforms earlier models which relied upon linear, one-way processes of communication and instead responds to a call for a model of community development "based on *dialogue* versus monologue, *horizontal* versus vertical information sharing, equitable *participation*, local *ownership*, *empowerment*, and *social*, versus individual change" (p. 3, emphasis in original). Figueroa et al. also note that "dialogue is necessary to create a mutual understanding (common framework) with which to solve the problem" (p. 8), whilst Baú (2014) adds to this argument, stating that "the aim is not that of finding immediate solutions to a dispute, but to open up platforms that creatively deal with the overt problems" (p. 6).

Communication infrastructure theory (CIT) (Broad et al., 2013; Chen, Dong, Ball-Rokeach, Parks, & Huang, 2012; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b) similarly presents a model of community development based on communication. As Broad et al. (2013) state:

CIT also asserts that individuals are situated within an ecology of communication resources – made up of a variety of mediated, organizational, and interpersonal connections – and that they draw resources within these networks of communication to construct knowledge and to achieve goals. (p. 328)

However, it should be noted that CIT differs from CFSC in that “the most basic premise of CIT is that local communities are based on resources for storytelling about the community” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, p. 177).¹ Kim and Ball-Rokeach also state that this storytelling “can take any communicative mode ... oral or written, electronic or nonelectronic [*sic*], synchronous or asynchronous, positive or negative, or prearranged or emergent narrative; the storytelling, however, has to be about the local community” (p. 178).

As a result, “individual’s civic engagement is built on connections to a viable neighbourhood storytelling network grounded in a conducive neighbourhood context” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b, p. 413). This process of storytelling forms a “dynamic, networked conversation that collectively forms the communicative foundations of community” (Broad et

¹ It should be noted here that this definition of storytelling differs from the previous concepts of storytelling discussed throughout the section on community-based theatre. Within CIT, storytelling can be understood as widely meaning community members talking to others about their community. Although I believe that fictional and theatrical narratives are still relevant here, it is important to recognise that this area of literature is not directly referring to these.

al., 2013, p. 327). Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006b) state that “talking about and exchanging community stories ... is positively related to community attachment and civic participation” (p. 414) and that “individuals talking about the neighbourhood with their neighbours is the most potent storytelling force in constructing neighbourhood belonging” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, p. 180). Chen et al. (2012) also found that the majority of respondents felt that talking to other people was the first or second most significant way in which they learnt what was happening in their neighbourhood. As a result, it can be understood that “community engagement is generated through shared discourses” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b, p. 413) and as such, “neighbourhood storytelling is a generic process of constructing and reconstructing discourse about community identity, issues, and action strategies” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, p. 177).

Whilst both of these models uphold the principles of communication within collective processes of community building, these theories also translate the concepts of community participation and empowerment into action. Drake, Simmons, and Smith (2014) note that whilst participatory approaches frequently aim to bring community members into established and formal processes, this is often based upon preconceived assumptions about the community and their needs, with the result being that authentic community-led initiatives are not adequately developed or nurtured. Within the theories that place communication at the centre of community building, community participation and engagement are also positioned as core principles of these approaches, thus mitigating some of the concerns raised by Drake et al. above. This also responds to the concept within community development practice that bottom-up community participation is a driver of social change (Dillon & Fanning, 2013) and that the involvement of community members will result in better quality decision-making and initiatives that respond to local needs (Awortwi, 2013). Drake et al. also argue that “long-term

change is only possible if people are offered opportunities to identify their own needs and play the central role in addressing them” (p. 316), whilst Ledwith and Asgill (2000) state that “transformative community development is rooted in a vision of participatory democracy, equality and social justice” (p. 290).

Furthermore, the central roles of communication and community participation further mitigate issues raised by Maritz and Coetzee (2012) when they state that “problem-based approaches often position the educational program within the authority of the ‘outsider’ as the expert depositing information in others’ lives” (p. 134). Interestingly, however, both the models of CFSC and CIT recognise that an external catalyst is required to initiate the process of communication and community change. As Figueroa et al. (2002) state:

The catalyst in the model represents the particular trigger that initiates the community dialogue about a specific issue of concern or interest to the community. This catalyst is a missing piece in most literature about development communication. Much of the existing literature implies that the community *spontaneously* initiates dialogue and action ... experience has shown that communities rarely initiate a dialogue about a problem spontaneously. (p. 6, emphasis in original)

As a result, it can be understood that communication is not enough to initiate community building, but that internal or external intervention is also required to provide opportunities for this to occur. As Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006a) state, “without any resources for constructing stories about the local community and sharing them with others, it is impossible to build a community” (p. 177). Baxter (2014) also states that an external development activist should catalyse knowledge from within the local community, although it

is noted that this is often an “idealistic dream” (p. 140), whilst Broad et al. (2013) acknowledge that community practitioners identify “interpersonal interactions with resident constituents as the starting point for any organizing effort” (p. 334).

2.3.3 New foundations for community building.

The above discussion is significant in suggesting that the existence of a social network, or community of interest, is not enough to form the basis for an authentic community. The findings from the theories above advocate that some element of human emotion or spirit is critically required in order to achieve community building. However, it is the communication theories that particularly resonate with me. The reflective and dialogic qualities of communication suggest that a community built upon this foundation could reach further towards the ideal of a supportive and collaborative community than those based upon place or shared interests. Whilst it must be acknowledged that successful communication is not simple, at times not even practical amongst large groups of people, it does, however, lend itself to the acknowledgement of difference that Diprose (2003) argues for and denies the homogeneity that is often attributed to community defined by place or shared interest. Whilst there are ongoing questions about power such as *whose* communications are valued, a communication community opens up the channels to challenge some of the hierarchies of power that are in place within social networks. This corresponds with Delanty’s (2007) belief that this approach can resolve many of the problems that are centred within the idea of community, particularly issues with authority, status, and ritual that can otherwise control many facets of human interaction.

These findings have great implications for the theory detailed within this review and the practice of community work, particularly with vulnerable or marginalised groups which

have a significant need to be heard within society. Within my own research this also has an impact on how community needs to be conceptualised and how the process of community building should be approached. From this theoretical overview, it is evident that multiple elements are required in the building and sustainability of community. Whilst it is perhaps common elements such as place or interest that instigate an initial movement towards community building, it is the additional connections built through elements such as communication that facilitate sustainability and inclusivity within a community. These complementing models of community development serve to create a scaffold in which community building can occur, based on a shifting platform that is not defined by one set of demands, but evolves through the needs of the community.

The above argument subsequently enables a renewed dialogue surrounding the significance of place within community. Whilst place has commonly been a singular variable in which to define and characterise community, it can now be seen within a wider and more complex set of relationships, thus removing the focus from a sense of place and enabling locality to become a secondary factor within contextualised space. This alternative viewpoint releases the dialogue of place from the dichotomy of lost or saved, as it can now be articulated that place can be one of many contributing factors in the development of communities, whilst there is a desire within that context for it to be so.

The above approach can explain research findings such as those by Kuecker et al. (2010) who found that people-place relationships are central to much work aimed at developing community identity and social inclusion, and Smets (2011) who states that “place attachment continues to play an important role” (p. ii28). Wellman (2005) also notes that “the neighbourhood-centred definition of community still makes partial sense” (p. 53), whilst Delanty (2003) argues that place is a critical element in the modern crisis of belonging. These

dialogues do not have to represent a lingering affiliation to a dying sense of community, but rather their significance can be adequately acknowledged within a contemporary recognition of community. It therefore remains essential to concentrate on community building within grounded communities, combining a sense of place with other community-building models such as shared interests and communication. However, as the theories of CFSC and CIT evidence, this process is not automatic and the elements of community do not arise within a locality simply because it is suggested that these are critical to its development. As a result, it is argued here that there must be an intervention or facilitation of this gradual process and opportunities must be provided for community building.

It is this final argument, that the process of community building cannot be assumed and instead must be guided through processes within which it can develop, that illuminates the need for the research and places genuine participation within dialogic tools such as theatre in an increasingly strong position. The research is thus situated within this dialogue and the literature that I have considered in this section is critical to my understanding of the research framework of community and the development of knowledge and theory within this field. Several qualities of community-based theatre, such as dialogue, storytelling, participation, and empowerment, are reflected in the dialogues laid out in this community literature review. This is particularly significant in relation to Delanty's (2007) desire for communication, the theories of CFSC and CIT, and the concept of a neighbourhood storytelling network. The information in this review has therefore been fundamental in linking the research context of community to the form of community-based theatre and offers the potential for theatre to interact with theories about community building at both a theoretical and practical level.

2.4 Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Community Building

It is intended that this section should be considered within the framework of the community-building theories discussed in the previous section, as a way of situating and understanding this literature. The growth of diversity has impacted upon the way community can be perceived and on traditional community-development models. As such, an examination of diversity and its connections to community are of critical importance to this research and form a key element within this review. The consideration of this literature will therefore further assist in defining the theoretical foundations for the research.

Addressed as a social phenomenon that is bound to the forces of globalisation, migration, and diaspora, cultural diversity has become largely established as a contemporary characteristic of Western nations (Faist, 2010; Ocholla, 2002; O'Donnell, 2006). As a result, it demands critical attention as practitioners and theorists work increasingly amongst diverse groups and within diverse contexts (Townley, Kloos, Green, & Franco, 2011). If culture can be defined as the social practice through which we produce meaning (Schech & Haggis, 2000), then cultural diversity is the recognition of difference in these practices and the resulting interpretations. Similarly to the dialogues on community, diversity is often attributed with positive meaning and as such, definitions often refer to an idealistic practice promoting unity, tolerance, and acceptance as this quote from Ocholla demonstrates:

Diversity is based on recognition of harmony in differences and emphasis on similarities in differences. This approach provides the patience and tolerance for recognising, knowing, experiencing, embracing, benefiting and fulfilling each other as well as accommodating the unique social differences. (p. 59)

It should be reflected upon here that definitions of diversity are often value based, whereas the term is largely applied within social policy as being synonymous with multicultural communities, nations, and organisations, without the attachment of a specific value or judgement (although as previously noted, the inference tends towards the positive). It should therefore be considered whether diversity refers to a social value such as harmony, unity, or tolerance, or whether it refers to a state of multicultural being or social existence. Whilst this distinction is often unclear within the literature, Faist (2010) argues that it is a term loaded with attributed meanings, representing the perceived and evaluated form of cultural differences and as a result, the meaning of diversity will vary between contexts (Townley et al., 2011).

As previously noted, much of the diversity literature reinforces a positive paradigm, promoting it as a resource that needs to be embraced and arguing that diversity increases productivity, enhances creativity and problem solving, and promotes a culture of inclusivity (Ocholla, 2002; D. A. Thomas & Ely, 1996). However, it must also be recognised that diversity has been linked to cultural discrimination, social inequality, and injustice (Faist, 2010; Ocholla, 2002). Daley (2009) states that “an assumption has been identified that migrants add significantly to cohesion breakdown” (p. 159) and Harding (2009) notes that strangers are defined as both threatening and deceitful. As a result, that which is “other” is also that which is a threat and source of fear (Chakrabarty, 2011). In many cases, where policy has attended only to the differences or similarities between cultural groups, the important commonalities or the different perspectives that multiethnic communities can offer have been ignored and de-valued (Ocholla, 2002; Townley et al., 2011). As a result, diversity programs run the risk of perpetuating cultural differences by reinforcing categories of ethnicity and maintaining the power of the dominant culture (Faist, 2010; Finestone &

Snyman, 2005). When this is compounded by layers of poverty, racism, and isolationism (Jan-Khan, 2003), tensions between cultural groups build and the positive paradigm of diversity is undermined by increasing division and social separation. At worst, grievances enforced by unfavourable social conditions and cultural tensions can escalate into cultural clashes or race riots (Finestone & Snyman, 2005) as seen in Cronulla, Sydney in 2005 (Barclay & West, 2006; Johanson & Glow, 2007; Schultz, 2007b) and across several northern towns of the UK in 2001 (Jan-Khan, 2003; P. Thomas, 2006) and at best, unresolved cultural tensions result in entrenched division, mistrust, and community friction (Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Jan-Khan, 2003).

The preceding dialogue presents a strong case for models and techniques that can engage with and resolve the challenges and tensions within intercultural interaction. However, the literature on diversity also recognises the inherent contradictions between community paradigms that promote a sense of community based upon common elements and diversity paradigms that value heterogeneity. Townley (2011) states that a sense of community is found to be higher in racially homogenous communities than in racially mixed neighbourhoods and that homogenous communities have been linked to a sense of greater physical and emotional safety. Such communities have also been found to provide a buffer for ethnic groups that have suffered the damaging effects of racism and discrimination and residents have noted that it is easier to develop relationships with neighbours who are culturally similar to oneself (Townley et al., 2011).

2.4.1 Reducing prejudice: The common ingroup identity model.

One explanation for the presence of divisions – or a lack of positive interaction – between ethnic groups in culturally diverse communities, is the finding that people tend to

form relationships “where different axes of identity ... [meet] and where there [are] most points of connection and similarity” (Daley, 2009, p. 162). This concept forms the basis of social identity theory, which establishes the principle that “in many social contexts people define their sense of self in terms of group membership” (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009, p. 5). This subsequently creates an “ingroup” and an “outgroup”, which can be explained as “people who belong to the group and those who do not” (Brewer & Brown as cited in Burton, Westen, & Kowalski, 2009, p. 697), thus creating a sense of “us” and “them” (Cunningham, 2005). Furthermore, social identity theory also asserts that identification with a specific group can lead to “ingroup/outgroup bias” (Hayes, 1998, p. 383) or “intergroup bias” (Cunningham, 2005, p. 252), meaning that “people would tend to favour their own group to which they belong, and to act less favourably towards those in a different group” (Hayes, 1998, p. 383). Intergroup bias can also lead to the development or intensifying of stereotypes, as research suggests that outgroup members are more likely to be perceived as homogenous, whilst the individuality of ingroup members is emphasised (Burton et al., 2009).

When this theory is placed within the context of culturally diverse communities and in the discussion throughout this thesis, it establishes a highly interesting dialogue about why relationships are formed (or not formed) in community contexts and the ways in which these relationships – or lack of relationships – can potentially nurture intercultural tensions. When it is considered that ingroup membership is formed through points of similarity and that outgroups are therefore necessarily defined by their difference or otherness, then it is possible to perceive how culture and ethnicity can emerge within communities as a point of division and separation. Furthermore, it is possible to understand that intergroup bias, within the context of multicultural communities, can potentially lead to the development of attitudes and behaviours such as racism, discrimination, exclusion, and stereotyping. As Townley et al.

(2011) state, “Strong ingroup identification appears to encourage ingroup biases that may have deleterious effects on the value of diversity” (p. 73). This is particularly significant as it raises questions about how these points of difference might be overcome in order to achieve positive and meaningful interaction between different cultural groups.

In considering social identity theory and questioning how points of difference might be bridged, the body of research around Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis becomes highly relevant. It should be recognised that the research surrounding the reduction of intergroup bias is heavily influenced by the original scholarship of Allport, but that this is now a field of research in its own right. Whilst I acknowledge the work of Allport and his influence over contemporary research, I have largely focused on the work of psychologists Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio and the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999). In particular, I have drawn much knowledge and understanding from their book, *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model* (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Although I draw on other key points of research from the field, it is the common ingroup identity model that I have found to be most relevant to my own research and which I have used at length within the thesis.

The common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999) examines the concept of intergroup bias that emerges out of social identity theory and considers how the sense of division created by ingroup and outgroup membership might be altered by intergroup contact. This model is drawn from the original contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) which posited that contact alone between groups could not overcome prejudice and outlined a series of conditions which, when achieved within the nature of the contact, could reduce bias. These conditions are: “Equal status among the groups, common goals to orient the contact, contact characterized by intergroup cooperation rather than

competition, and the support of the authorities to establish norms of acceptance” (White & Abu-Rayya, 2012, p. 598).

Allport’s (1954) theory that “it is possible to structure intergroup contact in specifiable ways to ameliorate intergroup prejudice and conflict” (Dovidio, Gaertner, Saguy, & Halabi, 2009, p. 75) has been supported by studies conducted since (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005, 2006; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012; White et al., 2009) and has led to the emergence of “new frameworks” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, p. 75) such as the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999). Like Allport’s contact hypothesis, the goal of the common ingroup identity model “is to alter systematically the perception of intergroup boundaries, redefining who is conceived of as an ingroup member, to reduce bias” (Dovidio et al., 2009, p. 77).

The common ingroup identity model proposes that bias – or prejudice – can be reduced when the intergroup contact fulfils several key conditions: intergroup cooperation, common fate (also referred to as shared fate), supportive norms, and equal status (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). The model suggests that bias is reduced by “transforming members’ cognitive representations of the membership from separate groups to one involving common ingroup identity” (Gaertner et al., 1999, p. 389). This is a process known as recategorization whereby, through successful contact, a shared group identity is formed. This common ingroup identity is also known as a “superordinate group identity” (Townley et al., 2011, p. 60), or put more simply, a *we* identity (Cunningham, 2005).

Dovidio et al. (2009) acknowledge that the idea of a common ingroup identity reflects assimilation perspectives; Townley et al. (2011) state that there is a “risk associated with

individual members losing important aspects of their identity in order to form the superordinate in-group” (p. 78). Nevertheless, one of the most interesting facets of this model is that the development of the common ingroup identity does not necessarily require the subgroups to surrender their original identities (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner et al., 1999). In this sense, the superordinate group forms a third identity, allowing for the existence of multiple identities within it, rather than assimilating these into a single group based on the dominant culture.

The above information is particularly significant within this discussion on cultural diversity as it identifies the capacity for multicultural identities to emerge out of the interactions between different groups, without compromising individuals’ identification with their own culture or ethnicity. White and Abu-Rayya (2012) support this by noting that the dual identity aspect of this theory is particularly important in contexts where subgroups “value their identities as central to their functioning” (p. 599). White (2011) further places this discussion within the context of race and culture when she states that the “dual identity framework is particularly beneficial in multicultural societies where ethnic and religious identities are fundamental aspects of individuals’ self-concepts and are unlikely to be readily abandoned” (p. 60). Whilst Gaertner and Dovidio’s (2000) theory was not specifically formulated around ideas of cultural diversity, Cunningham (2005) replicated the study with ethnically diverse groups and came to the conclusion that “a common ingroup identity reduced the negative effects of ethnic dissimilarity” (p. 256), thus further confirming the potential for this theory to be applied within a diversity paradigm. White, Abu-Rayya, and Weitzel (2014) also found evidence in their study of intercultural and interfaith contact with young people that a reduction in intergroup bias at the time of the intervention continued to have a significant effect 12 months after the contact had ceased.

2.5 Young People: Perceptions and Participation

Perceptions of young people have been a source of increasing focus over the past few years, with opposing representations of youth as the creative drivers of a new age and as criminogenic, socially isolated groups of troublemakers becoming an increasing dichotomy. A concentration on the latter has led to negative images pervading international media and creating widespread unease surrounding interactions with young people (Barbarin, 2015; Bernier, 2011; Cooper, 2009; Dillabough, McLeod, & Oliver, 2015; Thompson & Low, 2010). As Barbarin states, “representations of young people in the national media conjure unsavoury images of urban youth as out of control, emotionally labile, unmotivated, and unwilling to take responsibility for their actions” (p. S45). An analysis of local Canadian media by Bernier found that “young people were depicted routinely as troubled, troubling, and dangerous” (p. 158), whilst The Centre of Media and Public Affairs (as cited in Checkoway et al. 2003) also found that as youth homicide fell in the USA during the 1990s, news coverage of these crimes increased by 721%. Additionally, whilst juvenile crime dropped, the American public believed it to be on the rise – a finding that has been attributed to media bias (Figuroa et al. as cited in Checkoway et al., 2003). Furthermore, Dillabough et al. (2015) note that in recent years there has been an “intensification in the circulation of narratives of panic and risk management in relation to socially excluded youth” (p. 660).

In addition to these negative representations of young people, shifts in the global status of economic and sociocultural developments have meant that young people are now facing a unique spectrum of challenges in their transition towards adulthood. The financial crisis that recently affected Europe and the USA has led to increasing levels of youth unemployment across these regions (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; The Economist, n.d.) and whilst the Australian Bureau of Statistics demonstrates that youth unemployment in Australia

remained moderately stable in the face of this crisis, the fact remains that in 2010, when this research project was in development, 19% of all Australian young people remained out of full-time work or study (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.) and in 2014 the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) documented that youth unemployment was on the rise, with the national figure reaching double the rate of adult unemployment and approximately 4% higher than it was in 2008 (Jarvis, 2014).

To compound these increasing challenges that young people are now facing, continued underinvestment in education and the demise of essential community and youth services (Checkoway et al., 2003) are resulting in the risk of increasing alienation and disengagement amongst young people and for those individuals who have experienced difficulties or those who lack strong support networks, this risk is greatly increased (Checkoway et al., 2003; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2010). Any dialogue regarding young people must be understood within this context of the current socioeconomic climate (Hughes & Wilson, 2004) and recognition must be given to the changing circumstances that young people are now expected to accommodate within their lives.

Despite the challenges that young people are facing, there is also a view that this demographic group is actively changing the way society operates through the use of digital technologies and online communication. Bourke and Hunter (2011) argue that this is a “generationally-defined culture-shift” (p. 1) in the way people choose to interact and value their time. No longer placed in the role of passive consumers, young people have become the drivers of technology, developing new forms of communication and creating opportunities for contemporary forms of interaction and exchange. With the assistance of technology, young people are now appropriating and creating their own cultural forms (U. M. Butler & Princeswal, 2010), enabling the emergence of new writers, musicians, performance artists,

and graphic designers at the click of a button and the posting of a new blog or streaming of a live video. Young people are actively recreating, reinventing, and reaffirming their own identities and sharing these with other like-minded individuals (Cockburn, 2005) and as such, a new way of life is emerging that cultural organisations cannot afford to ignore (Bourke & Hunter, 2011). With specific reference to particular youth organisations in Australia, Hunter (2005) also notes that “companies responded to the changing dynamic of contemporary youth-specific cultures and interests, and focused more on young people as agents of their own cultural development” (pp. 147-148). Contemporary young people want to be a part of cultural action and are willing to create it themselves rather than waiting for tours or exhibitions that have been decided and programmed for them by mediating adults (Bourke & Hunter, 2011). Young people have therefore become vital to the growth of the cultural industries. Although it must be noted that the overwhelming selection of material available to young people is a source of concern for businesses that require audiences to walk through their doors in order to access the cultural experience, young people’s interface between traditional methods and new technologies is pushing the boundaries of cultural organisations and encouraging the exploration of new techniques and creative approaches to making work.

The demands of contemporary youth culture are not confined to market-driven consumer needs but have reached the core of how cultural organisations operate, with youth participation leading a new wave of research and social policy trends (U. M. Butler & Princeswal, 2010; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Jensen, 2008). Organisations are being compelled to adapt their approach to how they work with youth and particularly those whose primary remit is to engage with young people, are being forced to consider how much this demographic group is genuinely placed at the centre of what they do. As Bourke and Hunter (2011) state:

Practitioners who work with young people know it's no good just asking young people what they think or dropping them into board meetings. If due care and attention are not paid to their own ways of communicating, their involvement will only ever be token. (pp. 56-57)

In my own experience as an applied theatre practitioner, I have witnessed this last example at a cultural organisation who proclaimed to be “youth orientated” and invited two members of their youth theatre to attend a board meeting. No training was given to the two individuals and they were asked to leave once the real discussions were to begin. This example of poorly led youth consultation demonstrates the need for organisations to commit to their intentions of youth participation and create meaningful exchanges with young people. Organisations that claim to be focused on the needs of young people are finding that they cannot achieve their aims, nor assume to know what these needs are, without the serious input of young people themselves.

Examples of such work are becoming increasingly prolific. In the UK, the youth-led British Youth Council (BYC) and the hundreds of local youth councils that it represents, have established training and development programs for young people across Britain and speak out on matters relating to young people (British Youth Council, n.d.). Whilst traditionally young people have been removed from the decision-making processes that affect their lives (Bourke & Hunter, 2011; Checkoway et al., 2003; Giroux, 2003), initiatives such as this demonstrate young people's ability and desire to be involved in matters that are important to them. Whilst organisations that place young people at the centre of their decision-making and output will not be appropriate for all establishments, the significance of youth consultation and participation can no longer be ignored. This is a key shift in youth participation and the way in which young people are influencing the world around them. Whilst not all youth

consultation is properly implemented and the issues of tokenism that surround the concept of participation remain highly relevant, it cannot be denied that young people are becoming a critical resource within cultural development.

U. M. Butler and Princeswal (2010), however, remind us that there are challenges to young people's participation that are unique to each historical period. The issues laid out in the first paragraph of this section highlight some of the contemporary challenges that young people face, particularly against negative media images and stereotyping. As Checkoway et al. (2003) state,

Because the popular media, social science and professional practice often emphasise troubled youth and the services they require, it is not surprising that adults often view young people as victims or problems, rather than as competent citizens capable of meaningful participation. (p. 298)

As such, the "problem" of youth pervades much contemporary discourse and literature on youth studies often highlights the developmental needs of young people within a framework of disadvantage, disempowerment, and the assumption that without provisions, young people will necessarily spiral into a life of violence and poverty (U. M. Butler & Princeswal, 2010; Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Checkoway et al., 2003; Cooper, 2009; Giroux, 2003). This "deficit" model of youth (Cooper, 2009) problematises a positive youth agenda and encourages the view that young people are deficient, vulnerable, or "at risk". Proponents of this deficit youth model reinforce negative stereotypes of young people and "create a fragmented view of citizenship where an expectation of equal rights for all does not exist" (U. M. Butler & Princeswal, 2010, p. 341). Cahill (2008) argues that if young people "are understood to be 'the problem', it is unlikely that they will be positioned as the

‘solution’” (p. 19). This approach weakens young people’s ability to help themselves and merely continues to empower the adults who operate as “gatekeepers” on their behalf (Checkoway et al., 2003; Henriques Coutinho & Pompeo Nogueira, 2009; Hoggett & Miller, 2000). The result is the development of problem-centric programs and the positioning of young people as recipients rather than competent citizens, thus aggravating rather than alleviating problems (Cahill, 2008).

In contrast, the viewpoint that young people can be a “resource” (Barbarin, 2015; Cahill, 2008; Callingham, 2013; Checkoway et al., 2003; Maritz & Coetzee, 2012; Wright, 2011) offers an alternative approach to examining youth participation. Problem-based approaches often fail to position young people as contributors of knowledge and information (Maritz & Coetzee, 2012) and as Callingham (2013) argues, the focus must turn “from youth as contributing to the problem to youth as contributing to the solution” (p. 48). Similarly, Barbarin (2015) also notes that “adoption of a more positive counternarrative [*sic*] involves abandoning the paradigm about young people as a social problem” (p. S45). Within the resource framework, young people are perceived as competent citizens with a right to participate by building on their strengths and making a difference in ways that offer tangible benefits to themselves and their communities (Checkoway et al., 2003). “This shift in positioning prompts a re-cognition. A re-thinking of who these young people are or can be” (Cahill, 2014, p. 33). In this way, young people can operate as resources rather than deficits and their participation is placed within a positive framework that does not assume that youth activities can make “young people into better young people” (Thompson & Low, 2010, p. 410) but instead concentrate upon the positive contribution that individuals can bring to each situation. The importance of this is highlighted by Figueroa et al. (2002) who note that “in order to resolve problems successfully it is important that all affected in the community get

the chance to express their own views and needs” (p. 8). Whilst this is not to dismiss the extensive benefits that participation can offer young people, such as increased social interaction, civic competency, organizational capacity, and social responsibility (Checkoway et al., 2003), the intentions behind the activity are critical in determining the values of participation inherent within the work.

I believe that by working towards the resource model of youth identity, theatre practice can engage with young people in a way that values their decisions and creative input within theatre making, thus creating an authentic process of group democracy that also recognises individuality and the multiple perspectives that are present. As Wright (2011) states, “drama and notions of agency [enable] us to think of young people as being ‘at promise’ rather than ‘at risk’” (p. 112). The discussions presented in this section demonstrate a need for practitioners to apply thought and consideration to their work with young people. The process requires two-way exchanges that only become genuine and meaningful if young people are valued and perceived for their promise rather than their assumed deficit.

2.6 Conclusion

Thompson, as cited within Kramer et al. (2006) states that the “applied” in applied theatre has the idea of “graft”. This is an idea that continues to return to me, not only because I find this an effective way of describing my own feelings, but also because I respond to the image of applied theatre being carefully grafted onto a foreign context, where it is eventually sealed to create a new practice that sits between the original bodies. This is not dissimilar to the concepts of third space that are established within intercultural performance discourses (Greenwood, 2001; I. Watson, 2000) whereby the meeting place of two cultural performance traditions creates a new context – a third space. In the context of this research and through the

literature examined thus far, it is not applied theatre that has grafted itself onto the other research contexts, but rather that all four fields of theatre, community, youth, and diversity have woven a complex thread, grafting themselves to each other and presenting the research within a new space that exists as a result of this meeting place.

This review, within the interface of these various contexts, has enabled a process of understanding and information building that has established a framework that equally informs and is informed by the literature and theoretical structures of these disciplines. As a practitioner, I believe that this review can only establish the theoretical underpinnings of this concept and that it is the research component – the interaction and engagement with people – that offers the true illuminations of this work. However, I am also aware that the research requires a strong foundation that is drawn from existing theory and knowledge in order to ground it within a useful and effective pedagogy. As a result, conducting this review has been invaluable and it has served as a resource that I have continued to refer to and build upon throughout the writing of the thesis.

I will now continue this discussion by examining the methodology of this research project and the issues that arose as this interfaced with the applied theatre praxis. This places the examination closer to the point of practice and thus raises both challenges and opportunities in the face of developing this research. It is hoped that this literature review has provided the contextual information and grounding necessary for the discussion to move onto this next section and to explore the practicalities of this research.

Chapter 3

Walking the Ground: Methodology

The following chapter sets out the research design and discusses how the research was implemented. In its essential form, the chapter answers the questions about what I did and how I did it. However, to condense the chapter down to such a basic description suggests that the research followed a clear, straight path. The idea of “what I did and how I did it” appears neat and containable, as if it can be easily written and explained. In practice, although the research began with clear intentions, when it collided with the reality of the context it became something else and adopted a form dictated by the participants, the place, and the events that occurred throughout the process. Hughes et al. (2012) acknowledge this when they state that, “situations of practice are inherently unstable, messy, interconnected, conflictual, uncertain, complex ... the world is no longer a readily controllable, predictable, mappable place, if it ever was” (p. 193). When walking the ground, inside the context and amongst the participants, the research became all of the qualities that Hughes et al. describe. Although Hughes et al. normalise this and recognise that this is how practice happens, for me it was nevertheless a process filled with challenges.

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the following research questions: How can community-based theatre contribute to community building with young people in culturally diverse contexts? What are the ethical issues that arise from engaging in community contexts and how does community-based theatre respond to these? It is these questions which informed and guided my decisions throughout the research process, supported by a methodology of reflective practice and action research. The research questions gave an ongoing sense of purpose to the project and the challenges that were faced, serving as a

reminder that the way the participants and I worked through these moments was in itself an example of what community-based theatre might contribute to community building and what ethical issues emerge in community contexts. The methodology of action research and reflective practice also largely supported this process, facilitating dialogue and critical reflection about the events that occurred and enabling the project to reach a final point.

This chapter discusses these various elements of the research. It details the research design and considers what occurred in the meeting place between design and practice. It outlines the fluctuations, challenges, and struggles that became part of the research and importantly, it considers how the research design supported the project through this process and how the methodology “caught the various dynamics of the project” (M. Balfour, personal communication, May 25, 2017). The chapter commences with a discussion about the reflexive researcher and my own theoretical assumptions about the research. This is followed with the project details, information about the participants and the performance narratives, and the ethical considerations of the project. The methodological framework of reflective practice and action research is then examined. Following this, data collection and data analysis are documented, thus situating the research in a clear and identified process.

3.1 The Reflexive Researcher

In my dual role as researcher-practitioner, reflexivity was a critical consideration. As Bacon (2007) states, “your aim is to try and develop as a reflexive researcher and this means being able to understand yourself within your psychological, sociological and cultural context” (p. 139). In becoming Bacon’s reflexive researcher, I had to consider my own context and the positioning of my voice throughout the research. Although I designed the research in a way that I felt would honour the multiple voices and largely separate these from

my own context and positioning, Ackroyd (2007) reminds us that, “we cannot conceive that methods are neutral techniques which can be innocently used to generate understanding. . . . The researcher selects her methods – tools and techniques used to gather evidence, information and data – according to her epistemological and ontological assumptions” (p. x).

As a result of the above information, I have engaged with a reflexive process, considering my own agenda as the researcher, the social and cultural frameworks that might colour my reactions to the work, and the tacit knowledge and assumptions that I brought to the work. Most significantly, I hold an implicit belief that applied theatre is of benefit and I therefore approached this research from an angle of investigating this gain. In acknowledging and maintaining awareness of this throughout the research project, I was able to distance myself from this assumption and increase my objectivity. I also have an academic interest in looking critically at the assumption of benefit and asking questions about what this benefit might be and how it might occur. My desire to critically examine this work has supported objectivity throughout the research and assisted in building a balanced and thorough inquiry.

It is also critical to consider that the research project itself is not separate from the political and social pressures that surround it and that “it is a product of a particular context and moment in the history of the production of knowledge” (Thompson et al., 2009, pp. 19-20). The research, and my approach to it, is therefore situated within the discourses laid out within the literature review and in particular, current thinking in the fields of applied theatre and community development. The research project must also be placed within a global context at a time when political dialogues about multiculturalism, refugees, and immigration are particularly ardent and where these issues feature highly within policy and election agendas. In an Australian context, the media’s negative focus on the ongoing arrivals of

“boat people” to the shores of Australia (McKay, S. L. Thomas, & Warwick Blood, 2011; O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007), and the controversy caused by mandatory detention and off-shore processing contribute towards a distinct societal voice that is inevitably absorbed in differing ways and carried into the research by myself, the participants, and other people directly or indirectly involved with this project. The participants themselves also bring the social and cultural contexts of their local communities, and the very fact that they were recruited to the project through a youth advocacy and anti-discrimination organisation suggests that, at least in some part, they are also bringing these inherent values to the work. The research is therefore inseparable from these political and social contexts and must “acknowledge [that] we speak within and from this particular moment” (Thompson et al., 2009, p. 20).

Structures of power and status within the project should also be considered. This is particularly important in the context of a research project that has touched upon dialogues about cultural identity and community that is led by me, a woman of Anglo-British heritage and an English accent that implies a privileged background and an absence of cultural difference. Additionally, my status as the facilitator of the project and a university researcher sets up additional hierarchies that can be seen as influencing the research process (Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen, & Romero, 2010). Part of the tacit knowledge and assumptions that I brought to the project was that I could develop the young people’s participation, leadership, and ownership within the project to a degree where these hierarchies became less pronounced. However, it would be naïve to think that my race, gender, heritage, or education had no impact on the research. Although the specifics of these challenges will be discussed in further detail throughout the thesis, it was an issue that I have had to consider and, as a reflexive researcher, required me to view these power structures within the project.

3.2 Planning the Research Project

A practice-based research project was developed through which to examine the research questions. I felt that this would enable a focus on practice and provide opportunities for the core research elements to intersect. As the primary step in planning the project, I selected the town of Footscray, situated within the City of Maribyrnong in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia as the site for the research. This was due to the cultural diversity of this suburb and the surrounding areas. In 2011, 45% of Footscray's residents were born overseas, compared to 31.5% across Greater Melbourne (.id, n.d.). Footscray and the surrounding areas were also characterised by low socioeconomic jobs and low-income families. Whilst there was much celebration of the area's diversity, there were also ongoing problems with racism and discrimination, particularly amongst young people in the area (A. Hutchens, personal communication, August 30, 2011).

I subsequently developed a partnership with a Footscray-based organisation whose remit was to tackle issues of racism and discrimination amongst young people.² The organisation was youth led and employed one adult staff member who worked alongside a youth committee which made decisions, developed strategic plans, engaged key stakeholders, and delivered resources and activities for young people ([Name of organisation³], 2011). It was felt that the youth leadership framework of the organisation and their agenda of participation and cultural awareness mirrored the aims of my own research and it was considered that mutual benefit would arise from this partnership.

² The name of this organisation has been kept confidential in order to protect the identities of the participants within this study.

³ The name has been removed for confidentiality purposes.

In September 2011 I facilitated two “taster” drama workshops with the youth committee members to introduce the idea of a project. This enabled the young people to witness the values of participation and youth decision-making which were imbedded within the intended research. The committee members subsequently confirmed that the research project could go ahead and further liaison with these young people took place to plan participant recruitment tools and to develop the logistical aspects of running the project alongside the organisation’s other activities. This was a valuable process that enabled youth participation to become a core element of the project from the very beginning and which situated the research project within the spirit of the organisation’s youth leadership approach.

For logistical reasons, it was decided that the project should be a newly created program rather than using an existing activity or group of participants and I would adopt the dual role of theatre facilitator and researcher. The design framework of the practical project consisted of regular participatory theatre workshops, building up to a devised performance by the young participants and the delivery of a peer-led workshop alongside this. It was intended that the audience members at these events would be young people and community members from the local area. In the planning and development phase of the project design, the various stages were clarified by breaking it down into five practical phases: recruitment, the theatre workshops, rehearsal, performances, and post-project reflections. The project was intended to start at the beginning of 2012 and the original timeline for the project was 5 months. The partner organisation contributed funding for a workshop space at the local youth centre and also provided support throughout the project in sharing their knowledge of the area.

3.3 Collisions with Context: Challenges and Deviations

The project faced several challenges that diverted the course of the work and required modifications to the original plan and the boundaries of the project. The following section outlines the sequence of the research project as it unfolded in practice. This provides an understanding of “what happened” that can support the later discussions in the thesis. In order to clarify the information outlined in this section, I have included a table as Appendix A that details information such as project stages, workshop content, and the number of participants.

The first challenge was the departure of the staff member at the partner organisation in December 2011. This staff member was replaced by Melissa⁴ who remained at the organisation throughout the research project; however, she was not recruited until February 2012, therefore delaying the start of the project. The recruitment process was subsequently limited due to the loss of the relationships between the previous staff member and the local schools and organisations. Recruitment was therefore conducted by myself and involved speaking to key contacts at schools, community organisations, and youth centres. I found this process challenging due to the resistance I faced at some of these organisations and the lack of access I had to the young people whom they served. Flyers advertising the project were distributed and posters put up in key locations, but I was unable to speak directly to many young people. The Youth Committee also supported this process, recruiting through word of mouth and distributing posters and flyers.

⁴ Please note that Melissa’s real name has been withheld in order to protect the identity of the organisation and the participants involved in the study.

The first session went ahead on March 8, 2012 as an “introductory” workshop. Regular theatre workshops then began on a weekly basis, although participant numbers were varied and were often low or nonexistent. Establishing a core group was a challenge as some young people used the project on a drop-in basis, without a commitment to attending regularly. This hindered the development of group dynamics and creative ideas, but also prevented the commencement of the research due to the need for ethical consent forms to be signed. A core participant group therefore didn’t emerge until around the sixth workshop, consisting of Gordana, Christian, Sarah, Kim, Catherine, and Emily⁵. Numbers still fluctuated, however, and issues of commitment and attendance were ongoing.

The content of the workshops drew on a range of exercises including theatre games, improvisation, image theatre, character development, and devised theatre making.⁶ Peer-led warm-up exercises were also introduced in order to develop facilitation skills. During this time, two devised narratives emerged as key pieces. A midway performance in the form of a staged reading was planned for June 2012 and whilst there were several other smaller narratives and ideas that emerged, the group decided that these were the main narratives that would be performed. These two narratives were never given formal titles and were referred to by the group as “Bob’s story” and “Nora’s story” after the characters that featured in them. These terms therefore became the default creative titles of the work and they are subsequently referred to from here on as *Bob’s Story* and *Nora’s Story*.⁷

⁵ Further information about these participants is provided in the following section on page 82. Please note that the participants’ names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

⁶ Sample workshop plans can be found in Appendix B.

⁷ Further information about these narratives is provided on page 85.

The staged reading of the above narratives went ahead successfully in June 2012 to a community audience at Footscray Community Arts Centre. However, following this, Kim chose to leave the project. In July the project also took a significant turn when Catherine and Emily (who are siblings) were unexpectedly removed from the project by their mother in response to her concerns that the project was taking them away from their domestic chores and schoolwork. Melissa was able to negotiate that Catherine and Emily could attend two more sessions of the project in addition to a final performance and a last-minute performance was arranged to accommodate this. Unfortunately, before this could happen, Catherine and Emily's grandmother sadly passed away and the two young women were unable to return to the project. As a result, the performance was cancelled and following this, concerned about how long the project was continuing, Gordana also decided to leave the project. In discussion with the remaining two participants, Sarah expressed that she would like to continue, but in a non-performance role. However, Christian strongly felt that the project should continue and that there needed to be an outcome for the hard work that everyone had put in.

After further discussions with Melissa and the participants, it was decided that the project would continue with Christian as a single performer and with Sarah as the stage manager. Further recruitment did not take place as the narratives were deemed to be personal to the existing participants and there was a reluctance to include new participants who might change the dynamic of the project without having been privy to the initial devising process. Christian did at one point raise the possibility of including his brother in the performance, but later rejected this idea as he didn't want to include anyone else in what was an intensely personal performance. Furthermore, time was limited and it was felt that not only would recruitment take too long, but that it would also be unfair to ask new participants to perform a devised script without giving them the opportunity to develop ideas of their own.

The scope of the final performance events also necessarily shifted here. It was decided that *Bob's Story* would become the sole focus of the performance and I adapted the script for a solo performer. Performance events at two local high schools were arranged instead of targeting community audiences as originally intended. Both of the final performance events consisted of a 20-minute theatre performance of *Bob's Story*, performed solely by Christian, and a 60-minute peer-led workshop jointly facilitated by Christian and Sarah.⁸ The first event took place in September 2012 and was performed to a group of approximately 40 young women in Year 9 undertaking Studies in Society and Environment (SOSE). The second event took place in December 2012 with the theatre performance and accompanying workshop presented to approximately 15 students of mixed age and gender taking part in a leadership program. Following this, final interviews were conducted and a workshop was planned with the participants to bring closure to the project and to discuss the research outcomes. However, this was unfortunately unable to go ahead⁹ and as a result the project came to a close in January 2013.

In telling the story of the research, the difficulties that arose throughout the project are central to this narrative. The challenges, solutions, resilience, and ownership that emerged from these events defined a great deal of this project and shaped and moulded the experience, thus having a significant impact on the practical project and the research. Although I have chosen not to dedicate a specific chapter to a discussion of this, these elements are inevitably present when examining the outcomes of the research project.

⁸ The plan for the peer-led workshops can be found in Appendix C.

⁹ Please refer to page 112 for more information.

3.4 Participants

There are two sets of participants within the research: the core research group who participated in the theatre workshops and created the performance piece and the audience members who watched the performances. Although the intention was to record the audiences' feedback in the form of questionnaires, the data received from these were unfortunately not considered to be useful to this inquiry.¹⁰ The target participants for the core research group were young people aged 16-25 from Footscray and the surrounding areas in Melbourne, Victoria; however, this demarcation was later altered to accommodate a participant who was 14 years of age. The research project was otherwise inclusive of all other considerations.

The following participants made up the core research group and a brief context is given below for each individual. This offers information that supports the reading of the analysis chapters. Please note that the names have been changed in order to protect the participants' identities within the research.

- Christian was a young male who, at the time of the project, was in his early twenties. He was originally from Burundi and identified as having a refugee background. Christian attended the project from April 2012 and participated in the final performance events as the sole performer.
- Gordana was a young woman in her early twenties and originally came from Albania. She was an active member of the partner organisation's Youth Committee and was involved in setting up the project. She participated in the initial workshops and the

¹⁰ Please refer to page 106 for more information about this.

mid-project performance; however, she chose to leave the project in July 2012 following the departure of Catherine and Emily.

- Sarah was a young woman of Vietnamese background, in her late teens. As a member of the Youth Committee, she was involved in setting up the project and attended regularly from the initial workshops in March until the final performance events, where she took on the role of stage manager and cofacilitated the peer-led workshops.
- Catherine was a young woman approximately 17 years of age and completing her final year of school at the time of the project. She identified as being Sudanese and was born in Kenya before arriving in Australia as a child. She participated regularly in the research project between April and July 2012 when she was no longer permitted to attend.
- Emily was Catherine's sister and was the youngest participant at 14 years of age. She identified as being Sudanese and was born in Australia. Emily also participated regularly between April and July 2012 when she was no longer permitted to attend.
- Kim was a young woman in her early twenties of Vietnamese background. At the time of the theatre workshops she was President of the Youth Committee and before this, she was involved in setting up the theatre project as a member of the Youth Committee. She chose to leave the project in June 2012, following the midway performance.
- Melissa was the staff member employed by the host organisation. She was instrumental in supporting the work of the project and attended the workshops, performances, and regular meetings. She also participated in several research interviews.

- Lauren and Isabella were two young women in their late teens of Anglo-Australian and South Pacific backgrounds respectively. They only attended one or two workshops before discontinuing with the project; however, it is important to mention them here as they are briefly referred to within the analysis chapters.

3.5 The Performance Narratives

The devised narratives of *Bob's Story* and *Nora's Story* emerged as the core focus of the creative work and are discussed at length throughout the thesis. Whilst I played a role as artistic facilitator and director, it is critical to understand that these stories were conceived of and devised by the young people themselves. The written forms of the scripts were developed from digital recordings of the workshops which were then transcribed and edited by myself. The editing process involved weaving different versions of the devised piece together and moving sections around to create a sense of story. This did not involve editing in the sense of “improving” the young people’s words. There were several different versions of each script to allow for different numbers of actors and these were only intended to be a guideline for the participants. As a result, the rehearsals and performances did not follow the exact script, but the core elements of each story remained constant. Excerpts from each narrative are provided below and the full transcriptions can be found in Appendix D.

3.5.1 Bob.

Bob's Story became the primary narrative for the research project and was the core piece of creative work to emerge, becoming the sole content of the final school performances. Initially the narrative was performed by multiple participants at the midway performance in June 2012 but due to the loss of several participants, the script was redeveloped and was performed by Christian as a solo piece. The two final performances were also accompanied

by the peer-led workshop led by Christian and Sarah, which was centred on a series of questions relating to “what should Bob do next?”

The character of Bob is 17 and arrived in Australia as a refugee from Africa. The narrative follows Bob, incorporating other characters such as “Dad”, “Mum”, and “Sean” (a school bully). Bob experiences many challenges across the course of the performance related to bullying at school, family violence, and alcohol abuse. The narrative also engages with issues of safety in the local neighbourhood and the young people’s anxiety about their local community. The result is a feeling of isolation and Bob dreams of creating a better life for himself, both now and in the future:

Bob – And my dad’s drunk. And they’ve sent me to my room. So what if I’ve been crying and do you know what they say to me? Why don’t I listen to them! Why don’t they listen to me! They want me to be like them. But I want to be better...

Sean – Stop wasting your time with studying because you know what? You’re going to become nothing in your life. You’re going to end up like your damn father so you might as well just give it up. (*Bob’s Story*, script extract)

3.5.2 Nora.

The script emerged from scenes and storytelling devised by Gordana and portrays the moment a war zone becomes part of a young girl’s life. During the development of the script and throughout her research interviews, Gordana revealed that this narrative is based on a real-life event that happened to her and her family. Although not all elements in the script are

true, the story is significantly drawn from her personal experience and reveals a previously hidden side to her life before arriving in Australia.

The narrative begins when soldiers burst into Nora's home and displace her and her family. Fearing for her missing brother and watching her mother hand over the family's precious items, Nora narrates her terror in this moment and her uncertainty as the family travels through the war-torn land to reach safety:

Nora – My strongest memory of the war was the day it started. Although, it's not really when it started, because it started a long long time before. But this is the day it starts for me. This is the day it hits our area...

And then, he asks me where my brother is and I answer that I don't know and I realise that he is missing. My mother and sister come back to where I'm sitting and ask me if I know where my brother is.... My father goes outside to look for him and I see him, through the window, looking everywhere, everywhere, outside. Looking and looking and looking. But I remember him coming back. I remember that he couldn't find my brother. (*Nora's Story*, script extract)

The script was performed by multiple young actors (including Gordana) at the staged reading in June 2012. Following this event, Gordana chose to leave the project and due to the significant level of personal information and experiences that had informed the story, the narrative was felt to "belong" to Gordana and was subsequently withdrawn from further performances and creative development work.

3.5.3 Other narratives.

During the creative process various other ideas were initiated, the most significant of these being a script that was intended to be part of *Bob's Story* and featured another character, Jessie. The script focuses on Jessie's feelings about walking home through a run-down area in her community. Due to the changes in the participant group, the full narrative was not included in the final performances; however, elements of it were added to the final script of *Bob's Story*. Further creative ideas included a character who is bullied after telling his best friend that he is gay and a father reflecting upon his life at the bedside of his newborn daughter. Summaries of these ideas can be found in Appendix D.

3.6 Ethics

In accordance with university regulations, ethical consent for this research was granted by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee in advance of commencing the project. Separate ethical consent forms and information sheets were prepared for the core research participants and audience members, addressing the difference in these two roles. Furthermore, an additional consent form was prepared for individuals such as Melissa, who did not form part of the core participant group of young people, but had agreed to participate in research interviews and take part in the theatre workshops. These ethical consent forms and information sheets contained information such as what the project is, data collection, financial and time commitments to the project, and potential risks. For further information about the ethical consent forms and the information sheets, the original documents can be found in Appendix E.

Participants aged between 16 and 18 years old were requested to seek parental consent to participate in the research. The ethical consent form for core research participants

was submitted for variation once the project had started, requesting a change in the age boundaries of the project from 16 and 25 to 14 and 25. This was in order to accommodate Emily, who was 14 years old at the time. However, due to her young age, the variation also stipulated that parental consent was required rather than requested. For further information regarding the modified consent form, please refer to Appendix E for the original document.

Ellis (2007) states that researchers should strive to leave communities and participants “better off at the end of the research than they were at the beginning” (p. 25) and whilst Somers (2006) suggests there is a central idea that by “making drama, we are ‘doing good’” (p. viii), ethical practice must be an integral element of the work if researchers are to ensure that their “benefit” agenda is upheld. This becomes particularly important when work is being conducted with vulnerable or marginalised peoples and communities (Thompson, 2005) and an awareness of the ethical implications is paramount. I recognise that these arguments function within the core of this study and I have therefore carefully reflected on my own ethical practice throughout the project, subsequently positioning this at the centre of the work.

Christians (2011) claims that the “contract” made with communities when preparing community-based research is akin to a “promise” and I approached the project with this idea in mind. I offered a promise that genuine participation and consultation would be pursued within the research, that the multiple truths, perspectives, and ideologies of the participants would be valued and respected, and that I would continue to reflect upon these questions throughout this project. It is my hope that I upheld these promises to the participants and communities that were involved in this research and that, as Christians (2011) notes, I upheld these in action, making them demonstrable and answerable to the people who generously permitted my presence for this time.

3.7 Building the Methodological Framework: Reflective Practice and Action Research

In my search for the meaning of this work, I am reminded that the quest is not only for knowledge, but how we as practitioners and researchers justify this to others (Bundy, 2006a). When selecting the methodology, I was looking for a process that could speak about the research in a way that “achieve[d] credibility for the truth value of the work” (Bundy, 2006a, p. 51). I was also committed to choosing a research framework that could interact with the unique elements of applied theatre and which could “further [my] understanding by concentrating on depth rather than breadth” (Winston, 2007, p. 41). As such, the research methodology needed to function in ways that attended to the profundity and detail of the work, to “*identify and explain the impact ... rather than assess the extent*” (Hughes & Wilson, 2004, p. 61, emphasis in original). Furthermore, as the research sought to understand and create meaning from the experiences of the participants, it was critical that the methodology could engage with the core values of participation, democracy, and youth leadership that exist at the centre of my practice and that it “resonate[d] with the ethical commitment of culturally, socially and environmentally engaged research” (Kershaw & Nicholson, 2012, p. 2).

In consideration of these requirements, I selected action research and reflective practice as the methodological framework for this research. Whilst other methodologies were considered, these were not felt to be the correct fit. Action research and reflective practice were employed because I felt that they offered the most appropriate engagement with the core values of the project, such as participation, and were aligned with the practical requirements of theatre, such as flexibility and responsiveness to the creative process. This framework allowed me to function in role as both researcher and practitioner and enabled me to examine

my own practice, as well as consider the wider meanings of the work. I also felt that these methodologies best reflected the interactive relationship between practice and research and that they would work compatibly alongside each other.

The use of reflective practice and action research within the research design also recognises the extensive role of these within drama pedagogy. Taylor (1996) states, “for arts educators to ignore reflective practitioner design is to remain ignorant to the kind of artistic processes which are the lifeblood of our work” (p. 27). It is also widely acknowledged that there are several shared elements between applied theatre praxis and participatory action research techniques (Gavin Bolton, 1996; Cahill, 2006; Leitch & Day, 2000; Thompson, 2003), in particular, the values of participation, dialogue, change, and democracy that both models embody (Cahill, 2006; Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Lewin, 1946). As such, my decision to apply these methods within the research project is a direction that is reflected amongst a wide body of work within the applied theatre discipline.

My understanding of reflective practice was informed by Schön (1983, 1987) and his view that reflective practice is a way of learning about and developing practice. This was further clarified by Schön’s examination of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, a distinction that clarifies the difference between the intuitive decisions that are made in or during the moment of action and the contemplation or reflection that occurs after the event (Gavin Bolton, 1996; Bundy, 2006a; Neelands, 1996, 2007a; O’Mara, 2006; Taylor, 1996). Taylor also defines this way of working as demanding a “discovery of self, a recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction” (p. 27). In this way, reflective practice becomes a way of life (Bleakley, 1999; Neelands, 2007a; Schutz, 2007) that creates a sense of “living in the room” (Neelands, 2007a, p. 18) with the research, enabling practitioners to embed this process into the very core of their practice.

Schutz (2007) also offers support for formalizing reflective methods by stating that “we do not fully learn from it unless we make it explicit and utilise it in further practice” (p. 28). However, Bundy reminds us that, “meaning is constructed not discovered” (p. 53) and that reflective practice is therefore recognised as a subjective act where knowledge is speculation rather than truth (Bundy, 2006a).

The use of action research in the project was based on the original action-research model drawn up by Lewin (1946) which outlines the four stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Carr & Kemmis, 1983). Lewin’s four stages of action research are intended to perform as cycles whereby an “ongoing spiral of steps” (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1996, p. 94) loops the principles of reflection and action into a continuous process of change and evaluation. Interestingly, however, McTaggart (1999) argues that researchers should not be “driven to a slavish adherence” (p. 509) to the spiral model and instead should adopt more flexible approaches derived from case studies that are comparative to one’s own research. Dick (1999) argues that there are “cycles within cycles within cycles” (p. 3) and Thompson (2003) suggests that the stages overlap and the multiplying spirals continue without a clear ending. In this way, the research method can be seen to follow rather than dictate a method for bringing about change (McTaggart, 1999).

Thompson (2003) proposes a variation to Lewin’s (1946) original action-research model termed theatre action research (TAR), which places theatre as the research method rather than the method to be researched. A similar concept is also presented by O’Connor and Anderson (2015) who discuss applied theatre as research (ATAR). Reflecting Lewin’s model, TAR proposes four stages: the discovery of research questions, data collection, developing proposals for change, and later a return to the process to discuss the success of those interventions. However, the significant difference between the two models is that whilst

traditional action research data are to be found through conversation (Dick, 1999), in TAR the data and the eventual “action” can be understood as being the physical, aesthetic, and narrative dialogues that emerge from the theatre process.

Although this is an emerging theory, one which Thompson (2003) states “can only be made by walking” (p. 172), I believe it is a valuable approach and one that I felt was appropriate to incorporate within the research design. However, I found that it was a challenge to envisage how TAR could operate within the specifics of my project. The blurring of lines between the creative work and the research means that it was often difficult to identify which was which. This is perhaps the whole point of Thompson’s theory, but when this comes to the fine points of collecting data and searching for meaning within the work, it can be difficult to understand. However, action research is an emergent methodology (Dick, 1999) and as Thompson notes, the full potential of TAR will be discovered through practice and the ground must be walked before it can be fully understood.

The task of implementing the methodological framework was a sharp lesson about the space that exists between planning and practice. The moments of interaction between the artistic practice and the research methodology were largely structured by the specific contexts that occurred within this project. It therefore became clear that the methodology, instead of following a fixed plan, needed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the participants and the context, something that is further discussed throughout the following data-collection section. As a result, I did not employ the clear, delineated action-research cycles that I had set out to in the beginning, as these quickly became inappropriate within the shifting and fluid nature of both the creative work and the complexities of working within a community setting. Instead, I allowed the cycles to emerge in response to the project and participants as needed. Although failing to maintain fixed action-research cycles may be seen as a limitation within

this research, I feel that the ability to be flexible and responsive offered far greater value than that which it might have lost.

My intention in using reflective practice and action research was also to incorporate the voices of the young people, thus enabling a meeting point between my own thoughts and those of the participants. Whilst reflective practice often prioritises the researcher's perspective, I chose to implement research tools that would also capture the participants' critical reflections. There is no longer a "grand narrative" (Taylor, 2007, p. 12) that takes priority over the experiences of others and the researcher's voice therefore must become one of many. In achieving a holistic overview of the human experiences within the research, the use of multiple perspectives "help crystallize the rigour, artistry and trustworthiness of the findings" (Taylor, 1996, p. 39). By using this framework, it was anticipated that participants would be able to contribute their own perspectives and experiences, enabling enriched communication and knowledge sharing throughout the project. Whilst it was expected that this approach would contribute valuable research data, it was also hoped that it would improve the participants' experiences of the research and create an environment whereby the participants felt themselves to be valuable members of the research process.

3.8 Data Collection

Multiple data-collection methods were employed in this project and the following section provides specific details about what these were, how this collection took place, and some of the challenges that presented themselves throughout this process. It is important to highlight that data collection was carried out in negotiation with the needs of the practice and the participants. This is particularly significant as I was working with marginalised young

people so data-collection methods needed to be appropriate and sensitive to these personal and social contexts (Mitchell & Correa-Velez, 2010).

Another issue to consider here is not only how the data were collected, but what or what was not collected. It is important to take into account the people in the community whom the project didn't reach (W. K. Watson, Bell, & Stelle, 2010) and acknowledge the data that were not offered, such as withheld narratives (Hughes et al., 2012). The role of the practitioner's subjectivity in the data-collection process must also be acknowledged. As Ledger, Ellis, and Wright (2012) state, "to document nevertheless implies choice" (p. 165). Although it was my aim to collect as much data as possible, there were inevitably moments where a choice was made about what was collected and what was not. At times, this was in response to unavoidable circumstances within the context, or because of a sensitive situation where collecting these data would have been inappropriate. However, there were also occasions where decisions were made to prioritise one set of data over another, for example choosing to film the work of one person or group and thereby excluding other discussions and creations that were happening simultaneously across the room. As Kershaw, Miller, Whalley, Lee, and Pollard (2012) write, "all performance and theatre is bound by location in space and time, tied to limits that it cannot completely escape" (p. 66). This reminds us that the essence of theatre is ephemeral and that a researcher cannot hope to be everywhere at once. It does however raise important questions about how these decisions are made and whose agenda they follow. It is hoped that the multiple sources of data lessen this gap by providing, if not a complete picture of the research, at least a holistic one that allows the project to be viewed from several angles, "ultimately reveal[ing] more about the practices under observation than when subjected to a singular, homogenising perspective" (Pitches et al., 2012, p. 143).

3.8.1 The reflective journal.

Hughes et al. (2012) ask whether it is possible “to research practice without ever writing anything down” (p. 194); however, my own feeling is that I *want* to use writing in my research. Several researchers have commented on the disparity between the vibrancy of practice and the academic tradition of writing about it (Kershaw et al., 2012; O’Toole & Bundy, 2015; Pitches et al., 2012). Rather than seeing words as reductive in conveying the ephemeral qualities of theatre, I found that reflective writing enhanced my practice and the research, enabling me to process events and supporting reflexivity and mindfulness.

The reflective journal was used to record my reflections-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987) throughout the research project.¹¹ It consisted of regular written accounts of the workshops and other elements such as planning sessions and the final performance events. However, the journal was not only a document of records and details about what happened but also a space where practice was critically examined alongside deeper consideration of these actions. This element of the journal was an important part of the research data which highlighted some of the more complex and engaging points of the research. Reflections were also added to the research journal after viewing the video footage of the workshops. This is a process that is supported by the work of Dunn (2010) who states that, “video-stimulated recall is not a process used for analysing data, but rather is used as a means of generating an additional form of data” (p. 198). The use of video is explained further in the following section; however, my written reflections that emerged from these videos formed a useful and integral part of the reflective practice framework.

¹¹ Extracts from the reflective journal can be found in Appendix F.

Reflective writing also served as a distancing technique (Gillie Bolton, 1999; Bundy, 2006a) so that the data remained objective and reflexivity could occur (Bundy, 2006a). I also returned to my reflections after the end of the practical project and added additional entries into the journal. This encouraged further elements of distance as the writing came from different perspectives, one “inside” the research and one beyond it, looking back. Leitch and Day (2000) state that it is possible to “reflect in differing ways at different times” (p. 183). By returning to the research project with the knowledge and understanding that came from having completed the process, I was able to achieve increased distance and objectivity and generate heightened observations and critical reflection about the work.

I am aware here that the reflective journal prioritised my own voice; however, there were moments within the project where I was restricted or unable to include the voices of the participants, such as in the case of two participants who had to leave the project suddenly. In these instances, the participants’ reactions were lost and the journal provided the opportunity to articulate these moments in some way, even if this was not fully representative. Recording my written reflections also enabled me to better cope with critical incidents (Craft, 2005) and provided a space where these thoughts could be acknowledged. In the reflective journal I could own my emotional reactions to the challenges that the project was facing. Reflective practice in this instance encouraged me to honour my own voice and enabled me to filter these difficult emotions through the journal, thus introducing new and surprising layers of data.

One final consideration about this form of data collection is the information that is missing or absent within the research journal. With each entry I wrote until I had nothing left to say; however, there are inevitably many reflections that are missing from these data simply because they didn’t occur to me at the time. Within the writing, I adopted a reflexive stance

and considered my own position and agendas at length. It is hoped that by drawing attention to this, I was able to understand why I was making these reflections and not others and begin to perceive what might lie in those empty spaces. Despite this, I am aware that there will still be gaps in my reflective writing and observations of practice.

3.8.2 Video recordings.

It was my intention to document as much of the process as possible by filming the creative workshops and rehearsals. The participants were aware of the recording each time and had agreed to the introduction of the camera; however, I was aware of the risk that young people can often feel threatened by a camera, or distracted by their desire to interact with the technology. Because of this the camera was set up at the start of the session, placed discreetly in the corner of the workshop space and then ignored as much as possible. Whilst this arrangement was successful in maintaining the participants' focus on the theatre work, it meant that the video data produced was not of a high quality. Participants are often off-screen, conversations at the other end of the room to the camera are muffled, and the gaze passively documents the space in front of the lens. As a result, the video data are intended only as a digitised record of the sessions and are not a piece of creative work in their own right (Ledger et al., 2012).

The digital recordings performed multiple functions within the project, contributing to both the research data and the creative development of the theatre work. As a source of research information, the recordings were watched in detail and, as discussed in the previous section, reflections were written from these viewings. The action of watching the video data also became a research process through which I was able to learn about my practice and develop my own understanding and awareness of these events. Furthermore, the video data

enabled me to collect fleeting reflections made by the participants. Some of the participants had English as a second language and literacy levels were varied. As a result, any written reflections were largely simplistic and bore no comparison to the thoughts and ideas that emerged during verbal interactions. Because of this, a verbal framework was established with regular group reflections throughout the workshops and in-depth debriefs following the performance events. The use of video in the workshops captured these verbal reflections, therefore including these voices in the research.

The sheer volume of video data, comprising over 25 hours of footage, posed problems relating to how this could be managed, a problem shared by Dunn (2010) when she states that, “with more than 20 hours of these tapes to consider, how could I hope to complete fine-grained and detailed analysis of all possible aspects?” (pp. 199-200). I therefore made the key decision to transcribe only parts of the video footage, when the dialogue was felt to be particularly significant or interesting. This was a subjective decision; however, what I deemed to be “significant” was informed by the themes and patterns that had emerged from the personal interviews and the participants’ reflections. In doing this I was able to process the information in a way that honoured its content and usefulness but kept it manageable.

As a secondary function, the video data proved to be useful for the creative work as recordings of improvised theatre scenes were transcribed into script format. This meant that devised narratives could be secured for research purposes and that the young people could accurately recall their work from week to week. As a rehearsal aid, the videos allowed the participants to look back over their performances, helping them to make adjustments and develop their confidence.

It is also important to acknowledge the ethical issues of using video with young people. Moments of data were lost during the initial phase of the project due to new participants not having completed the ethical consent forms, and we were not permitted to film the final performances at the high schools. In addition to this, there were several moments during the project where sensitivity was required and the presence of the camera felt intrusive. This was especially the case during several sessions in the project where we had some complicated discussions about the participants' motivation and commitment to the project. Many of the participants simultaneously had difficulties at home and in one case, a participant sat through a session in tears. Although the camera was normally an accepted and ignored part of the workshops, in this case turning it on felt like an invasion of the group's privacy and one that would compromise my responsibility to offer care and support at this time. The camera represented my role as "researcher" and "collector" of information and as such had to be used with respect and in continual negotiation with the context.

3.8.3 Interviews.

In establishing a framework of action research and reflective practice, it was important for me to collect data from the participants. However, implementing sustainable reflections proved challenging within the context. Several participants struggled to commit to the basic attendance which the project required and asking them to maintain a reflective journal outside of the workshop times would have been inappropriate. During the workshops time was scarce, leaving little room for formal reflections and whilst discussion was woven into the sessions, this didn't always fully represent the participants' thoughts about the project. In response to these issues, interviews became the core element for recording the

participants' voices within the research project.¹² In contrast to the reticence about discussing the research themes in the workshops, participants willingly volunteered for interviews and these often generated highly reflective material and intense discussion about the project.

Each interview was video recorded, with permission from the participant, and later transcribed. Whilst I had originally intended to conduct several interviews of around 20 minutes with each participant, in practice the process needed to respect the participants' articulation of their time pressures. As a result, the interviews were longer than anticipated, lasting approximately one hour but I conducted only two rounds of these, one towards the middle of the project and one at the end. This revised structure meant that some data were lost along the way, especially in the example of the two participants who were removed from the project, as they left before I could conduct a second interview with them. However, the compromise of conducting fewer interviews meant that participants willingly contributed their time and there was a sense of respecting mutual priorities. In addition to the individual sessions, group interviews were conducted after the three performance events. I also interviewed the staff member, Melissa, at three separate points and she contributed to the group interviews.

L. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) state that "interviews enable participants ... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (p. 409). I wanted the interviews to achieve this and to offer participants the opportunity to speak about the project freely and to contribute their own direction as they wished. I therefore adopted a semistructured format throughout this process as "this mode of interviewing thrives on open-ended questions, human-to-human

¹² Interview samples can be found in Appendix G.

interaction, and a desire to understand rather than to explain” (Grady, 2007, p. 89). It was intended that this would allow “the respondent the opportunity to introduce topics of interest to her and to provide an insider’s perspective” (W. K. Watson et al., 2010). These qualities mirror the values that underpin the research project and as such, it was felt that this was the most befitting approach.

Prior to the first round of interviews, I prepared a list of open-ended questions that I felt responded to significant points from the project. However, mindful of the need to “retain significant room for flexibility” (Travers, 2008, p. 95), these questions were intended as a guide only. Throughout the project, I had found that the participants struggled to openly reflect in depth, especially when there was no supportive structure to the inquiry. An unstructured question such as “what do you think of the project?” would often incite superficial responses such as “fun” and “good”. Because of this, the structure of having prepared questions that probed into the deeper levels of the work enabled the participants to enter into a more complex and reflective narrative whilst still leaving them free to follow their own focus and direction. Throughout each interview I also introduced new questions from the themes that emerged, enabling participants to contribute further information and allowing me to probe more deeply into specific elements of a participant’s narrative. This opened up the opportunity for “unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypotheses” (L. Cohen et al., 2011, p. 416) and added rich layers of data to the research.

I approached the second round of interviews with a much more unstructured format, embodying the concept of a “recorded dialogue” (D. Kelman, personal communication, April 23, 2013). This was partly because I had a deeper relationship with the participants at this point, enabling a freer exchange of dialogue. This decision was also made because at the end

of the project, I wanted to create an open space where any final reflections could be voiced. I still prepared questions, but these were largely thematic and designed to open up large areas of discussion rather than pin down specific points. I contributed spontaneous questions throughout the interview, but the content was led by the participants and my questioning was placed solely to seek out further information rather than to direct and frame the process.

In the workshops, the participants had sometimes struggled to fully articulate themselves and they often appeared unable to explain themselves as much as they would have liked. In the workshops and the interviews, these difficulties became particularly evident in the contrast between the ease of discussing “what” – for example, a description of what had happened or how they felt about something – and the difficulty that they found in explaining “why”, something that the youngest participants found especially challenging. Whilst this can be attributed to their young age and a lack of critical reflection skills, I felt that access to language was also a factor. To try to mitigate this issue in the first interview round, I gathered the key words that had appeared repeatedly throughout the workshops, the young people’s discussions, and in my own reflections. These words were put onto individual cards and presented to the participants in the interviews. I ensured that all the words were understood and then asked the young person to choose the cards which most resonated with them in relation to the project. Each participant was also given the option of contributing additional words that they felt might be missing from the word pool. Once cards had been selected, the participant was asked to discuss their words and explain why these were important to them.

Participants became especially animated during this part of the interview and it opened up new areas of discussion by giving the participants a structure through which they could consider their responses. Whilst a participant might not think to use vocabulary such as *participation* or *leadership*, through this exercise they were able to articulate the significance

of these qualities. This process was incredibly useful for me as I was able to learn about the way in which the participants perceived the project and the areas that they felt were the most important to them. This also introduced new avenues of inquiry into which I was able to initiate further questioning.

Due to the complex social and cultural frameworks of the project, there were several challenges in conducting the interviews. Some of the participants were prevented, unable, or unwilling to give a second interview, thus creating a gap in the data at different times within the project. There were also complications in setting up the interviews and compromises often had to be made in order to gain access to the participants. For example, the interview with Catherine and Emily could only be arranged together (they were siblings) whilst they were at a community event. The space given for the interview was extremely noisy and distracting; however, it was the only way to arrange this with the two participants and it had only been possible through the intervention of the partner organisation. On another occasion I conducted an interview at Christian's home when he couldn't make it to the original location. This reveals a critical point about working with vulnerable community participants in that it was necessary to develop an understanding of their lives and an awareness that the research had to bend to their needs.

As a reflexive researcher it is imperative to consider the implications of the various decisions that I made in the interview framework because, as Grady (2007) states, "interview data is not value free, nor is the process of collecting it" (p. 88). A key decision was that I chose to interview the participants myself rather than asking a neutral third party to conduct them. This was done because I felt that the researcher needed to have personal experience of the context. This decision was also made because, based on our interactions within the workshops, I felt that positive relationships existed between the participants and me which

would enhance the interview process. Grady (2007) argues that “interviewers are generally in a hierarchical relationship with the so-called ‘respondent’” (p. 88). I therefore positioned the participants as the ones with the knowledge and me as the one who needed to learn.

Furthermore, employing a flexible approach and reacting to the needs of the participants led to surprising outcomes, such as Christian’s gratitude that I was willing to come to his house to speak with him instead of cancelling the interview. Moments such as this served to develop the connections between myself and the participants, engendering trust and enhancing the depth of the research relationship.

I am also aware that the relationship between the participants and myself potentially introduced self-censorship (Travers, 2008), where participants offered answers that they thought I wanted to hear, or failed to give truthful responses about negative elements of the project. In order to mitigate this, I clearly stated to each individual that there was no right or wrong answer and that I was solely looking for their thoughts on the work. I additionally made it clear that the interview room was a safe space for their opinions and that any negative comments would stay between us and would incite no judgement from me nor cause residual problems for the individual within the project. It is hoped that the trust between the participants and me, combined with the fact that I honoured these statements throughout all aspects of the project and the research, assisted their ability to believe these statements. All the participants were invited to discuss parts of the project that they didn’t like or that they would change and several young people offered negative feedback, either independently or in response to my questions.

3.8.4 Workshop outcomes.

Additional data were collected from the multiple field texts that emerged from the creative workshops, rehearsals, and performance events, including documents such as scripts, workshop plans, and feedback from the peer-led facilitation activities. This also extends to informal sources of information such as sheets of paper used to record ideas, notes that were created as part of the theatre games or exercises, rough descriptions of improvised scenes, and doodles, notes, and scribbles from meetings, planning sessions, and discussions. Photographs were also taken of certain activities and to record notes and ideas that had been written on fixed surfaces such as a white board.

These scribbled notes and seemingly random pieces of paper represent the spontaneity and fluidity of the theatre workshops and build a picture of the creative path that the participants travelled within the project. This is most clearly articulated by Zatzman (2007) when she states that:

Everything counts. Start documenting. Recording. Construct/assemble field texts from all you see. Collect ephemera: your RSC Richard III ticket with notes written in the dark of the theatre; a piece of University College Northampton stationery on which is scrawled the record of an unexpected conversation about housing youth theatre projects within strategic places that speak to the history of a community; even the train ticket to Northampton holds the journey. Each piece fragile, fleeting evidence of breath, of memory... (p. 121, emphasis in original)

It is this concept that these objects can “hold the journey” that gives these data importance, as it is this information that creates a window for the researcher to look back at the work. As

such, I embodied Zatzman's encouragement to collect "all you see" and have used these data to generate a bigger and more diverse picture of the research story.

3.8.5 Audience questionnaires.

An attempt was made to collect feedback data from the school audiences at the two final performance venues. A questionnaire was created which sought to discover information about the audience's experience and what – if anything – they had taken away from this. The questionnaires were a combination of questions based on a Likert scale (Walter, 2008) and open-ended questions that required students to write a short answer. However, I was reliant on the school handing out and collecting the ethical consent forms and for the first school performance it was felt that the teachers hadn't been able to dedicate the necessary time to this. Although all of the students filled out a questionnaire, due to the need for ethical consent, only a small fraction of these could be used within the research. This represented a minimal part of the audience's experience and was not enough to contribute effectively to the research.

The information that students offered on the open-ended questions ranged from being well thought out and reflective, to superficial and immature answers that sometimes bore little or no connection to the question. This meant that the questionnaires in general were not highly useful and when this was reduced to the ethically included data, the useable information was severely limited. Because of these various issues we decided not to pursue the questionnaires at the second school performance. Whilst this was disappointing in terms of the research data, the decision greatly enhanced the performance event as the time pressure was reduced, creating a better experience for the students and the young workshop leaders.

3.9 Data Analysis

When conducting the data analysis, I employed a process of first- and second-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). From the outset, I appreciated the enormity of this task and the need to conduct the analysis with rigour and care. As Saldaña states, “qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience” (p. 10). As a new researcher, however, I was acutely aware of my inexperience in negotiating the technicalities of this work. In looking for support throughout this process, I found that *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* written by Johnny Saldaña (2013) and the seventh edition of *Research Methods in Education* by Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison (2011) were extremely useful. However, throughout this journey I also learnt the importance of responding to my own instincts in handling the data.

L. Cohen et al. (2011) note that “there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data” (p. 537) but that “the form of data analysis must be appropriate for the kinds of data gathered” (p. 130). As qualitative data analysis involves making sense of the data through organizing this according to patterns, themes, and categories (L. Cohen et al., 2011), I felt that coding the data was the most appropriate approach. This would enable me to follow L. Cohen et al.’s definition of organizing and making sense of the data through patterns and themes and also allow me to “communicate and connect with the data ... and to generate theory grounded in the data” (Basit, 2003, p. 152). Informed by the work of Saldaña (2013) and Attride-Stirling (2001), I conducted first and second cycles of analysis that involved coding the data and then categorizing these codes into larger groups. This was followed by a third stage of grouping the categories into themes.

Before beginning the initial process of coding the data, I first considered ethics and the concept of “do no harm to participants” (L. Cohen et al., 2011, p. 542). I allocated all the participants a pseudonym and anonymised the name of the organisation within the data. In this context there was also the responsibility to honour and respect the meaning and context of the participants’ words. Because coding is “primarily an interpretive act” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4) with “multiple interpretations to be made” (L. Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537), I recognised the need to employ the same reflexivity within my data analysis that I applied throughout the research project and data collection.

I also considered my assumptions about the project, the participants, and the data. In my dual role as researcher-facilitator I had closely interacted with the participants during the creative development and the data collection. As a result I had awareness about the context of each piece of data and of the participants themselves. However, I was also reminded of the need to look for the “other” within the data (Dunn, 2010) and to search for the gaps that I wasn’t aware existed. I also considered the lens through which I analysed my data. As Saldaña (2013) states, “The act of coding requires that you wear your researcher’s analytic lens. But how you perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers that lens” (p. 7). This lens was informed by my own context as an applied theatre practitioner and researcher and also by the research questions that underpin the thesis. As a result, it can be considered that my analytic lens was composed of a variety of influences, although primarily those of theatre, culture, and community that relate to the intentions of this research. This position was also influenced by the qualities of participation, equality, and democracy of applied theatre praxis, which presented a reminder to search for the participants’ meaning, rather than following my own agenda.

In the first cycle of coding, I chose to code by theme as I felt this to be most appropriate for the data. I also chose to employ a system of initial coding (also known as open coding) using descriptive codes. I felt this to be the most appropriate technique as initial coding is an open-ended method which allows the analysis to emerge from within the data (Saldaña, 2013) and descriptive coding involves summarizing the segment of data in a “short word or phrase” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 88). During the first cycle I also wrote out analytic memos in response to thoughts and ideas that emerged from the coding process. Memo writing contributes to reflexivity and can become a valuable contribution to the analysis process (L. Cohen et al., 2011). As I wrote memos, these in turn became coded, thus incorporating these ideas into the data and the analytic outcomes of the project.

The second cycle of coding involved pattern coding to “collect similarly coded passages from the data corpus [and] ... assess their commonality” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 212). This meant searching for patterns and links between the data and grouping these into categories. Although this often meant assessing the codes for similarities, commonalities, or frequency, I was also aware that “commonality consists of differences” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 6) and that patterns do not just emerge based on what is the same within the data. Gläser and Laudel (2013) state that searching for patterns within the data is dependent on the analyst’s ability and creativity. However, Basit (2003) also notes that as the categorising stage progresses, the researcher should become more confident and consistent in their decision-making, a statement that I found to be true throughout this process.

I followed the second cycle with a further round of coding which involved grouping the categories into themes – also known as “global themes” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389) or “selective codes” (L. Cohen et al., 2011, p. 562). This process was similar to the second cycle of coding in that I was searching for patterns and links between the categories. As the

categorisation process had left me with a clear understanding and awareness of direction of the data analysis, grouping these further into themes was a relatively quick process. Whilst the first-cycle codes were highly specific and descriptive, such as Discussions of Culture, and the second-cycle categories were more general and analytic, such as Community Building through Representing Issues, the final themes were global and encompassed a wider sense of meaning, such as Representing Community or Ethics of Storytelling. Attride-Stirling (2001) suggests that the global themes must be “the core, principle metaphor that encapsulates the main point in the text” (p. 393), a statement to which I feel my own themes adhered. Following this, I examined the data, codes, and categories held under each theme to “verify and refine the network” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 393) and made any shifts that I felt were needed.

I chose to conduct the coding process manually, a decision that was partly based on my desire to learn the mechanics of coding before moving onto using software programs. However, I also decided to use a manual process as I felt that the visual and kinaesthetic nature of this responded to my own personal preferences for how best to organise information and develop clear and creative thinking. I find it far more difficult to process information on a computer screen, where only a limited amount of data is visible, than when it is laid out in front of me and I can see the whole view. Saldaña (2013) also acknowledges this when he states that:

There is something to be said for a large area of desk or table space with each code written on its own index card or “sticky note”, or multiple pages or strips of paper, spread out and arranged into appropriate clusters to see the smaller pieces of the larger puzzle – a literal perspective not always possible on a computer monitor screen. (pp. 27-28)

I began with all the data in physical, textual form (printed pages and handwritten notes) and began cutting these into separate units at points where I felt a new code was required. As I did this, I began assigning the descriptive codes to each unit with a sticky note and placing these on the floor. As patterns began to emerge, I placed similar codes next to each other, beginning to create a thematic “map” of the data that could be shifted and changed during the categorisation process. Those pieces of data where the code or category were not immediately clear were placed in a “no man’s land”, to be reconsidered at a later point. This enabled me to achieve the “literal perspective” that Saldaña refers to and also allowed this to become a dynamic process whereby codes and categories could shift according to what emerged within the data.

In addition to gaining a wider overview of the data, I also found that the kinaesthetic act of cutting the data into sections, writing out the codes, and placing these on the floor triggered a depth of thinking that would not have been possible had I been working in the two-dimensional world of a digital monitor. As a result, I felt that my reflective and reflexive thinking was enhanced. Basit (2003) states that coding, “is tedious and time-consuming when carried out manually” (p. 153); however, I found that the data came alive and I found a deeper engagement with the information. Once the process was complete, I transferred the information to computer so that there was a digital back-up of my physical map. However, I continued to use the physical bundles of data and hand-written codes and categories throughout the final writing-up stages of the analysis.

It must be considered here that respondent checking is a vital part of adhering to the responsibilities of the ethical researcher. It plays a role in strengthening the research as well as ensuring that ethical considerations are met by consulting with participants and ensuring that the analysis honours their views. After the data-collection period, I had provisionally

established the idea of a respondent-checking session with the partner organisation. However, when I contacted the organisation following the analysis process, I found that it was no longer possible to conduct this session. This was due to various reasons: some of the participants had disengaged from the organisation; others cited work and study commitments. The organisation directed my request a second time to the participants, but unfortunately the outcome was the same.

It was profoundly disappointing to be unable to conduct this session, but it must be understood in the context of the participants' lives. One factor that I felt strongly contributed to this was the sense of reciprocal benefit that had been present throughout the project; however, there was no sense of immediate gain for the participants for attending the respondent-checking session. I also felt that the time that had passed since the end of the project meant that participants had moved on from this and that they no longer held the sense of engagement and ownership that had previously encouraged them to attend the workshops and interviews. The age of the participants must also be considered here as a factor and it should be recognised that the attention of young people can be fleeting and that time management had previously been an issue within the project. Furthermore, the participants had been drawn in by the creative aspects of the project rather than the research angle and I can therefore understand that a respondent-checking session – although I presented this creatively – did not appear as interesting to them as other components of the work.

As a result, this inability to conduct respondent checking can be viewed as part of the realities of working in community contexts, where participants are often vulnerable or marginalised and their lives are complex. Participants cannot therefore be expected to follow a researcher's schedule or respond to their needs. These realities were also highly visible throughout the project itself and caused many challenges for the research. It therefore stands

to reason that I continued to come up against such complexities in these follow-up interactions with the context. In hindsight, an alternative option would have been to conduct the respondent-checking session with the staff member at the organisation. Whilst this would not have been ideal, it would have at least provided a secondary overview of the analysis. However my mind was on the voices of the participants and this option did not occur to me at the time. This is perhaps my inexperience as a researcher showing through and it is a lesson that I have taken away from this experience.

Following this I returned to the final stages of the analysis. Within the post-coding analysis stage, the core themes identified in the final round of coding are integrated to form theory (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Attride-Stirling (2001) notes that this next stage of analysis involves describing, exploring, summarizing, and beginning to write about the themes, whilst also returning to the research questions and the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Within my own process, I returned to the literature before beginning to write and I also conducted further literature searches in order to deepen my engagement with certain areas. Once I had positioned the literature alongside the data, the research questions, and my own interpretations of meaning, I began the process of writing about the themes. Within this, I also found that I had more analysis material than I could contain within a PhD thesis. As a result, I selected three areas of meaning that I felt were not only significant within the research but that, when woven together, would form a narrative that best responded to the research questions. Following this, I concentrated on these three key areas of analysis – relationship building, representation, and risk – as the central topics that I would continue to write about and explore. These areas have therefore formed the key part of my analysis and are evident within the following three chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 4

Making Theatre, Creating Contact:

Theatre, Relationships, and Community Building

This chapter is the first of three which present my analysis of the research data and which explore insights into the research questions. Each individual chapter focuses on a different area of the data analysis and there are links and through lines which bind these to one another. When these chapters are combined, they present a well-rounded examination of the research outcomes and contribute further knowledge and understanding to the field.

This first analysis chapter is unique within the thesis as it focuses on a specific area of literature, the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999). In this chapter, the research project is examined exclusively within the framework provided by this literature. The following two analysis chapters take a different approach in that they prioritise a focus on the research project and weave literature in and out of the discussions. Although this creates a shift in the style of the chapters, it is intentional as the approach in each chapter responds to the needs of the discussion and the research data that are being presented. In terms of this specific chapter, it is my feeling that it presents an original perspective on the research and it is my desire to *use* this different structure as a way of revealing new connections between community-based theatre and community building.

The following discussion focuses on the area of interpersonal contact and the building of intercultural relationships. Initially it may be considered axiomatic to examine “contact” and “relationships” within the thesis, as both theatre and community largely depend on the occurrence of both of these concepts. Indeed, when I began to conduct my analysis of the

data, I found that I had overlooked the frequent references that the young participants had made about the relationships they had developed with one another and their strong sense of identity as a group, searching instead for something “greater” within the data. Comments such as, “now we’re like a family” (Sarah, interview S1), conveyed the significance of these relationships for the young people, but created a difficult task for myself in arriving at meaningful outcomes. Likewise within the literature there is much recognition that participatory theatre cultivates interaction, interpersonal skills, and relationship building (Cohen-Cruz, 2006a; Govan et al., 2007; Hughes & Wilson, 2004; Nicholson, 2002; Prentki, 2009b; Preston, 2011). However, these qualities are rarely the focus of modern research, often commanding less attention than the more contemporary and avant-garde dialogues of the field.

The theme of relationships was therefore never intended to find its way into the thesis, making space instead for those “more important” areas of data analysis. However, when considering my data, I returned to the literature and rediscovered an area of psychology that I had first come across during my initial literature review. The common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999) explores the idea of prejudice and discrimination between different groups and outlines a series of conditions, or qualities, of effective contact that can potentially reduce this. These conditions are detailed within the literature as being cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). As I continued to read into this field I noted that the codes and categories from my research analysis corresponded to the conditions of contact for reducing prejudice, or intergroup bias, set out by the common ingroup identity model. I subsequently began to consider the links between the research data and the model and contemplated how using this as a framework could offer a structure for examining what theatre can contribute towards

community building. As a result my thinking changed direction. I returned to examine the data that pertained to relationships and began to reconsider it within the framework of the conditions set out in the literature. Immediately the significance of the data transformed and where I had previously struggled to find a deeper meaning, I could now clearly see the importance and relevance of these new connections.

The result of the above thinking is the discussion in this chapter, which examines the links that exist between the research data and the common ingroup identity model. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the qualities of the research project and consider how these correlate to and fulfil the conditions of cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms set out by the common ingroup identity model. The discussion therefore examines how, in fulfilling these conditions of contact, community-based theatre can contribute to intercultural community building. Furthermore, the framework provided by the literature is established as a way of thinking about and articulating the outcomes of community-based theatre.

This discussion becomes more significant when considering the range of research supporting a link between interpersonal relationships and positive community outcomes (Billett, 2014; Lev-Wiesel, 2003; Runyan et al., 1998; Townley et al., 2011). In addition to this, racial homogeneity has been found to make a contribution towards an increased sense of community (Farrell, Aubry, & Coulombe, 2004; Townley et al., 2011) and racially homogenous neighbourhoods have also been linked to feelings of increased physical and emotional safety (Townley et al., 2011). This is concerning within culturally diverse contexts and demonstrates the need to foster positive intercultural relationships within communities and encourage the continuance and sustainability of such relationships.

The following sections of the chapter therefore examine the research project within the conditions for effective contact set out by the common ingroup identity model. The chapter is structured to examine the research project in relation to each condition of contact – intergroup cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms. The research data are presented in this way to highlight how community-based theatre can be considered as fulfilling each condition of contact, thereby gradually constructing a picture of how community-based theatre can contribute to community building. Please note that the common ingroup identity model and additional literature that relates to this are comprehensively detailed in the section of the literature review titled, Reducing prejudice: The common ingroup identity model on page 60. Furthermore, this is part of a wider section titled Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Community Building on page 58, which also details literature relevant to this chapter.

4.1 ‘We Are All the Drivers’: Theatre as Cooperation, Interaction, and Common Fate

This initial section discusses the research project in relation to the condition of cooperation. This condition is seen as being comprised of the qualities of common fate and interaction (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1999), the difference being that common fate means shared goals or common outcomes, whilst interaction is task related and is understood as being shared processes (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In the literature, these conditions are seen as being critical in the reduction of intergroup bias because the existence of interaction and common fate enables the group members to begin “thinking of themselves as one (superordinate) group rather than as two separate groups” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, p. 73).

Throughout the discussion of all the conditions in this chapter, the elements of common fate and interaction are perhaps the qualities most obviously found in theatre practice. Within community-based theatre, participants' ambitions of making, rehearsing, and performing theatre clearly establish a sense of common fate. Even when a performance may not be the ultimate goal of the work (such as issue-based projects), there are often common purposes such as sharing creative outcomes, educational aims, examining an issue, or building skills. As a result, it's possible to understand that the intrinsic structure of community-based theatre often fulfils the condition of common fate.

In terms of the research project, there was a definite sense amongst the young people that they had a common fate and that this was directed towards creating and performing a theatre piece. There were also other shared goals such as wanting to examine community issues, educating other young people, and skills development. It was also significant that these aims were developed with the young people involved in the project. Whilst personal outcomes will have been unique to each individual, the shared aims were woven into the planning and facilitation of each workshop or rehearsal and also into the way the group approached the overarching goal of making theatre. As a result of this, all aspects of the project, including the theatre workshops, skills building, and the individual participatory exercises were commonly understood to be working towards these shared goals.

The theatre and drama techniques used throughout the research project can also be clearly understood as fulfilling the condition of interaction, as the very nature of making, performing, or participating in any kind of theatre activity requires a complex level of interaction. Even towards the end of the research project where only Christian and Sarah remained, there was still a significant level of interaction required between Christian (as the performer) and myself (as the director), Christian and Sarah (as the stage manager) and, in the

final performance events, between the participants and the audiences. The participatory theatre and drama activities that featured within the research project are therefore established here as being largely inseparable from the conditions of common fate and interaction, thus holding the necessary conditions for interpersonal development and the reduction of intergroup bias within their very nature.

In examining the specific ways that the research project supported the conditions of interaction and common fate, play emerged as one of the key factors in developing interpersonal relationships. There is a wide body of literature that examines play and this spans multiple disciplines such as theatre, performance, drama education (Boal, 2003; Chamberlain & Yarrow, 2002; Chappell, 2008; Dunn, 2008; Johnstone, 1989; Peacock, 2009; Schechner, 2013), psychology (Henricks, 2014; Palagi, Stanyon, & Demuru, 2015; Pellegrini, 2010; Piaget, 1999; Weisberg, 2015) and education (Else, 2009; Lambert, 2000; Singer, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2006). The importance and function of play has also been widely documented within the field of theatre (Boal, 2003; Gusul, 2015; Johnstone, 1989; Mattsson-Lidsle, Koskinen, & Nyström, 2015; Schechner, 2013; Winston, 2013; Wooster, 2014) and the playful nature of drama activities and games often stands out, something that is evident in the following statements from the research participants:

The games we play, the warm ups, the icebreakers. That's how we get to know each other and experience each other's behaviour too. (Sarah, interview S1)

We've done them games that we've played. When we've had the whole group there we played those games. Like the dating game, we got to know [each other], we got more familiar with [each other]. (Emily, interview E&C1)

It is possible to see from the above statements that the participants felt the games and dramatic play assisted in building relationships between them. It's also important to note the references to interaction between the participants during these moments. In the above statements, Sarah noted that it was during the warm ups that they got to experience each other's behaviour and Emily reflects on the fact that the whole group was involved, thus presumably creating enhanced levels of interaction between the participants. The link between play and interaction is also supported by Thompson (2006) who states, "play fills the body with an adrenalin that incites it to look to others: to engage more vividly" (p. 55). Furthermore, Donelan (2010) notes that "play helped to build a more cohesive community of diverse participants" (p. 31). The cooperative and participatory nature of the play experienced within the research project can therefore be seen as fulfilling the condition of interaction, thus connecting community-based theatre practice to community-building outcomes.

Furthermore, there is a suggestion that the purpose of play has the capacity to move beyond the concepts of interaction and the "getting to know each other" statements that are articulated above. Acknowledging the significance of theatre games as a form of play, Marin (2014) states that "the power of theatre games and drama activities can be harnessed to motivate dialogue among young people regarding issues of global importance" (p. 40). Chakrabarty (2011) also states that in moments of dramatic conflict, the exercise would transcend the idea of a game and become "a performance of lived culture" (p. 410), whilst Donelan (2010), who specifically refers to dramatic play, states that this "functioned as a form of resistance, solidarity, creativity critique, and intercultural and aesthetic meaning making" (p. 31). As a result, it is possible to understand the concept of play as a form of interaction and intergroup cooperation that not only engages participants in developing interpersonal

dynamics, but which also occupies more complex spaces of interaction relating to dialogue, culture, and the development of meaning.

It was possible to see the element of play occupying complex spaces of interaction in the research project. In terms of developing dialogue and meaning this was particularly visible throughout the initial “ideas” phase and the devising phase of the project, when participants were using dramatic play to develop ideas and themes and later, characters and scenes about complex depictions of culture and community. Play also emerged as a tool for the young people to initiate dialogue about issues within the project and to introduce and encourage other ways of being. A particular example of this was when Christian facilitated a warm-up exercise with the group, chosen in response to the low levels of energy and ownership amongst the group at the time. The game involved everyone creating a “car” out of their bodies to transport another participant across the room. Christian introduced more and more challenges as the exercise went on, partly to create humour but also to introduce a need for the group to help each other in completing the task. Following this, he used the exercise to spark a discussion about the problems the group was facing. Christian explained that the car symbolised the fact that “we’re all the drivers [in the project], there are no passengers” (Video footage, workshop 21). As a result the game, which superficially appeared to be nothing more than a moment of fun, when coupled with the discussion created a sense of solidarity and motivation amongst the group members, with each participant finding meaning within the interaction brought about through play.

The interaction and shared goals established whilst devising and rehearsing the theatre performance are also significant here. Whilst the overarching ambition in the research project was to create and perform a theatre piece, within each workshop participants also shared micro goals such as building scenes, exploring characters, and developing new ideas. These

elements created a sense of common fate alongside the mechanisms of interaction. Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2011) state that in theatre activities, “cohesion was simply this: shared response cohering around a given task – promoting learning and teaching together” (p. 85). The shared goals throughout the project created the sense of cohesion that Goodley and Runswick-Cole refer to, with participants focused on achieving the tasks together. The dual aspects of interaction working alongside shared goals can be seen within this project through the following extract from my reflective journal that describes a moment from the devising phase of the project:

They start to create the initial Jessie scene. They are collaborating well and all expressing ideas. It is a great example of the potential this group has and how the story is bringing everyone together. There is passion and excitement to create this scene. (Jennifer Penton, Reflective Journal)

As such, both the element of play and the theatre-making work can be seen as fundamental to the development of meaningful contact and relationship building within the group. Significantly, participants also noted that cooperation and compromise formed part of this interpersonal interaction. The devising phase of the research project created moments of dispute and disagreement that participants had to learn to negotiate. These points of complex interaction were articulated through several of the participants’ statements from different moments within the project:

At the start you know, when all the young people were coming, we had different ice breakers and we had the stories developing which we didn’t have a clue about the main characters and trying to figure out that and working as a team. (Gordana, interview G1)

Everyone has different views like for example, Bob, all three of us had different views of Bob. And normally there's one dominant person and the rest will just follow, but two dominant people and two different ideas, it's really difficult. So sometimes one of us will have to let go, just for the sake of moving on let's let go and if we can drop into a character fine, so why fight about it, we can do a different character. (Kim, interview K1)

First we were all separate and we all had our own ideas and somehow like, some people won't like what you've got to say and other people don't like what you say, but when we're a group we know how we are so we know how to [deal with this]. (Emily, interview E&C1)

We work together and we make decisions together to see what's wrong and what's right. It's not all just one person, it's a group and everyone brings in their own ideas. (Catherine, interview E&C1)

I think the activities helped us. Without the activities I don't think we would cooperate, if it was just one person talking and we were just listening, we have to listen to what they do, I don't think anyone would join in together, communicate. It's like school. But I like the idea of how you teach, how we're all together and we can all bring in our own ideas, that's good. (Catherine, interview E&C1)

In particular, the statements above demonstrate that cooperation did not occur only through the drama activities in the project, but that the framework of participatory drama and theatre also actively created an environment where cooperation and interaction were fundamental components. In addition to this, Catherine, in the final statement above, makes

the important distinction that the conditions of cooperation and interaction were framed through activities that encouraged the young people to respond positively, whereby they could become the agents of this interaction rather than forced, passive recipients. Christian's comment that, "we're all the drivers, there are no passengers" (video footage, workshop 21) also supports this idea of agency, suggesting that the young participants were able to literally drive the interaction in the project. The other statements above by Emily, Kim, and Catherine highlight the necessity of compromise and negotiation and also implicitly suggest that this was a positive element to the project and one which fostered the young people's voices and welcomed their diverse ideas.

Furthermore, not only did the theatre-making process require participants to interact on a verbal level, but the embodied and aesthetic elements of theatre introduced a physical and bodily interaction. The embodied engagement that is inherent within theatre enabled the participants to show these stories rather than just tell them. The ability to enter into aesthetic forms of expression "prioritises a way of knowing that necessarily involved the body as well as the intellect" (Perry, 2012, p. 107) thus embodying the sharing of information and accessing different observations and emotions (Marin, 2014). This positions the narrative and aesthetic features imbedded within the research project at the heart of why community-based theatre can be understood to develop meaningful interaction and build strong interpersonal bonds.

Within the research project, the participants found that the interaction formed by the sharing and aesthetic development of stories stood out as being particularly significant. Elements such as sharing stories and incorporating these into scenes involved complex moments of cooperation, requiring participants to enter into dialogue and engage with each other in new ways. As the following authors suggest, the telling of stories involves participants in mutual interaction, "requir[ing us] to listen as well as speak" (C. Cohen, 2006,

p. 78) and enabling young people to “‘put on the shoes’ of another” (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 93). The participatory framework of the activities used within the research project allowed participants to share their own personal stories. These personal elements frequently became part of the theatre-making process and also featured in the dialogues that followed. In particular, *Nora’s Story* and *Bob’s Story* are examples where the sharing of personal stories became entwined with the theatre-making process. During the development of these narratives the participants interacted through the sharing and receiving of stories and, later, through the embodied performance of these. Nelson (2011) states that “in the process of developing the piece, students shared deeply personal stories of struggle and overcoming with each other. Students identified that sharing as central to the establishment of community bonds” (p. 164). As such, the embodied storytelling within the research project can be seen as supporting interaction, the building of relationships, and community building.

The performance of *Nora’s Story* at the staged reading is an interesting example through which to examine interaction in embodied moments of storytelling. Marin (2014) states that, “by expressing their responses physically, on their bodies, the students are able to get out of their heads and express themselves on a deeper level” (p. 41). As *Nora’s Story* was devised from a real-life event in Gordana’s past, performing the theatre piece meant that participants deepened their connection not only to the narrative, but also to Gordana’s own experiences and identity. In this way, the use of story and performance within the research project can be seen as a form of enhanced interaction creating, “experiential and embodied ways of knowing” (Cahill, 2014, p. 23).

The element of trust formed through this interaction also became significant. In one of the research interviews I asked Gordana how she felt about telling her personal story and she stated that:

I didn't have a chance to tell my full story, my life experience back home, to a lot of people.... And I'm sort of glad that drama helped happen because otherwise I wouldn't tell the story, so that was a good thing. (Gordana, interview G1)

Gordana's positive feeling about sharing her story supports the idea that there were strong levels of trust and respect amongst the group that enabled the exploration of issues that were meaningful to the participants. This idea is extended when you consider that *Nora's Story* was performed at the staged reading by multiple members of the group, thus meaning that mutual trust was needed not only to tell (and hear) the story in the workshop, but also to share in the performance of this. The element of trust was also clearly articulated by Melissa when she stated that "through themselves, through innocent sharing [of] different experience or different stories ... there was a level of respect for what was being shared, there was a confidence amongst the group, there was a level of trust" (Melissa, interview M1). This is particularly significant as the development of trust can also foster an increased sense of community (Neelands & Nelson, 2013). For Melissa, these qualities also elevated the capacity of drama to achieve personal interaction at a profound level:

I think it comes down to drama is at its core, sharing different stories. In another medium you might have an activity based workshop or dance or something, where you don't necessarily offer something personal and in offering something personal you really are getting to know somebody else in a way that there is a level of respect for what they're sharing and with that comes a level of trust amongst the group. (Melissa, interview M1)

However, although the above discussion identifies different elements of the research project and how these have contributed to the development of relationships, participants also identified the need for sustained interaction to occur:

I think time is one of the mains, because you get to know someone a bit more and once you get to know more you get a bit more comfortable with them.

(Kim, interview K1)

Towards the middle we started getting to know each other because people came every session and we started building up the relationship. So we started to become family and friends. (Sarah, interview S1)

Although this may seem obvious in terms of how relationships are developed, it does point out an additional need, that periods of interaction must be ongoing in order to build towards effective and meaningful relationships and community building.

Additional data emerged from the project to support this view and raised some interesting questions about the nature of interaction in this context. At the beginning of the project several participants attended some of the sessions and then failed to return. During Workshop 8 two participants, Lauren and Isabella, who had attended one or two initial workshops but hadn't attended again since, returned. At this stage in the project, membership was still in flux (although less so than at the beginning) and the participants were therefore used to having new people join. As a result I decided to let Lauren and Isabella participate in the hope that they might eventually become core group members. Although several members of the group knew who they were and everyone interacted with each other in the theatre exercises, Lauren and Isabella failed to fully engage in the activities at the same level as everyone else and they appeared to become increasingly distanced from the work and

disruptive of the session. After the break they chose to remain outside instead of returning to the workshop, only to come back at a point in the middle of the second half. Their manner became increasingly churlish throughout and they never returned to the project, despite my and the group's encouragement that they should do so.

Whilst several other factors to do with personality and Lauren and Isabella's own lives may have contributed to this dynamic, it can also be suggested that the space in between their initial involvement and their return had allowed other members of the group to increase the depth of their interaction and move forwards with their common goals, thus placing these two participants in a state of disconnect and reinforcing a division between the core participants and themselves. Melissa also felt that a contributing factor to this dynamic was the fact that Isabella had adopted a leadership role in the initial sessions, which was no longer available to her after the long absence. Whilst these divisions were not created through anything that the core participants said or did, their common identity as "the drama group" had evolved past the point of recognition for the returning participants. As such, the level of interaction and the positioning of shared goals were in two different states and commonality could not be found by simply participating in the shared activities of this workshop.

It is worth noting that new participants at this same stage of the project did not appear to experience similar problems and appeared to be able to integrate easily into the existing group. This is not to say that they disappeared into the group's identity, but they were able to co-exist as new members, bringing their own identities and incorporating these into the shifting focus of the group. This can perhaps be explained by the idea that they had no previous perception of the common group identity and so walked into the project without this expectation. It must also be acknowledged that the ease of this process was facilitated by the welcoming nature of existing group members and that the incorporation of new members

could have been more difficult in a different context. However, the welcoming nature of the group also serves to highlight the example of Lauren and Isabella and thus suggests that the breakdown of this interaction was more complex than basic group dynamics and was perhaps due to the shift in identity of the group.

Further examples to support this can be found within the cases of core group members who had to temporarily leave the project. In contrast to the case of Lauren and Isabella, if the member had already established a relationship with the group over a consistent amount of time and become invested in the common goals and depth of interaction of the project, they appeared to have no trouble in rejoining after their leave of absence. This was exhibited in the case of Gordana who, after being a core member of the group, had to leave for several weeks to care for a relative. When she returned to the group, she became part of the common ingroup identity once more without a difficult transition. This also occurred later on in the project with Catherine, who had to take time off for exams. In the middle of this period of absence, she expressed that “although I haven’t been here ... I still feel as though I’m part of the group” (Catherine, interview E&C1). Gordana expressed a similar sentiment in an interview at the end of the project. By this point she had chosen to permanently leave the group and as a result hadn’t been involved in the preparation or delivery of the final performance events. However, in describing her feelings about the project, Gordana expressed positive emotions about the fact that there had been a performance and she saw this as a successful end to the project. This suggests that she continued to uphold the shared goals of the work and that she continued to see herself as an invested member of the group, despite the fact that she was no longer actively participating in it. In the interview, Gordana also referred to the remaining participants as “we”, stating that “we didn’t give up” (Interview G2), even though she herself

had left the project. This suggests that she continued to identify as a participant despite the absence of recent interaction.

The above discussion identifies that the theatre-making processes within the research project incorporated interaction and a sense of common fate into the foundations of the work. It is further suggested that such interaction was enhanced through the use of play, the development of narratives, sharing of personal stories, and the embodiment of these in performance, subsequently enabling deeper connections and interpersonal relationships to be formed.¹³ This is supported by Townley et al. (2011) who suggest that fostering a sense of community takes more than simply learning about each other or knowing about the different groups. Likewise, Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, and Voci (2005) note that groups need to not just learn about each other, but that it is “the acquisition about unique attributes of specific individuals that distinguishes them from other group members” (p. 285). The profound levels of interaction and “ways of knowing” (Cahill, 2014, p. 23) that came about through play and the sharing and embodiment of narrative in the research project therefore position community-based theatre as an effective method for fostering intercultural relationships and subsequently as a community-building tool.

4.2 The Same but Different: Theatre and Equal Status

The research project is examined here in relation to the quality of equal status as this is “one of the pre-requisite conditions for successful intergroup contact” (Gaertner & Dovidio,

¹³ The thesis acknowledges that the outcomes of this element of the work are not necessarily all positive and are layered with complex issues such as vulnerability and risk. Chapter 6, What’s the Harm? Theatre, Storytelling, and Risk, discusses this in depth and examines these complexities further.

2000, p. 97). However, it must be considered that the condition of equal status is problematic, due to the complex social and political hierarchies created by factors such as race, gender, age, and economics. Ledwith and Asgill (2000) state that community development “cannot ignore the political significance of identity and, therefore, its centrality to any notion of collective action for change” (p. 292), whilst Mayo (2005) also notes that community development must take “account of the varying socioeconomic and political contexts and cultures involved” (p. 95). The research project took care to build a framework of democracy and equality throughout the process, involving the participants equally in the decision-making about the project - an example of this can be seen in the group discussions that occurred regarding the future of the work after Catherine and Emily were suddenly removed from the project - and in the creative development of the performance, such as the initial devising of *Bob's Story* where the character of Bob and the original narrative ideas emerged from a participatory image making exercise, followed by group discussions. In my facilitation I also took care to treat all participants with an equal measure of respect and to establish a culture of fair communication where all voices were taken into account. However, it must be understood that status shifts according to the context and that there are dynamic social and political forces that will impact on this.

In considering whether the research project fulfilled the condition of equal status, the different ways in which status was present throughout the project must first be examined. At first glance the participants shared a common status as young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds, although there is perhaps a very different status in being a migrant than in being a refugee. Furthermore, within an Australian context, there is also a shift in status according to how refugees arrived in the country. This was potentially significant when one of the participants revealed that they had arrived in Australia by boat, thus connecting this

young person to the problematic term “boat people” that has been used in Australian politics and media in recent years (McKay et al., 2011; O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Rowe & O’Brien, 2014). It is also important to recognise that the group was multiracial and whilst the young people themselves did not deliberately use this to create or diminish status, the political impact and influence of race suggest that this may have caused unequal status within the group.

The implications of race and culture to the condition of equal status can also be seen within the external influences that were placed on the group. Siblings Catherine and Emily, who were from a Sudanese background, found it challenging to balance their commitment to the drama project with the chores that they were expected to do at home. The pressure from their family to stay at home to complete housework and concentrate on their schoolwork gradually increased, until their mother finally removed them from the project at a late stage of the process. Although all participants experienced familial obligations to differing extents, it was noted by Melissa that she had previously witnessed high levels of responsibility placed on young women in Sudanese households.¹⁴ This example can also be seen in the context of gender in that the emphasis on housework was so great because they were young women as well as Sudanese, thus creating a further point of complexity around equal status. However, within the project, there was only one male participant, thus creating a dominant female environment and potentially affecting status in terms of gender towards a female bias.

There was also potential inequality due to age, as the youngest participant was 14 and the oldest was 23. Language, accent, and physical ability were also points of difference that

¹⁴ Melissa had previously worked for a Sudanese community organisation and therefore had extensive experience alongside families in this cultural context.

may have affected equal status. It must also be considered that whilst external influences such as familial responsibilities had a visible impact on status, the participants would also have had internalised ideologies relating to factors such as gender, race, and age that could have consciously or unconsciously influenced interaction and status within the group. Additionally, it is possible to consider equal status in terms of access to the project and the invisible group of young people who may have been prevented from participating by factors such as geography, economics, or social ability.

Furthermore, the project was facilitated by myself and supported by Melissa, both of whom are of Anglo heritage, well educated, and middle class. In considering status within the research project, the presence of Melissa and me implicitly created not only a hierarchy of leadership, but also one of race, economics, and social positioning. I believe that strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect developed throughout this process between the participants and also between myself, Melissa, and the participants. However, it is clear from this discussion that building equal status was more complex than simply introducing the framework for this within the project and that there were multiple factors, both internal and external, that continued to influence this.

Pettigrew and Tropp (2005) found that “equal status in the situation is effective in promoting positive intergroup attitudes even when the groups initially differ in status” (p. 265). It can therefore be understood that it is important to establish equal status within the context rather than in a wider sense of the term. It is also significant that this condition is at times referred to within the literature as “shared labour” (Gaertner et al., 1999, p. 389), thus further supporting the above point. The rest of this section therefore examines the concept of equality within the research project and how this was developed through the framework of community-based theatre.

In examining the concept of equal status within the research project, it must be considered that the meaning of *equality* can often become akin to *similarity*. The implications of this are particularly relevant within the culturally diverse context of the research project and the themes of similarity and difference stood out within the participants' expressions of their experiences throughout the project. This is particularly interesting in relation to the development of intercultural relationships and community building, as research has found that when groups are too similar, equal status may in fact exacerbate bias as participants take steps to become more distinctive (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, it is also suggested that when the original identity of groups is salient – such as when groups have different skills – that equal status can reduce intergroup bias (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). It should therefore be understood that enabling participants to recognise their differences as well as their similarities, providing that equal status is still maintained, can be the most effective way to reduce intergroup bias (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). This therefore suggests that recognising difference through the sharing of cultural identities plays an important role in building relationships and breaking down barriers.

The above paragraph is particularly relevant to the research project as participants emphasised the importance of sharing their cultural identities with the rest of the group. As Catherine stated, “that’s interesting, learning things from other people from other cultures. Since we’re not all from the same place we can share like what they haven’t got in that area” (Interview E&C1). Furthermore, there was a focus from the participants on the simultaneous state of being both the same as each other and also different from one another, thus connecting to the community-building potential detailed by the theory in the above paragraph. The quality of being the “same but different” is also supported by Thompson (2003) who

states that, “the moment of examining where individual actions find links with others can reveal possible points of connection between disconnected individuals as well as points of divergence between apparently connected ones” (p. 160).

An important aspect of being the same but different was that the theatre-making work enabled members of the group to contribute their own individual ideas and expertise, whilst remaining part of a collective effort. The theatre activities within the research project meant that everybody’s collaborative participation maintained the quality of equal status. No-one was separated by divisions of task as everyone was both simultaneously actor and spectator (Boal, 1979), creator and performer, storyteller and theatre maker. In the later stages of the project, certain participants inevitably took on bigger roles than others and participants such as Sarah elected to focus on a backstage role rather than performing. However, the democratic and participatory foundations of the practice meant that these were collaborative choices, arrived at by the group as a whole, thus reinforcing the equality of the shared tasks and reaffirming the positive group identity.

The significance of being the same but different was displayed through several of the participants’ statements such as: “We all work together. We have different minds, but we all work together” (Emily, interview E&C1) and “Everyone’s unique in their own way, with their own ideas, their own words, we don’t all think the same” (Catherine, interview E&C1). However, perhaps the most poetically and complexly expressed idea of this concept was offered by Kim, when she stated that:

I think it’s useful to look at these issues as a group because it does affect us because we’ve looked at so many characters that we all may feel, for example, in our workshop today we were talking about someone being in a detention centre, or a guy being on drugs changing his life for his daughter.

I'm sure we all felt, we all have our own opinions, but I'm sure we all felt sympathetic for the character. Different opinions but the same sympathy, the same feelings, we all felt for that character. (Video footage, Workshop 9)

Here, Kim identifies that the contribution of different ideas, voices, and creative expression was integral to the theatre-making process; as a group, we made characters and scenes together and each person not only contributed to that but was also entitled to have their own opinion about the issues raised, the artistic choices, and the characters' development. Furthermore, these discussions were welcomed as a key part of the collaborative theatre-making process, a notion that relates to the idea of “communicative democracy” in which difference is valued and disagreement becomes a new source of knowledge” (Young as cited in T. May, 2007, p. 157).

Participants also expressed the idea of equal status and difference through actively recognising and celebrating the diversity of skills that different people brought to the group and the positive impact of this on the work that was being produced:

We're all different and we all have different styles which makes us quite unique and very special. I think there's a very lot of talent, and everyone is quite unique. When you put them together it's like magic. It's like what can't we do or what can't we create? Everything's possible. (Kim, video footage, Workshop 9)

Like I think one of the girls is really good at acting, when you have a chat with her before she goes into the role she gets into character really well and another one who's really good at directing but he has such a specific way of

each character but the actors would see it different so think about who can write a character specifically, who can direct it. (Kim, interview K1)

The above statements demonstrate the participants' acknowledgment of their differences and the value that they found in embracing each other's skills throughout the theatre-making process. The participants also noted that they felt comfortable in expressing unique elements of their personality to the rest of the group, thus supporting the idea that being the same but different was an important element of the project. As Christian stated:

What I like so far is that even though we're different characters, we can bring our own self in it. As I'm chewing this thing these days now [a dummy he is sucking] automatically you guys have allowed me to bring it into the play itself, so I really like that, how you are allowing us to bring something that we are constantly doing outside of here and just do you. (Christian, video footage, Workshop 20)

This point is particularly significant to the wider discussion of how community-based theatre can be considered alongside the common ingroup identity model as a community-building tool, as Gaertner and Dovidio (2005) state that highlighting different skills and resources emphasizes mutual distinctiveness and is an example of how intergroup bias can be reduced.

The importance of cultural difference and the sharing and learning about each other's cultures during the research project were also highlighted by participants:

Through telling the stories and how we're from different cultures, you can learn [about] that ... it's good that you learn from people of different cultures and get to know them before judging them or anything. (Catherine, interview E&C1)

Culture because there's different cultures in our group and it's important that we respect culture. (Emily, interview E&C1)

Like in Asian countries we maybe have things that are forbidden and Africa I think they have things forbidden too, or India. So getting to know what they do in their culture plays an important part in getting to know them. (Sarah, interview S1)

The development of intercultural awareness through the sharing of each other's cultures is significant in terms of the idea of being the same but different and also highlights the importance of these intercultural dialogues to the development of relationships within the research project. The connection between this element of the project and community building is supported by a range of research. Stephan and Stephan (2005) state that "Allport emphasized the importance of cultural ignorance as a barrier to true intercultural communication" (p. 433) and Christensen (2000) suggests that learning about and recognising other cultures "gives rise to a feeling of fellowship" (p. 172). Preston (2011) also states that interpersonal and cultural understanding can improve relationships and transform inequality, thus linking the discussions about culture that occurred within the research project to the condition of equal status and the wider community-building implications of this.

Ahmed (as cited in Dennis, 2007) states that multicultural discourse is one where the stranger is welcomed as the origin of difference, rather than expelled as the origin of danger. In recognising and celebrating each other's differences, whilst also discovering shared elements of common ground, the research participants were able to enter into a genuine process of multicultural participation and diverse democracy (Checkoway, 2011). The emergence of these conditions also connects to the following statement by Hunter (2005), who notes that "while cross-cultural performance may promote the expression, representation

or comparison of one culture with another, intercultural work creates a space of exchange and collaboration that is specific to its context and its moment” (p. 147). The participants’ statements about culture suggest that by engaging in the participatory framework of this theatre project, they discovered a space for exchange and collaboration, rather than comparison or competition, thus situating this project within an intercultural discourse. The mutual respect for culture within the participant group further establishes this intercultural interaction as one where culture was perceived as a factor pertaining to both points of equal status and difference. As a result, there is the ability to “understand difference not as a division but as a strength” (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000, p. 297), therefore enabling the participants to find both distinctiveness and equality amongst a variety of factors.

However, it is Kim’s expression that we all have “different opinions but the same sympathy, the same feelings, we all felt for that character” (video footage, Workshop 9) that I find particularly stands out within this discussion and which contributes a valuable dimension here. This statement accesses the participants’ sense of connection with each other on a most fundamental, human level. It was not the similarities or differences in culture, values, opinions, or ideas that bound the participants together in their shared task of theatre making, but the fact that they shared an emotional investment with the characters and the stories that they made. There may have been disagreements about what the characters did or said, the way they behaved, or the social behaviours that they represented, but the participants shared an emotional connection as the creators of and investors in this work. In this sense, the condition of equality comes from the fact that they were all cocreators and that they felt something for the work that was being made. Ultimately Kim’s comment highlights the most critical element of the being the same but different – that the participants had different minds, but the same hearts.

It is clear from this discussion that the participatory theatre techniques used within the research project opened up opportunities for “cross-cultural dialogue and exchange” (Hunter, 2005, p. 143). A sense of equal status was established within the group, whilst also creating the conditions for participants to express their diverse and individual identities. As such, it can be understood that the research project fulfilled the condition of equal status in accordance with the common ingroup identity model, enabling the development of interpersonal relationships and community building.

4.3 The Value of Each Other: Theatre and Supportive Norms

The final condition of supportive norms refers to the concept that “intergroup contact will also have more positive effects when it is backed by explicit support from authorities and social institutions. Authority sanction establishes norms of acceptance and guidelines for how members of different groups should interact with each other” (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005, p. 265). As with the condition of equal status, this can be seen as problematic due to the complex social and political factors that exist here. It is also possible to consider that there are macro and micro viewpoints that can be adopted when examining this condition. In terms of the research project, the host organisation provided explicit support for the project and presented “norms of acceptance” for intercultural interaction. However, in broadening the horizons of what might be incorporated within the term *supportive norms*, the organisation’s support does not necessarily mean that the culture of the wider community also provided this, nor on a wider scale, that the political structures and policies of Australia offered significant support to intercultural community building, or to the young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds. It must be considered that with the support of a local organisation or authority, individual and group change is possible, but that without the wider cultural, social, and political support, there may be challenges to sustain this.

A. Butler (2005) states that diversity and inclusion work must operate at different levels including both the development of social relationships and the capacity to influence policy. Whilst the research project had the support of the host organisation and the research will be disseminated amongst academic sources, the project did not have the capacity to influence local or national policy, nor build wider structures of support for the participants beyond the project itself. However, applied theatre (as the wider field encompassing the research project) has typically championed the benefits of working at a grassroots level. Whilst societal transformation may at times be the ultimate goal, the field increasingly recognises that it is a “theatre of little changes” (Balfour, 2009a; McDonnell, 2005), which contributes to a process of change as part of a wider scale of multidisciplinary action. R. J. Fisher (2006) also proposes that “subjective changes in individual participants can have transfer effects of public opinion, political decision making, and other policy formulation, because societies as social systems are comprised of interacting individuals who influence each other” (p. 45). These points reinforce the importance of micro-level change and the potential for this to impact upon wider structures of power and policy. As a result, the micro movements in relation to supportive norms achieved within the research project must be seen as important elements that can potentially create an impact both within and beyond the initial scope of the work.

The significance of supportive norms within the research project is therefore important to discuss as there is evidence of these being created and sustained by the young people themselves. As the project aimed to develop the participants’ leadership skills and encourage peer-to-peer mentoring, the support offered by the young people to each other became highly relevant within the context of the project. Furthermore, it could be argued that in the absence of extensive supportive norms from the wider political sphere, supportive norms developed at

a grassroots level are not only valuable, but become a necessary asset to culturally diverse youth projects such as this one.

In terms of the participants' own reflections relating to supportive norms, these predominantly concentrated on the support that they gave to and received from each other. This suggests that although external, authority-sanctioned supportive norms may contribute towards the sustainability of intercultural relationships, the aspect that the participants found most important was the internal peer-to-peer support. The project was delivered with a "strengths" approach to working with young people so that "all activities are directed at encouraging people involved ... to have confidence in their own abilities and offer each other mutual support" (A. Butler, 2005, p. 152). Despite this, several of the participants expressed initial anxieties and fears about doing drama, in particular the youngest participant, Emily. Later on in the project when Emily was asked to consider what aspects of the project had helped her to participate and overcome these initial fears, she stated that the critical factor for her had been the kindness and helpfulness of the other members of the group (including myself and Melissa) (Emily, interview E&C1). This viewpoint also correlates to the following statement by Noble (2005) who writes that, "the support was there for people to stand out before the audience and speak, knowing the cast was standing there behind each person" (p. 3).

Recognising the value of each other also emerged as a fundamental part of encouraging supportive norms and developing the interpersonal relationships within the group. Several participants performed in the staged reading midway through the project and following this event I ran a workshop to celebrate the achievements of the day before. In this session, the group's energy and motivation became exceptionally low and their participation levels in activities and discussion became stilted. In response to this dynamic, I introduced an exercise where each person wrote a message of complimentary feedback to other group

members, relating to their participation in the staged reading and the project as a whole. As they wrote their messages, the energy in the room began to rise as the group responded to the positivity of the exercise. In response to this event, I wrote in my reflective journal:

Everyone is silent but there are smiles and people making eye-contact across the circle as they acknowledge a message from someone. The smiles are genuine and real – that smile you make to yourself when something great happens. How often in life do we get these kinds of messages, even from our friends? I can see it is a boost for the individual people here and I can feel the lines being woven across the circle, between the members of the group, drawn by these little messages that bring joy and praise and ultimately bringing us back together. (Jennifer Penton, Reflective Journal)

The act of valuing the contribution of others and having others express your value in return, strengthened the interpersonal relationships within the room and transformed a difficult situation into one that was brimming with appreciation and connection between the group members. I asked Catherine, who had been particularly distant throughout the workshop, how it felt to receive the messages. She replied by saying “it makes me smile” (Catherine, video footage, Workshop 17), notable because this was the first spoken contribution that she had given during the session so far. Another participant said she would keep the messages in her wallet, whilst another was planning to pin them up on a board by her desk. Towards the end of the discussion about this exercise, Christian told the group about his reaction to it and how significant it was for him to receive this information:

You know how when you’re working with people for a long time and you think you’re just another prop, another person, like whatever, and you figure that no-one really cares what you bring. And honestly seeing what you’ve all

wrote, it makes me realise how, personally I don't value myself with what everyone just said to me and seeing it, seeing it like this, I'm just like it blows my mind. (Christian, video footage, Workshop 17)

The collective expression of each other's importance and value not only reinforced the interpersonal connections between the group members but helped to strengthen and expand these relationships and, in that specific moment, assisted with rebuilding a sense of community and a sense of togetherness within the group.

As the relationships within the research project grew over time and the participants began to know each other better, these moments of support became increasingly profound. This can be seen in the case of Sarah and Christian, the two participants who took part in the final performances and delivered the peer-led workshops to school students. In the rehearsal session just before the first of these final performance events, I asked Sarah to comment on the fears she had previously expressed about cofacilitating the workshop. She replied by saying that she was "really nervous" (Sarah, personal communication, September 14, 2012) and admitted that she hadn't slept much the night before. Both Melissa and I offered her reassuring words; however, a significant moment emerged when Christian began to contribute to this conversation. He asked Sarah if she knew "how amazing [she was] at making someone feel comfortable" (Christian, personal communication, September 14, 2012). He added that she affects people more than she realises and offered examples of this that he had witnessed from the research project. The interpersonal dynamic between Sarah and Christian was one of opposites: Sarah was quiet and shy and Christian was loud and projected confidence. By offering support to Sarah based on real qualities that he had perceived in her, he encouraged her to feel that the differences in their personalities and confidence levels were an asset and that Sarah had unique and valuable qualities that she was able to contribute. Cahill (2002)

states, “a sense of meaning is generated when a young person believes that he or she is significant and has the scope to make a difference or play a role of use or purpose” (p. 15). The sense of meaning within this exchange was enhanced by the fact that Christian took notice of specific elements of Sarah’s personality and in communicating this to her he made these qualities, and his knowledge of them, visible. This enabled Sarah to recognise that she is “seen” by others in the group, thereby raising her own sense of personal significance and communicating to her the importance of her ongoing participation within the project.

After the performance, Christian offered further support to Sarah, commenting on specific aspects of her facilitation that he felt she had accomplished particularly well. In the de-briefing session after this performance event, Sarah admitted that it isn’t the culture of her family to give each other compliments and as a result she is rarely told that she has done something well (Sarah, personal communication, September 14, 2012). She also articulated the fact that it felt good to hear complimentary feedback from others about the performance and the workshop. Christian’s supportive comments to her throughout the day become heightened when they are placed within this knowledge, and the impact of this support and the enhanced interpersonal relationships that developed as a result should not be underestimated.

As this concept of support has been identified as a critical aspect of developing both a common group identity and interpersonal relationships, the examples from the research can be seen as part of an ongoing process of building and strengthening the relationships between the participants, with these moments of support contributing to the community-building opportunities within the project. This support was valuable to individual participants, assisting them to participate to their full potential and become increasingly comfortable with achieving

challenging tasks that are layered with emotional and social risks.¹⁵ The supportive network within the wider group also assisted with building a sense of community and helped the group to function more effectively as a team and within their interpersonal relationships. This increasing sense of ease and comfort with individual roles and amongst the group's surroundings can also be considered as a developing a sense of belonging (V. May, 2011), thus connecting this work to further aspects of community building. The research project can therefore be seen as fulfilling elements of the condition of supportive norms and this support achieved a range of positive outcomes towards the development of interpersonal relationships, community building, sense of personal achievement, and belonging.

4.4 Conclusion

In examining the research project in relation to the four conditions of the common ingroup identity model – cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms – it has been possible to see that there is an inherent connection between aspects of the research project (and the practice of community-based theatre that was at the centre of this) and these conditions. The participants' expression of elements discussed throughout this chapter, such as collaboration, cooperation, compromise, ownership and agency, sharing performance work with other young people, inclusivity, support, sharing cultural identities, and being the same but different can be seen to connect these qualities of community-based theatre with those required by the common ingroup identity model. As a result, it is possible to suggest that the research project, and in a wider sense community-based theatre, fulfils the necessary

¹⁵ These risks will be fully examined in Chapter 6, What's the Harm? Theatre, Storytelling, and Risk.

conditions set out by the model, thus positioning this work as a form of intercultural community building and providing a framework for clear and tangible ways to articulate this.

Furthermore, it is suggested within this chapter that the emergence of these qualities occurred as a result of embodied engagement with theatrical methods such as play, storytelling, and performance. It is therefore posited that it was this interaction with the embodied, aesthetic, and narrative components of the project that enabled participants to move beyond a simple form of meaningful contact and which offered enhanced possibilities for interaction and the establishment of common goals, equal status, and supportive norms throughout the project. As a result, the participants were able to develop qualities such as trust, respect, and connection with each other, leading to depth within their relationships and group identity. This process also enabled complex intercultural and interpersonal dialogues to emerge, whereby participants were able to develop intercultural awareness whilst simultaneously expanding and sustaining their own unique identities. It is also suggested here that the participatory, inclusive, and democratic values of the research project offered participants the agency and ownership to establish, drive, and sustain these conditions themselves, rather than experience them as external forces. This subsequently supported the development and depth of the qualities that emerged within the project and also served to enhance the growth of relationships and a common group identity.

These conclusions are highlighted by Gordana, when she states that:

I think because I said that we at the beginning thought, it's just drama and we just do a play and that's it. But now it's coming from us, it's our stories, we are the ones who develop the story, you know. Seeing that and now it's coming almost to the end, it's seeing the development of the stories and how we have been working together. At the start we were like basically having

your support than each other's support in a way. We did have each other's support but not on drama as much, but now we know what we're doing and we know our roles and then it's like just getting to know each project and the young people. (Interview G1)

Here, Gordana illustrates that certain core aspects of the research project – and by extension, community-based theatre practice – respond to all four conditions set out by Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) in their common ingroup identity model. Through Gordana's statement, the development of narratives and the theatre performance can be seen as fulfilling the conditions of cooperation and common fate, whilst the development of mutual support structures, the different roles that participants played, and their common identity as young people can be seen as corresponding to the conditions of supportive norms and equal status. The significance that Gordana gives to the development of stories within the aesthetic framework of theatre and the developing sense of autonomy within the project, also reinforces the importance of these elements in extending this work beyond a basic form of the four core conditions.

The discussion within this chapter therefore not only establishes that community-based theatre can contribute towards intercultural community building, but it also clearly outlines a framework for articulating why this is the case and how this might occur. Furthermore, when this is considered alongside literature that illustrates the link between improving relationships and community well-being, it presents an argument that the interpersonal development that occurred within the research project can assist with bridging intercultural and intercommunity differences and can thus contribute to wider community-building outcomes. The core elements within the research project of narrative and embodied engagement offered opportunities for significant and meaningful relationships to develop.

When this is combined with other fundamental characteristics of the project such as play, theatre-making, and performance, it is possible to understand that community-based theatre can facilitate a level of interaction that touches upon multiple conditions to a profound extent and depth.

The thesis explores the question of what community-based theatre can contribute towards community building in culturally diverse contexts. In searching for this contribution, the capacity to build intercultural relationships, as outlined throughout this chapter, can be seen as a vital element of this work. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the concept of relationship building in participatory theatre has been assigned an auxiliary position within the literature of the field. I also have no doubt that the practical outcomes of the theatre project discussed in this chapter will be familiar to drama practitioners and researchers. However, by placing these qualities within a theoretical scaffold that examines the potential for these attributes to contribute towards a community-building agenda, these familiar traits of theatre can become part of a formal dialogue that attempts to understand why these are significant, what they can achieve, and further our knowledge about community-based theatre's role in community building. The interdisciplinary connections discussed in this chapter are also exciting as they reveal new pathways between theory and practice – both in terms of theatre research and that on the side of the common ingroup identity model. This also establishes the opportunity for further work to be carried out in this area, particularly in using the common ingroup identity model to further examine the impact of theatre on reducing prejudice and developing positive intercultural relationships.

Chapter 5

‘Screaming But You Just Don’t Hear Their Voice’:

Theatre, Community, and Representation

If the previous chapter can be thought of as examining how theatre engages across and between communities, then this chapter can be seen as reflecting upon theatre in terms of how it speaks about, to, and within community. In my initial conceptions of the research project, part of my intention was to examine the potential for this work to create opportunities for social inclusion and cohesion within communities that experience intercultural tensions. The previous chapter has presented the idea that engagement in theatre programs can support the development of intercultural relationships, thus linking the research findings to the primary research question. However, as Salverson (2008) states,

It is no longer enough (if it ever was) to assume that theatre, by its very nature, is about connections; rather it is the task of those who create performance that engages with risky stories, and the people who have lived them, to articulate the nature of that contact. (p. 247)

This statement reminds me that theatre is inherently about storytelling and it is these stories that can provide the richness of voice and experience that is present (and often unheard) within communities. My vision and expectations for the research were therefore not just that the process of theatre itself would develop the capacity for inclusion and community building, but rather that it would be the participants’ critical engagement with issues pertaining to culture, race, community, and identity, as part of the theatre-making and performance process, that would develop intercultural dialogues and peer-to-peer education.

In addition to my own vision for the creative process, the community partnership organisation hosting the project and the young people involved in the youth consultation workshops also voiced a desire to examine issues such as racism, discrimination, and cultural awareness, which are significant to multicultural young people both in wider society and in the local area within Melbourne's western suburbs.

Prior to the commencement of the project, I had imagined that these themes would emerge as performance narratives that explored the young people's experiences of these issues within multicultural communities. I had also assumed that there would be an overarching message that leant towards creating a more positive and inclusive society. The project itself challenged and disrupted many of my prior assumptions and this notion of how the themes were to manifest within performance narratives was no exception. Whilst the themes of community, culture, race, and identity featured strongly throughout the project, rather than examining intercultural or multicultural society, the young participants used these themes to illuminate their lives in two definitive ways: to reveal their deeply personal and sensitive stories and to depict the issues that they saw within their own cultural communities.

The outcome of this was that the young people created narratives about their own cultures and communities, rather than discussing the issues that existed between cultures and communities. In many ways, these performance narratives did still open up avenues for intercultural dialogues and the development of cultural awareness. However, the performance narratives primarily created opportunities for the young participants to create and perform accounts from their own lives, thus portraying representations of both community and self and furthermore building critical dialogues with and about community.

In this chapter I examine the meaning of the representations of community and self that emerged from the research project and I consider their relevance in relation to the research questions. When the points in the above paragraph are considered alongside the words of Hunter (2005), who states that, “projects engage participants in questioning perceptions of self and community” (p. 154), it is possible to place the research findings described in this chapter within a wider conversation about community-based theatre. Furthermore, it is expected that this discussion will contribute towards a more complete awareness of the outcomes for both participants and communities involved in this work.

This chapter reflects upon *Bob’s Story*, the primary narrative that was developed within the research project, and the secondary narrative, *Nora’s Story*, as a means to examine the representations made throughout the research project. Further information about these narratives is detailed in the Performance Narratives section of the Methodology on page 85 and the full scripts can be found in Appendix D. The initial devised scenes of *Bob’s Story* took place in several workshops where only Christian, Catherine, and Emily were present. All three of these young people identified as being African or African Australian and the narrative came to embody many of the issues that these young people felt were prevalent in their local African communities. In addition to this, Christian also revealed that several elements of the story – such as domestic violence – were based on personal experiences. As such, this narrative became highly significant for its dual role, representing sensitive community issues and additionally acting as a vehicle for personal storytelling. Despite not being part of the final performance events, *Nora’s Story* is also highly interesting within the context of this chapter as it presents a significant example of personal storytelling and representations of self, presented through the fictional world created in theatre.

5.1 Representing Community: Narratives of Exclusion

As discussed in the literature review, there is much research surrounding community-based theatre practice which argues that the dramatic paradigm offers an opportunity for communities to redefine their narratives and to reimagine their realities, thereby creating new visions of community and community action (Beswick, 2011; Cahill, 2006, 2010; Govan et al., 2007; T. May, 2007; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). As T. May writes, “theatre functions as a site of collective dreaming where a seemingly impossible future might be envisioned” (p. 162). However, van Erven (2001) reminds us that community-based theatre avoids being labelled or pigeonholed due to the diversity of its creative methods. Whilst it is important to recognise that “the efficacy of much community-based theatre is built on the understanding that participating in drama enables participants’ own narratives to be represented, reframed, rewritten and re-interpreted in ways which challenge cultural orthodoxies” (Govan et al., 2007, p. 73), as practitioners and researchers we must consider that these representations and challenges can present themselves in a variety of different ways and with very different intentions.

Within the context of the research project, *Bob’s Story* emerged not as a reenvisioning or reimagining of a better future, but rather as direct representations of social issues such as domestic violence, social isolation, and alcohol abuse. Cahill strongly asserts (2006, 2008, 2010) that problem-revealing narratives in the absence of a “re-classification, re-imagining or re-storying” (Cahill, 2012, p. 422), will not only fail to “generate the possibility of change” (Cahill, 2006, p. 67), but can “lead to passivity and resignation.... be disempowering, inadvertently generating a sense of an inevitable outcome” (Cahill, 2006, p. 68). The final peer-led workshops asked the audiences to imagine a better future for Bob and were thus key in averting the concerns raised by Cahill and in redefining Bob’s “inevitable outcome”.

However, whilst the reimagining of Bob's future enabled audiences to reframe and reinterpret community narratives, thus engaging with community building and the potential for change, the negative dialogue developed by the participants within the core body of the narrative must be also critically considered. For the participants who were involved in the theatre-making process, Bob's narrative was the story that they chose to focus on, devising scenes that examined his reality in the present and offering problematized visions of community as it is now, rather than as it was or could be. Although there was a strong desire from these participants that their performance work would have an impact of positive change within their community, their desire to pursue a narrative based on stories of exclusion and isolation suggests that the voice they wanted to portray, the reality they wanted to define (rather than redefine), was less about reimagining the future and more about bearing witness to those specific community issues.

The concept of bearing witness to the issues of the present, challenges the literature that advocates the purpose of community-based theatre as being to redefine and reimagine community narratives. However, in turning to theoretical frameworks from social change and community development discourses, there is a key acknowledgment that before the future can be defined (or redefined), identifying the problem must be an integral step at the beginning of the change process. The model of communication for social change (CFSC) (Baú, 2014; Figueroa et al., 2002; Reardon, 2003), that is discussed within the Literature Review on page 51 identifies that the "recognition of a problem" is the primary stage of the development cycle. As Figueroa et al. state, "this stage is so fundamental that it is unlikely that any process would be implemented before there is a basic recognition of the problem" (p. 16). As such, Bob's narrative can be perceived as identifying and raising awareness of the issues that these young people perceived within their communities; the role of

community-based theatre here, in speaking to community and initiating dialogue, can therefore be understood to be engaging in a process of community building and change. Furthermore, Figueroa et al. also state that “once a community has passed through the previous stages [such as identifying the problem] it would be ready to plan *where* it wants to be in the future ... and to figure out the ways for getting there” (p. 18, emphasis in original). In this respect, the participants’ agenda of building a narrative that exposes negative depictions of community can be understood to provide a critical link between the social issues experienced by the community and the potential solutions, or reimagining of the future, that were explored within the peer-led workshops.

When considering the theatre piece as a representation of community issues and as a contribution towards community building, it is critical to carefully examine the processes that contributed towards creating the “negative” narrative and the significance of this for the participants. In the context of this project, these dialogues are particularly interesting as Bob was created towards the beginning of the project by a group consisting solely of African young people. Up until this point, the research participants had been culturally and racially diverse and whilst various themes relating to community, culture, and identity had been discussed through the devising process, these had touched upon aspects relating to wider society, rather than to specific cultural interactions. The workshops involving the three young African participants who created Bob – Christian, Catherine, and Emily – thereby facilitated an opportunity for them to talk specifically about their own culture together. Once they agreed that Bob was an African character, there emerged a dialogue between the story-building and expressions of their own lives about what it meant to be African, the challenges

of dual identity as African Australians, and the social issues that exist in their African communities.¹⁶

During the workshops where these discussions took place, the young people reflected upon the story of Bob and the experiences that he was going through and they entered into an explicit dialogue about comparative issues within their own African communities. As the story grew and the challenges that Bob was facing were increasingly revealed, the young people expressed their recognition and perception of these issues and their experiences within their real-life communities. Equally, as the participants talked about the issues present within their African communities, similar problems in Bob's life began to emerge. Personal stories were also layered into this dialogue and the young people's individual experiences were placed alongside the group's collective narratives. Whilst Thompson (2003) states that the "ideal version of [the applied theatre] process would be that from the stories come the issues and not vice versa" (p. 161), I believe it would be impossible to separate the two things within this context. Although the initial work was born out of the story that the group had

¹⁶ I have chosen to use the term *African* here as this is the word that the young participants used to describe themselves and their communities within this workshop. I do not wish to homogenise Africa and I am acutely aware that the culture, religion, language, geography, and society of African countries are hugely diverse, as are the experiences of the African peoples. The young people referred to here were from various backgrounds: Burundian, Kenyan-born Sudanese, and Australian-born Sudanese. As a result, their African identity and their local communities were different from one another. However, they found a common bond in "being African" and this was how they chose to refer to themselves and their culture within this context. The character Bob was also identified as African by these young people as they mutually felt that his specific heritage was not important, just that he was African. My perception is that this was done so that Bob could stand as a character that was "for" all of them and with whom each participant could continue to identify, regardless of his specific African heritage.

created, it soon became a synergetic process of creative work and personal discussion, both story and dialogue feeding into the evolution of the theatre making thus creating a “representational space” that existed somewhere “between the real and the imaginary” (Beswick, 2011, p. 424).

Around the time of these workshops, during the devising and rehearsing phase and prior to the first midway performance of the theatre pieces, I watched a performance extract and discussion by the Flemington Theatre Group (Flemington Theatre Group and Kelman, 2012), a performance ensemble of almost exclusively African young people. As part of their manifesto, they explained their desire to subvert the negative stereotypes surrounding African young people and to portray positive messages about what it means to be African. This was in stark contrast to the work that my participants were creating and the messages that were being generated in our theatre making. Ackroyd (2000) states that “we need to ensure that our practice comprises more than simulation exercises and role play, that it is truly reflective, and that we debate the purposes of what we are doing” (p. 6). I desired to make a piece of work that embodied these qualities and although I wasn’t searching to replicate the work of the Flemington Theatre Group, I did want to ensure that we were making a piece of theatre that was dialogic and reflective and which would uphold the community-building principles behind the work. Returning to the project with this in mind, I approached Emily and Catherine (Christian was temporarily absent from the project) and asked them if the work we were making and the messages we were communicating were the ones that they wanted to convey. Rather than asking them to change the narrative, I wanted to be sure that they had considered the implications of creating and performing negative representations of community and to ensure that they were creating the story that they wanted to tell.

I was met with aggressive resistance to the idea that we should change the narrative in any way, or that the performance might convey specific attitudes about their communities. When I pushed them on the subject, they responded with the idea that we were “just telling a story” and that the negative aspects of the play referred to family life rather than to culture or community. Hunter (2008) states that, “what one person perceives as aggression might be another’s attempt to assert personal power and identity” (p. 11), a statement which I believe rings true in this context. Inevitably, there was a myriad of power structures that were being navigated among the three of us. I, as the white, educated, and nonmarginalised group leader, was essentially challenging these two young Sudanese women to expose themselves by confirming that Bob’s narratives were related to their personal views about sensitive community topics, and in particular, ones which would typically remain hidden from outsider’s eyes. Salverson (2008) makes a poignant comment on a situation from her own work, which confirms the complexity of interactions such as this and supports my perceptions about the reasons behind these young women’s reaction to my questions: “She would be within her rights, I think, to explain nothing, to retain her privacy and not expose her vulnerable relationship with the story she is trying to tell” (p. 250). Salverson’s statement acknowledges that the telling of sensitive narratives places the participant in a challenging position where “hiding” behind the idea of “just a story” can create a space whereby the story can be revealed.

Although the discussion during the theatre-making process had already connected Bob’s narrative with the community themes, my questions were perhaps too deliberate in building the bridge between the fictional world and the real one, making the journey across the bridge too vulnerable and too exposed for these participants. Instead, denial was their best outcome – enabling them to support the narrative, without admitting its true nature. However,

the symbiotic relationship between the fictional story and the real-life discussion meant that the narrative was far from being just a story, an idea which can be seen as being supported by the participants' impassioned rejection of any changes to the narrative. Furthermore, in their joint research interview which was conducted shortly after this discussion, these participants expressed strong views that the play itself carried significant community-building messages that were important for them as young people to voice: "I think people have just added in what they'd like to fight for.... What they've seen that's not right and what they want to change" (Catherine, interview E&C1); "I got to be a character and I got to talk about issues ... it was good" (Emily, interview E&C1). This negates the concept that they perceived the narrative as just a story and, although they didn't reconnect the play's themes back to their African communities in these interviews, the dialogical context of the character and story suggests that these connections were an intrinsic quality of the narrative.

The body of literature on storytelling, as discussed in the literature review, supports the idea that "narrative reveals and constructs social and cultural values" (Govan et al., 2007, pp. 74-75) and acknowledges that "stories are a key method of knowledge construction within the tradition of applied theatre" (Cahill, 2014, p. 29), thereby further rejecting the concept of just a story. Little and Froggett (2010) also recognise that storytelling is a "mental process of organising experience which is in a meaning driven, reciprocally constituting relationship with culture. It is central to how people construct and understand their experiences" (p. 459). Cohen-Cruz (2005) describes storytelling as a means of expressing the "authority of experience" (p. 129), whilst T. May (2007) also argues that story is the mechanism through which a community can access its "total social knowledge" (p. 157).

When considering these statements in relation to my own research project, it is critical to recall the context in which Bob was created: drawing stories from inside the young

people's own experiences and placing these into performance narratives in ways which the young participants dictated themselves, thus determining their own representation on stage (McDonnell, 2005). Bob's narrative and the embodied performance of this can therefore be perceived to be these young people's representation of the social issues that they perceived within their African communities and the challenges that they felt they were facing as African-Australian young people. With this in mind, it is understandable why *Bob's Story* became incredibly important to the participants within this project. Although interwoven with personal accounts, these were "rendered universal by the process" (Balfour, 2009b, pp. 7-8) and the narrative became "representational not autobiographical" (Enciso, Cushman, Edmiston, Post, & Berring, 2011, p. 228). The narrative was therefore not simply about the participants telling their own stories, but telling the community's stories and reflecting the community back to itself through performance.

The concept of representation and its link to community building within the project is widely supported by the voices of the participants, both from the original three creators of *Bob's Story* and from other members of the wider multicultural group who contributed to the devising of Bob's story later on in the process. Gordana stated that she felt the project was important for "young people to have a voice on issues that we have in our own communities" and that "drama can sort of represent those issues that young people deal with" (Interview G1). Melissa also commented on her surprise at realising the depth and expression that the young people were introducing into the devised scenes which has revealed multiple layers of meaning within the drama work. In particular, Christian expressed incredibly strong opinions that this narrative was intentionally representing community issues with the purpose of bringing awareness and change to the community:

We have a lot of issues in the community.... This project is very important because [it] show[s] the negatives of the community. Like give them a smack on the back and say “Hey, what you doing is not right, that’s affecting your son or your daughter, so you need to change for the better”. That’s why I think it’s very important for the community, that it’s very important for the community to see this, because it’s actually educating the community to become a better community for themselves, for their kids, for their grandsons, for whatever. (Christian, interview C1)

It is clear from this statement that, for Christian, the connections between the narrative and the community issues were explicit and intended. Furthermore, Christian also perceived that this enabled the young people to create representations of their communities and the issues perceived within them.

However, what is particularly interesting about this discussion is, as previously discussed, that the participants’ agenda of raising awareness and building dialogue within the community had led to the exploration of themes such as social isolation, family violence, alcohol abuse, and bullying, thus presenting a character that is socially positioned in a series of negative circumstances. This negative and exclusionary representation of the world, although it was determined by the young people, must be questioned and critically examined, especially when it is being considered within a framework of positive community change. In particular, when I presented this work at the IDEA¹⁷ congress in Paris in 2013 I received a lot of interest and feedback about the idea of the “narratives of exclusion” and in particular, questions about how and why these emerged. One audience member who had attended my

¹⁷ International Drama/Theatre and Education Association.

presentation felt that I must have somehow pushed the “conflict” element of the story by unintentionally driving the group to create a heightened sense of drama.

The propensity towards creating and performing narratives of conflict, discomfort, and pain is acknowledged within applied theatre literature and sources can be found referring to it as the “erotics of suffering” (Salverson, 2001, p. 123), the “hegemony of trauma” (Doná, 2007, p. 221), and the “collective hunger” for the “irresistible” stories of testimonial theatre (Cahill, 2014, p. 29). In addition to this, exhibiting narratives of suffering can potentially be seen to perpetuate the youth deficit model that is referred to in the literature review, whereby young people are acknowledged through a framework of disadvantage and the development opportunities that they gain or take from society, rather than through a resource model where there is understanding and recognition about what young people can offer (U. M. Butler & Princeswal, 2010; Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Checkoway et al., 2003; Cooper, 2009; Giroux, 2003). In the case of refugee and migrant narratives, the concept of enhancing a perception of suffering also has implications similar to the youth deficit model, whereby people are seen primarily in terms of their pain and trauma, thus building only “a thin description of the individual” (Marlowe, 2010, p. 183) and ignoring their potential to make a positive contribution to society.

These dialogues are of great importance within the context of my project and must be particularly considered in relation to *Bob’s Story*. However, it is critical to consider that to reflect solely on the exclusion and conflict within the narrative that Bob, and by extension the experiences of the young participants, are considered only in terms of their disadvantage rather than their strengths. This chapter has so far examined many of the complex negotiations that have occurred within the creation of the theatre piece and there has been a critical acknowledgement that the young participants have driven the negative content of the

narrative themselves, not with the intent of portraying a suppressed or disadvantaged version of themselves, but instead as a means of demonstrating the strength of their conviction and the importance of their message.

The above point can be understood further by examining the experiences from the ninth workshop of the project. At this point the core participant group had been working together for several weeks and multiple devised scenes and characters had begun to take shape (including the beginning of both *Bob's Story* and *Nora's Story*). In this session the group was reflecting upon the various themes, characters, and devised scenes that had been made so far within the project. They had created a large, visual map of this performance work by laying out representations of these various components on the floor and drawing connections between the ideas with pieces of string. Towards the end of this discussion, Gordana began to make a circle with the wool and explained that it represented the cycle that many young people live out in their lives: the starting point being that a young person is forced out of their normal lives by abuse, displacement, war, or other traumatic life event. This then leads the young person to fight for survival, eventually reaching a point where they can participate in a “normal” life. However, at this stage the young person experiences further challenges because they are different – marked in an indelible way by their life experiences, hence causing the cycle to begin once again. When I asked the group what it was that enabled someone to move on from this pattern, they answered “hope” and “strength”, leading away from the cycle and towards empowerment.

Bob's experiences in the play reflect the cycle described above, and the idea of fighting for a normal life but being forced away from this path by external events became a key thematic concept within the development of this narrative. Rather than presenting Bob entirely as a victim and as a young refugee with an exclusive narrative of deficit and

disadvantage, the play instead reveals multiple layers of Bob's experiences as a way of reflecting the issues and the pain in his life, but also the sense of hope and his potential to overcome these challenges. This is reflected in lines such as, "He wants me to be like him! But I can't. Do you know why? Because I want to be better" (Bob, *Bob's Story*, script extract). This example presents a moment where Bob is reflecting on the expectations of his parents and identifying his capacity to create his own future, thus embodying qualities such as strength, resilience, and self-respect. Equally, Bob's future – as created by the workshop audiences – can be seen as embodying the route away from the cycle, driven by his own strength and hope.

When considering this, it is important to remember that the young participants themselves are from refugee and migrant backgrounds, with personal histories that are potentially layered in conflict and lives that mirror aspects of the cycle that is discussed here. It is also critical to consider that despite conveying negative elements of Bob's life, the theatre piece responds to the young people's cycle of change described above and engages with discourses of strength, hope, and the journey towards empowerment. As such, these positive qualities are a key feature of these young people's work, thus establishing their message that struggle does not exist without a way to move forwards. Neelands (2007b) argues that "struggles over norms of recognition are multiple and interwoven" (p. 309). It must therefore be considered that the conflict evident in this narrative, and the struggle to escape it, rather than being about simply creating dramatic tension, exhibiting suffering, or embodying a state of "deficit", are actually authentic reflections of these young people's voices and which represent qualities of strength, resilience, and the desire to move towards positive change both in their own lives and also those of other young people.

Hunter and Milne (2005) state that modern practitioners working with young people “demonstrate an acknowledgement of the complex cultural and social practices which young people participate in and manipulate” (p. 8). As this statement recognises, practitioners cannot simply ignore or bypass participants’ desire to speak about certain issues and must consider that this desire is born from reasons that are connected to their cultural and social positioning within the world. There is an importance then of listening to what the participants want to say and acknowledging this dialogue as being significant, rather than dismissing it as being too negative or too seeped in conflict to be meaningful. As Tully (2004) states, “this is the fundamental democratic or civic freedom of citizens – of having an effective say in a dialogue over the norms through which they are governed” (p. 99). By failing to consider that young people’s work might be representative of the personal stories, social issues, or themes that they want to convey, practitioners and audiences are denying these participants their voice.

The lack of voice is something that the young participants recognised within their own lives, the significance of which can be understood through this statement from Christian:

I think with this project we’re trying to show that there’s more to that, to the voice that you think young people has. They’re really going through a lot, and you just haven’t ... they’ve been screaming but you just don’t hear their voice. (Interview C1)

The project was designed to offer young people a platform for their voices and a space where they are recognised as being “informants knowledgeable about their own experiences” (Doná, 2007, p. 122). The dialogues that they enter into must therefore be acknowledged as significant and meaningful and whilst this does not mean that their narratives cannot be questioned or interrogated, it does mean that their answers must be treated with respect. As Cohen-Cruz (2006b) reminds us, “facilitators provide the social context in which the

participants intervene, through the stories THEY choose to tell, and how *they* choose to tell them” (p. 24, emphasis in original). *Bob’s Story* was the narrative these participants chose to tell and I therefore elected to adhere to Cohen-Cruz’s statement, to acknowledge the young people within the concept of the resource model rather than assuming a state of deficit, ultimately respecting their authority to tell their stories in the way that they wanted.

The participants’ desire for voice and their expressed intentions of representing social issues reveals the young people’s community-building agenda and their radical intentions to affect change. However, when you consider Christian’s previous statement about how young people are “screaming” to be heard, it is possible to see that these are issues that the participants have been otherwise powerless to speak up about. Whilst this may be the story they want to tell, the various hierarchies of power that accompany age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status mean that these young people have marginal authority to speak within their communities and across wider society. By navigating these structures of power through performance and storytelling, the participants have challenged the status quo and are taking action to ensure that their voices are heard. As Dennis (2007) states, “The place of the personal story is often extrapolated as a chance to reclaim *voice*” (p. 355, emphasis in original), an idea which Gordana affirmed throughout the project: “Doing this gives you a voice, young people a voice through drama and their stories” (Gordana, interview G1).

Bourdieu’s (1990) work on acts of representation is of particular interest here, as is the work of Hunter (2008), who draws on this concept to examine young people’s performed responses to the world around them. Bourdieu (1990) states that:

Symbolic struggles over the perception of the social world may take two different forms. On the objective level, one may take action in the form of

acts of representation, individual or collective, meant to show up and show off certain realities. (p. 134)

Bourdieu (1990) uses the example of demonstrations as an act of representation for groups who wish to make themselves visible, or for individuals, the “strategies of self-presentation” can manipulate “the image of one’s position in social space” (p. 134). Bourdieu’s comments are particularly interesting in the context of the research findings laid out within this chapter, especially considering the research participants’ desire to “show up and show off certain realities” that relate to their perceptions of self and of the world around them. When you apply this concept to the research project, *Bob’s Story* can therefore be considered an act of representation that uses symbolic space to examine the young people’s struggles over their social world and which repositions their images within social space.

Hunter (2008) refers to Bourdieu’s acts of representation in the context of her work with young people through the organisation Contact Inc in a culturally diverse area of Brisbane, Queensland. Young people in this area had previously engaged with acts of representation through group violence and the Contact Inc project instead “provided the conditions – or safe space – for these struggles to take place through the medium of performance” (Hunter, 2008, p. 11). This can be seen as having connections to the outcomes of my own research project, where although the participants were not engaging in group violence as a means of expression, a different set of social constructs was at work within these participants’ lives that led to their need for representations of community to be similarly expressed. In particular, their low socioeconomic positions and their marginalised status as young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds offer few opportunities for “struggles over the perception of the social world” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 134) to manifest in ways that are deemed socially acceptable. In addition to this, the social issues that they expressed as being

prevalent within their communities and the personal stories that they contributed to the narratives suggest that they were potentially at risk of entering into destructive patterns of behaviour such as disengagement from education, antisocial behaviour and, at extremes, substance abuse, social isolation, and self-harm. Within the research project, the actions of representation became focused upon representing the participants' experiences of self and community through the story and character of Bob, thus creating a positive and constructive outlet for these expressions. As Hunter (2008) states, the Contact Inc project facilitated "the participants' 'actions of representation', not through violence, but through public performance utilising hip-hop forms to convey their attitudes on respect, identity, hope, and belonging" (p. 11). Within *Bob's Story*, the participants utilised theatre to convey their attitudes on exclusion, social isolation, family dysfunction, bullying, violence, and, of course, hope.

By committing these struggles to representation through narrative and performance, the participants were able to speak about these social themes and take action within a framework that supports young people in this expression, rather than one which negates it, such as violence. Here, the act of representation is the dramatic storytelling, the narratives of exclusion that enabled these young people to speak up about issues that were important to them and equally to communicate their own desires to be better than the characters in the story. This not only repositions marginalised young people as making a valuable contribution and bearing voices and stories full of knowledge and value that demand to be heard, but it also facilitates an opportunity whereby these young people are able to speak *about* community and, perhaps most importantly, speak *to* their communities. Nicholson (2005) states that "identity is created and performed in dialogue with others" (p. 94). Thinking about this statement along with Hunter's discussion on acts of representation, it's possible to see that community-based theatre, in this instance, acted as a point of communication and

connection between the young people and the community and opened up a dialogue where both personal and community identities could be exhibited, challenged, and explored.

5.2 Representations of Self: The Reflective Space

The performance narratives devised by the research participants, whilst creating dialogue and representing issues related to community, also created opportunities for the young people to explore representations of self through storytelling and performance. This is an aspect of community-based theatre and devised performance that is recognised by Cohen-Cruz (2005) when she states that, “personal stories allow for self-representation” (p. 140). This concept was prevalent within the young people’s performance work and featured strongly in the participants’ comments and reflections upon the project. The idea of self-representation therefore becomes an integral and critical element of the research, sitting alongside the discussions about community representation and the wider community-building topics with which this discussion engages.

As previously stated in this chapter, *Bob’s Story* was informed by personal accounts of the young people’s experiences as well as their testimonies about community issues. Christian in particular played an integral part in the initial devising process of this narrative and steered the final performances in which he was the sole actor. During these processes he revealed that he had created certain elements of the narrative, such as a scene of domestic abuse, based on his own experiences and that he was able to personally relate to other aspects of the narrative. Although the themes were presented as being collective and universal rather than autobiographical, Christian inevitably remained critically aware of his own story being interwoven with that of Bob’s and as such, devising and performing this narrative led to various opportunities where he was able to interrogate his own experiences and consider

elements of his own life, mirrored through his portrayal of Bob. In contrast to this, *Nora's Story*, in which a young girl speaks about the war in her country, was created as a semiautobiographical testimony by Gordana. Although the narrative was fictionalised and the audience was unaware of the truth (and whose truth this was) behind the theatre piece, when telling the story in the project's workshops Gordana explicitly revealed that the events in the scene came from a real experience that she was part of as a child. Whilst Christian was able to examine his experiences by looking at them through Bob's eyes, Gordana's narrative became a testimony whereby she was able to reveal a hidden part of herself to others. These two narratives of Bob and Nora present the paradigm of personal storytelling in vastly different ways; however, both narratives opened up opportunities for personal revelation and transformation and engaged the teller with moments of embodied self-representation.

The simultaneous engagement with fiction and reality is a complex interaction (Hughes et al., 2012) that raises both challenges and opportunities. Prendergast and Saxton (2015) refer to theatre that engages with fictionalised accounts of reality as “the lie that tells the truth” (p. 280) and Cahill (2010) calls the meeting place between the real and imagined the “fiction-reality boundary” (p. 156). However, Cahill argues that this “boundary is permeable” (p. 160) and Conquergood (2002) suggests that “a boundary is more like a membrane than a wall” (p. 145). C. Cohen, Gutiérrez Varea, and Walker (2011) also state that “issues and stories are propelled from the socio-political context, through the permeable membrane, into the creative space of theatre and ritual” (p. 166). I particularly enjoy the image of a dramatic membrane that allows reality or fiction to seep through, perhaps unseen or unspoken, and from the perspective of the research project this is a concept that works especially well. Bob's narrative was a fictional story where elements of reality crept in, whilst *Nora's Story* was a true account where small fictional details permeated the membrane to

maintain the fictional illusion. As Gordana stated, “with my stories what I did was, actually the person was me but I sort of make up the character and sort of change a bit the story, so you don’t have the actual story but you go around it” (Interview G1). Whilst the narrative is predominantly based on true events, ultimately no-one except Gordana knows which parts of the story belong to fiction or to reality. Throughout the project in general, there appeared to be an implicit understanding that this membrane existed and that the two sides were constantly in a state of flux. Even when these links weren’t explicit, participants stated that their real stories were told “through” fictional characters (Emily, interview E&C1) and there were several references to the characters and stories “coming to life” as if they were becoming real through the devising and performance processes: “This one [the process of making characters] is more practical, like the person exists. Or it’s still imaginary but to me it kind of exists. Bringing your own life experiences is one of the ways I learnt [to do this]” (Sarah, interview S1).

The result of this was that there were considerable moments of identification and connection between the participants and the characters:

I felt connected to Bob’s stories because we were putting it together and took our own experience and everyone’s experience in one big story.... I might not experience everything that Bob does and you know there were some pieces where I felt, yeah I’ve been there you know, so that meant there was a connection, because it came from young people. (Gordana, interview G2)

The play, the characters, it just feels like a reflection to my own self.... I think that portraying this character made me think about my own things and I think that’s the most important thing I took away from this whole experience.

(Christian, interview C2)

These moments of connection, identification, and representation created opportunities for the young people to examine their own thoughts and behaviours in relation to the events occurring within the narratives, particularly when this was embodied through performance. Christensen (2000) states that actors are “simultaneously existing in two autonomous worlds, the real and the reflected” (p. 169). Whilst this is a similar concept to the idea of being positioned within both fiction and reality, in the “reflected” world the actor is critically engaged in connecting the theatrical likeness to their own experience and is thereby drawn into a process of self-representation and transformation.

In Gordana’s case, the aspects of real life embedded within *Nora’s Story* enabled previously hidden elements of her life to be made visible. In this respect, the theatre process moved beyond the concept of representational space as a site for reflection as it also became a site of revelation, whereby elements of Gordana’s life could be revealed and shared with the audience. As a narrative and performance that speaks of a personal trauma undergone by the teller, *Nora’s Story* can be thought to engage with wider dialogues about “theatre of witness” and “theatre of testimony” (Cox, 2008; A. S. Fisher, 2008; Leffler, 2012; Neumark, 2007; Salverson, 2008; Wake, 2008). Within this literature there is a fundamental concept that the act of speaking about moments of trauma necessarily engages the teller in a process of healing or personal transformation (Thompson et al., 2009) and much of the research in this area focuses on supporting or challenging these claims.

However, whilst the application of theatre in instances of personal storytelling can be acknowledged as creating “opportunities for participants to develop an embodied understanding of their stories by representing them visually” (Govan et al., 2007, p. 78), the impact of *Nora’s Story*, rather than assisting Gordana in developing self-awareness, can instead be largely considered in terms of Gordana’s choice to reveal these aspects of her life

and her cultural history. This narrative is therefore particularly interesting to examine as a moment of personal storytelling, as it is positioned not as a mechanism to support Gordana in a process of healing, but instead intends to display, uncover, and represent identity.

Thompson (2004) states that stories told within social theatre projects are layered with issues and themes that are “often sensitive, personal and related to intensely difficult or private situations” (p. 150). This was clearly evident in Gordana’s case because of the depth of emotion that can be found within the narrative and the confronting themes of loss, displacement, war, and family that are woven through the events in the story:

My dad turns around to see what’s happening. He looks out of the window and says to me, “it’s alright”, so that I won’t be scared. But I hear the tremble in his voice and I know that it’s not really alright. (Nora, *Nora’s Story*, script extract)

Gordana herself identified the events depicted as “the story that you thought you never wouldn’t be able to write down” (Interview G1), thus signifying the gravity of this moment in Gordana’s life and suggesting that she previously felt unable to share or discuss this story.

Despite this previous inability to share such elements of her personal history, Gordana expressed that communicating her narrative through storytelling and performance was a positive experience, thus opening up a wider dialogue about the role of applied theatre in this process. The previous chapter explored some facets of this discussion, as did the first section of this chapter which explored collaborative representations of community. Although these discussions did not rest upon Gordana’s specific experience, I believe that many of the concepts outlined in these two chapters can be applied to her case. This is especially true of the discussions in the previous chapter which outlined the role of theatre in constructing a

safe space through which personal information can be shared and additionally the capacity for intercultural understanding to be built amongst group members through the exchange of stories. Gordana herself also stated that “getting to know each other’s stories” (Interview G1) was a critical element behind the development of the group. It could therefore be considered that such components of the theatre-making process contributed to Gordana’s ability to reveal this “untold” story whilst also facilitating community building through sharing cultural stories and creating shared discourse and meaning.

Gordana’s narrative emerged through a similar process to that of *Bob’s Story*, as discussed in the first half of this chapter, in the sense that discussions surrounding real-life events became woven into the fabric of a fictional world. The presence of a “fiction” or story became a critical element in Gordana’s revelation of her narrative and in particular the use of a character as a means through which to represent herself - something that she described as “it’s you but it’s not” (Gordana, interview G1), an expression reminiscent of Schechner’s (1985) concept of “not not me” to describe the blurring between actor and character. This fictional thread layered within a real memory supported Gordana in maintaining a sense of protection from her own feelings about telling a traumatic memory: “You are telling the story through someone else so that makes it easier ... you still have feelings and you feel a little bit sad ... but it’s through someone else, it’s not actually you” (Gordana, interview G1).¹⁸

However, more importantly for the discussion within this chapter, the protection offered by the fictional world of theatre also extended to the invisibility it afforded Gordana in hiding the truth of the story from the audience: “So they’ve seen this young person who started this

¹⁸ The ethical implications of circumstances such as this within personal storytelling are discussed further in the following chapter.

story but they don't actually know if what she had been through or if she started someone else's story you know" (Gordana, interview G2).

Gordana's comments here are particularly interesting within the discussion of self-representation, as she strongly expressed that a key outcome of telling her story was the opportunity to share it with others. Despite her feelings of benefit at hiding her identity, Gordana actively chose to reveal the truth about her story to the other group members and to various other people who were part of the project or who witnessed the performances. It is therefore possible to see that the fictional paradigm afforded Gordana a sense of control over who gained access to these hidden parts of her identity, thus enabling her to tell her story without the fear of exposure, or judgement from those with whom she had not chosen to share the information.

It can also be considered that the element of "truth" and the degree of knowledge that the audience had about the story, is separate from Gordana's own sense of personal gain from telling the narrative. As such it is possible to understand that telling the narrative served a dual function, whereby there is a degree of separation between the significance of telling the story and the knowledge gained by those witnessing the performance. This duality can be witnessed within Gordana's statements from her research interviews, where she articulates a sense of importance about the action of telling of her story, despite the fact that many members of the audience were not aware of whose story or truth was being told. In her reflections it is possible to see that she feels a sense of benefit both in terms of the knowledge that certain audience members have gained about her life but also a feeling of gain from being able to share the story:

You're telling a story to those people who don't actually know that side of you and what you've gone through in detail so it's a good chance to open up and say this is what I've gone through. (Gordana, interview G2)

A lot of people would get confused about the country where I'm from because of the situation that it has been in, so the explanation and the experience that I had, just to be able to tell it.... And I'm sort of glad that drama helped happen because otherwise I wouldn't tell the story, so that was a good thing. (Gordana, interview G1)

It is the dual significance of the narrative: The meaning of the telling and the act of receiving it as an audience member make this instance of personal storytelling particularly interesting and position it within dialogues regarding personal and cultural identity.

Although Gordana openly identified with being Albanian and a migrant to Australia, she revealed that people did not know the specific details about her personal history: "They know how you came to Australia but they don't know how your life has been before that" (Gordana, interview G2). As a result, the details of Gordana's life in her home country remained unknown to her friends and peers and her Albanian identity was known only in generalised terms. As she stated, "I didn't have a chance to tell my full story, my life experience back home, to a lot of people. Always would cut it down" (Interview G1).

Whilst her own concept of self and identity may have been internally vivid, the idea of "cutting her story down" suggests that Gordana felt that she offered a fractured or incomplete picture of herself and her life to others. Although the reasons why these stories were not told are likely to be varied and complex, her use of the phrase, "I didn't have the chance" also suggests that Gordana had an implicit desire to convey this information and construct a fuller portrayal of her cultural identity.

Here, the theatrical stage provided an opportunity where Gordana's story could be given attention and focus without the need for the censorship or self-editing that she describes in the comments above. This process therefore enabled Gordana to reveal a snapshot of her personal history where past experiences could be witnessed by both the teller and the audience, thus enabling her to reclaim her past and further explain her own identity:

We identify ourselves through our life stories. What we've been through, what we've experienced and that's where the stories we have created came from, our identity. Because like mine for example came from my identity, who I am, where I'm from and what I've been through so it sort of explains identity. (Gordana, interview G1)

It is acknowledged within the literature that "people convey meaning through storytelling" (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 166) and that applied theatre can provide "a space where values and identity could be explored dialogically through story" (Kelman, 2008, pp. 95-96). However, it is possible to see, through Gordana's statement above, that *Nora's Story* is not an exploration of identity, nor a simple exchange of meaning with the audience, but instead a public declaration of Gordana's cultural and historical self. As Gordana stated within the research project, "I think the importance [of doing drama] is that we might not know each other's culture that much and the stories behind what that culture is" (Interview G1). It is therefore possible to understand that Gordana experienced the theatre-making process as a way to explore, share, and learn about culture through stories, thus placing her own narrative within this collaborative, cultural space. As such, one of the critical outcomes of this self-representation through narrative and performance was that by introducing untold aspects of her cultural heritage, Gordana was able to reveal an alternative version of her present self (in terms of how her friends and peers perceived her). Alrutz (2013) states that, "to perform/tell

our stories is to refashion existing ideology, identity and truth” (p. 51) and it is therefore possible to understand that Gordana’s revelation presents a “refashioning” or reframing of her identity in social and political space.

Furthermore, W. K. Watson et al. (2010) state that “it is through narrative that people define themselves ... [and] make connections between past, present and future” (p. 303). Here, by revealing elements of her past through narrative and performance, Gordana was able to openly define and extend her identity beyond the boundaries of her life in Australia, thus connecting her past and present selves. Through this process Gordana was able to make known her dual identity: an identity which belongs not only to her present life in Australia, but also to her past and her Albanian heritage and which necessarily acknowledges the conflict and struggle that is part of her personal history. With reference to this, but also moving beyond concepts of past and present events, Alrutz (2013) states that “to share your (perhaps marginalised, new, unpopular or uncomfortable) narratives, has the potential to affect how each of us sees the past, participates in the present and imagines the future” (p. 44). In sharing her new and marginalised narrative, Gordana is not only reframing her past and present identities, but she is also implicitly building a future whereby these dual components of her Australian and Albanian life can be recognised by others as belonging to her holistic identity. Alrutz’s statement above can also lead us to understand that Gordana’s narrative not only affects the perception that the audience has of her, but also impacts their interactions with Gordana in the present and future. In this way, Gordana is achieving a more complete portrayal and understanding of who she is and how she embodies her existence within the world, also altering her personal relationships to include these new elements of her identity.

From considering Gordana’s statements throughout this section of the chapter it is possible to see that introducing new aspects of self into her public identity and the enhanced

knowledge that her peers now possessed about her, were of great significance and importance to her. However, this experience can also be understood as developing Gordana's own sense of self. Noble (2005) states, "every time a person speaks or acts within life, they are in the midst of recreating and marking their identity" (p. 2). Gordana's revelation of her narrative can therefore be seen as contributing to a process of personal development and self-discovery where she was able to redefine her identity for her own purposes as much as for others.

In addition to this, Neelands (2007b), in drawing from Hegel's thesis of identity, states that "one recognises oneself only by virtue of recognising, and being recognised by, another subject" (p. 307). This concept is also reflected by Gordana when she stated that "people encourage you ... to be yourself so it's good" (Interview G1). This comment was part of her response to a question about how it felt to have shared her story. She explained her fear that the performance would not be understood or well received by the audience, but that people's acceptance and encouragement supported her in feeling good about presenting the narrative. Gordana's acknowledgment that the audience's reaction affected her immediate feelings about presenting her story, upholds Neelands statement about the reaction of others influencing self-recognition. This therefore suggests that Gordana was able to further develop her own sense of self-recognition and identity through the audience's acknowledgment and perceived validation of her narrative. As Thompson (2003) states, "the act of telling or listening to a story is ... an affirmation that the story is important" (p. 170). In this sense, the narrative was perceived as being important not only through Gordana's telling, but also in the way it was received by the audience. It is therefore possible to understand that in addition to revealing hidden elements of her identity to others, through the theatrical process of self-representation Gordana was also able to develop her own sense of identity and self-recognition.

Whilst *Nora's Story* was created with the explicit intention of representing self and personal experience, *Bob's Story* instead engaged with the discovery and reimagining of aspects of self through representation and identification with character and narrative. For Christian, the representational performance and the reflective space it created assisted him in processing experiences from his own life, thus developing a new understanding of self and introducing moments of transformation: "It has allowed me to connect with myself more. It has allowed me to understand the things that surround me, it has allowed me to understand the cause and effect of bullying, family relationships and stuff like that" (Christian, interview C1). For Catherine and Emily, who had created Bob's narrative alongside Christian, they felt that by reflecting upon the characters' thoughts and actions they gained a heightened understanding of human behaviour and sense of empathy: "It just helps us notice what other people go through ... what people go through you can understand more and why people act a certain way" (Catherine, interview E&C1). Although these two participants had contributed scenes based on issues or themes that they felt were important, neither of them admitted to building the narrative based on their direct personal experiences. Although this doesn't mean that the play was absent of their personal stories, it perhaps explains why their reflections about the characters served to develop their understanding of others, whilst Christian, who confessed to including deeply sensitive personal stories, developed a further understanding of himself. It is perhaps therefore the theatricalised representations of self and of experiences belonging or relating to oneself that offer significant opportunities for self-reflection and self-awareness.

For Christian, this increased self-awareness emerged from specific moments within the play that related to his own experiences. In particular, one of these was a short scene in which Sean is bullying Bob in the school library:

Sean - Whattup son? What you doing? Did I scare you? Oh poor boy I'm sorry, did I scare you? (singing) Who let the dogs out? Listen boy, what are you studying? Oh your book, look at your book oh I'm sorry did I drop your book? Look at you, aren't you pretty cute. Yeah, aren't you pretty cute studying...

Bob – See that? That's what happens to me every day. By the way, that's my bully Sean. He's the reason sometimes I don't want to come to school. Like this morning for instance. And when I come to school and this thing happens, I just feel like going home and giving up. (*Bob's Story*, script extract)

Whilst Christian was initially cast in the role of Sean, once Catherine and Emily left the project he took on the additional role of Bob, meaning that in this scene, he performed the dual role of both bully and bullied. In this solo performance, Christian moves between the two characters to enact both the moment of bullying and the impact of this behaviour on Bob. In the script extract above, Sean throws Bob's book on the floor and makes several threatening moves towards him. This scene was directed to show both Sean's intimidation and Bob's terrified reaction. As Sean throws the book he freezes – suspended in action as Christian leaves this position, moving to the empty chair to become Bob and performing his reaction, before returning to Sean and continuing in this role. This stylised routine was only implemented once within the play so as to maintain the impact of this moment and it hence became a significant and powerful scene, both for the audience and for Christian performing it.

The experience of performing both of these characters, simultaneously embodying both Sean's menace and Bob's fear, created an interesting point of conflict for Christian. This duality caused him to reflect upon moments in his real life when he had been bullied by

others and moments when he had been the bully, leading him to consider the impact of his behaviour and reflecting his upon actions.

So it has just made me in touch with myself, it brought me back to when I was being bullied, how I felt and everything and then thinking about when I was bullying people ... and I'm just like, oh man, did I really make them feel this way? Did I forget how painful it felt when I was being bullied?

(Christian, interview C1)

It is possible to understand here that Christian perceives the scene to be representative of his experiences, but also that he himself is represented by both Sean *and* Bob, each portraying different and opposing versions of himself. The representational space of theatre presented Christian with a window into his own life and through speaking the character's thoughts in the fictional world he was able to reflect upon these related experiences from the real world.

Events within this scene also prompted additional points of reflection for Christian in areas which have affected him far more deeply. Christian devised and performed this scene so that Sean's final lines to Bob were particularly hard hitting and were intended to do the most damage to the character:

Stop wasting your time with studying because you know what? You're going to become nothing in your life. You're going to end up like your damn father so you might as well just give it up. (Sean, *Bob's Story*, script extract)

Throughout the play, Bob's father is revealed to be an unemployed alcoholic who is violent and aggressive to his son and wife. The line is intended to play upon Bob's worst fears that he will eventually become like his father, never amounting to anything more. In his

narrated reflections following this incident of bullying, as seen in the previous script extract, Bob reveals that Sean's bullying makes him feel like giving up – the implication being here that Bob would drop out of school in order to avoid these experiences. However, Bob arrives at the realisation that failing in his education would mean that he “might as well end up just like [his] father” (Bob, *Bob's Story*, script extract), and that going to school will give him the best chance of changing his life. This is followed by another moment later in the play when Bob is at home feeling lost and isolated after being verbally abused by his father. He sits in his room and reflects upon something his father has just said to him:

Did you hear him? I don't listen to him. He never listens to me! And come on son, be like your old man. He wants me to be like him! But I can't. Do you know why? Because I want to be better. (Bob, *Bob's Story*, script extract)

The revelations where Bob expresses his understanding that he can be better than his father are two of the most empowering and hopeful moments for this character in the entire play. However, these hold a particular significance, not just for Bob, but for Christian who discovered his own strength in determining his future alongside Bob. It is important to remember that although Bob was not created to intentionally mirror any of the participants, Christian was heavily involved in devising this narrative and later on, as the solo performer, he inevitably introduced certain elements into the characters that were drawn from his own life. As previously stated, Christian also wove some of his own experiences and emotions into the characters and narrative. Thus, there are many connections between Bob and Christian and aspects of their lives are reflective of each other. Throughout the project, Christian gradually revealed that there were comparisons between his own father and the character of Bob's dad in the play and that other details in the play, such as Bob fearing that he would become like his father, were also highly sensitive to his own life. These similarities

affected Christian to the extent that he expressed concerns about performing Dad as he was afraid of becoming too close to the negative emotions of the character and of retaining these in his own body, thus becoming like his father.¹⁹ Although this is a troubling concern, it also suggests that the comparisons between the fictional and the real worlds were considerable and that there was a large degree of representation within the play.

Within this context, the two moments discussed above where Bob discovers his own strength and identifies his desire to become better than his parents, become highly significant. Christian specifically chose to add the lines in the library scene as he wanted Bob to stay in school, to choose the better path and to strive for a better life. Considering the strong correlations between Christian and Bob, this moment can be understood as being important to both character and actor – a crossroads that represents choices that both of them must make, whether to give up or to fight for what they want out of life. As Christian himself stated, “I started reflecting that scene to my own life and I realised how much me and Bob have in common ... and I just realised that I had the same potential that Bob has” (Interview C3). The theatrical representation therefore enabled Christian to examine his own future, as seen through Bob’s eyes and spoken about through Bob’s dialogue. Cahill (2010) states that:

By embodying the possible, which is not yet part of reality, we “bring the
elsewhere home”, thus bringing it into the realm of that which can be

¹⁹ The potential risk of performing characters and scenes which hold personal connections for the participants is an important consideration and one which I believe demands to be examined more closely. The following chapter will discuss the challenges associated with work delivered in community contexts and I therefore believe that this will provide a more appropriate and complete space to fully interrogate these questions surrounding personal risk. Hence I have avoided entering into this discussion here, but intend to fully do so within the thesis.

considered. Having been enacted, even in the fiction of drama, it becomes part of our reality. (p. 167)

The flux between fictional meanings and real-world significance can be seen within *Bob's Story* and in the context of its creation. When Christian was faced with devising an answer for Bob at the crossroads in the library, he implicitly recognised his own choices within this. Bob's decision – to give up or to stay – was now tangled up with Christian's own sense of self, the answer no longer simply offering Bob a future, but representing a future that was available to Christian as well. Equally, Bob's statement that he wants to be better than his parents facilitates a pathway whereby this becomes possible in the real world as well as the fictional one.

The above connections are also made explicit by Christian himself, thus adding weight to this argument and supporting the significance of the representational and reflective space that is made within theatre and the potential impact that this can have on participants:

The most important thing I took away is the father. The father is an alcoholic and abusive father and a nobody and that's exactly what I want to be the opposite of in the future. I want to provide for my kids, I want to be positive role model for my kids and I want to you know, and me just seeing that kind of reminded me why I need to get a job, why I need to go to school why I need to strive hard in life. (Christian, interview C2)

Christian's words mirror those of Bob in the library, both deciding on a better future for themselves and envisioning a future that is now in their grasp. Donelan (2002) states that "through the processes of role-taking that lie at the heart of drama, students can imagine themselves differently.... By imagining and discovering new aspects of themselves within the

fictional context of the drama ... they can move beyond a restricted, socially and culturally defined sense of self” (p. 33). By imagining Bob, who became a representation of parts of his own identity, Christian was able to move beyond his current sense of self and reimagine himself moving beyond his current social and cultural roles. Christian referred to this process of self-discovery as “finding my own hero” (Interview C2); however, the following statement is perhaps a more moving and complete testimony:

I am really thankful for having this project, because you guys don't understand what it has done for me. It has made me look at my life and say how long I am going to keep living this life you know. It's not for me you know, I don't want to end up like Bob, I want to move on from Bob. So many times that my paps was come drunk and beat up my mum, you know just like Bob's story and stuff and I don't want that to keep on holding me back. Just like we went into schools and the schools were like, you know the question, how can Bob move on from [this] situation? I was always taking that in as well, how can you move on from this situation and you know what, I am not going to let this hold me back, I am going to be the person I set out to be.

(Christian, interview C2)

Whilst *transformation* is a highly contested term and implies long-term sustainable change, the shift in his perception of self that Christian expresses here can arguably be considered “transformational”. Most importantly, Christian also came to embody the principles of this transformation throughout the project, moving from being unsure about whether or not he could commit to the project, to becoming an inspirational young leader who single-handedly fought to keep this work going when both the organisation and I were close to shutting it down. He elected to become the sole performer, choosing to take on the

personally challenging role of Bob's father and additionally cofacilitating the workshop that accompanied the performance, thus creating opportunities for further young people to become engaged with the work. In addition to this, one of these performances and workshops was held at Christian's previous high school, a place where he stated that he had been told he was "wasting his time" and that he would never amount to much more than "washing toilets". Understandably, he felt anxious about returning to this site of disempowerment, but did so and delivered a highly successful performance and workshop. In doing this he was able to demonstrate his skills and transform himself from the disempowered student who had previously occupied this space at the school, to a leader who had something positive to offer young people. Despite articulating a discomfort at returning to the school, he delivered on his promise that he wouldn't let his experiences in life hold him back, thus proving his commitment to his transformational intentions in the form of action. Rudd (2009) states that "narrative is not just something I tell retrospectively; it is something that I am acting out as I live my life" (p. 62). For Christian, Bob's narrative was never simply a piece of fiction, but it became something further, no longer representative of his past, but a pathway towards a life that he could act out within this project and beyond, demonstrating his capacity to be better and assisting him in carving out his own future.

Although the second half of this chapter has focused on personal outcomes rather than community ones, it should be acknowledged within the thesis that community building does not only refer to broad and collaborative efforts to engage community, but that the small, individual shifts that are described in this chapter must also be considered part of any wider contribution towards community building. This is reinforced by Figueroa et al. (2002) who claim that for wider initiatives of community development to have any effect, they must be accompanied by individual change. It is clear that the discussions presented here regarding

personal and specific responses to the theatre project not only reflect the impact that this work has had on those individuals, but that the meaning of these experiences can also find a place within the wider discussions about community building.

Cahill (2014) states that “one’s ‘position’ is understood to be shaped by the discourses, norms and storylines within which we live” (p. 30). If Cahill’s statement is to be accepted, then it must be considered that by altering and reframing these discourses and storylines, one’s position can also be shifted. The discourses, norms, and storylines within which the young people described here live are complex and are influenced by wider and heavier forces than their participation within this community-based theatre project. However, it must be considered that both Christian and Gordana within this project were able to take hold of certain elements that they could affect and that they have used the theatrical spaces of representation and dialogue to shift these discourses accordingly. For Gordana this is particularly the case with her expression of cultural identity, whilst for Christian this involves his recognition and sense of self in relation to the direction of his future and the sort of man he strives to become. As such, it can be considered that, in these ways, they have altered their “positions” within social, personal, and community norms, thus contributing towards individual change and development. Furthermore, the leadership elements of the project, such as the peer-led workshops and the fact that both Gordana and Christian inhabit leadership roles within their lives (at the time, Gordana was studying to become a youth worker and Christian was involved in mentoring projects with young musicians), also suggest that an enhanced sense of self, identity, or social positioning could potentially contribute to their future engagement with young people, thus creating a community impact that exists beyond the personal outcomes discussed here.

Furthermore, although the discussions in this second half of the chapter have focused on the individual and on topics of personal representation, self-reflection, and identity, many of the points raised can also be seen as tying into the community-building frameworks that are discussed throughout the thesis. In particular this refers to the creation of dialogue between community members (Alrutz, 2013; Figueroa et al., 2002; Reardon, 2003) as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter and the sharing of cultural stories as leading the way towards intercultural understanding and awareness (Vuyk, Poelman, Cerovecki, & van Erven, 2010) which was described in the previous chapter. This quality of building dialogue and understanding between community members is raised by Cahill (2006) when she states that “drama is a useful method through which to gain a deeper understanding of issues affecting people’s lives” (p. 70). Gordana, in choosing to reveal the hidden elements of her cultural identity, and Christian in exploring his perceptions of culture, community, and self, have opened up a process of communication with the audience. These dialogues offer the audiences not only knowledge about Christian and Gordana, but also a cultural and historical understanding about the contexts within the stories and by extension, a deeper understanding of the diverse people and experiences that exist within the community.

In addition to this, the themes of conflict, family, isolation, displacement, and loss that are profound within Gordana and Christian’s narratives can be seen as being universal human themes and in this way the specific details of these stories can become “‘generalised’ within the framework of the performance and [become] representative of a like community” (Cox, 2008, p. 194), thus moving the story from a “personal marginalised place towards a collective centre” (Dennis, 2007, p. 356). As Prendergast and Saxton (2015) state, “Accepting that the power of theatre lies in the very fact that it is *not* real, we can use stories to create content in which ‘my’ story becomes an ‘our’ story” (p. 282, emphasis in original).

It is therefore possible to understand that the personal aspects of the narratives can be seen as representative and recognitive of many different individuals and communities who have also experienced these elements within their lives. These narratives can thus be seen as offering a “living insight” (Christensen, 2000, p. 176) into the circumstances of a wider community. In performing the narratives the theatrical event, and the “living insight” (Christensen, 2000, p. 176) it offers, enables a “*moving closer*” through the communalization of distress (Westoby, 2008, p. 493, emphasis in original) and thus assists in constructing communities of identity amongst those who share like experiences or who recognise their own experiences within the stories being shared (Nicholson, 2005). Furthermore, the living insight also serves to build awareness of these issues and encounters amongst other community members. In this way, the theatre performance enables the audience watching the performance to “gain insight into the conflicts, joys and sorrows that can arise when different lifestyle, values and traditions are transported into new soil” (Christensen, 2000, p. 175). In witnessing each other’s lives, the community is therefore able to create a shared understanding (Nelson, 2011), thus assisting community building through recognition, cultural awareness, and a connection to the diverse stories, histories, and experiences of the community.

Chapter 6

What's the Harm? Theatre, Storytelling, and Risk

The thesis has thus far concentrated on examining community-based theatre and reflecting on the capacity of this work to act as a community-building tool. The previous chapters have discussed community-based theatre as a way to develop relationships within culturally diverse communities and the potential for participatory theatre work to create dialogues about community and between community members. However, the complexities of working with theatre in community-based settings, often with vulnerable participants, must give practitioners and researchers pause and the implications, ethics, and agenda of such work must be carefully considered alongside and in addition to any positive outcomes.

In the past, the applied theatre field has found itself in a cycle of self-promotion in order to gain recognition and funding which led to a series of unrealistic claims about the efficacy of the work under the “transformative principle” (Taylor, 2003, p. 1). The field has since worked to redress this through extensive inquiries into impact and evaluation (Thompson, 2000) and research that addresses the complexities within the work as well as its capacity for “good” (Ahmed, 2004; Balfour, 2009a; McDonnell, 2005; Somers, 2006; Thompson, 2003). It is these dialogues, that encompass the limitations of the work as much as its potential, that have undoubtedly pushed the boundaries of the field beyond what they once were and opened up new areas of both academic inquiry and approaches to practice. My own research is inextricably connected to this historical legacy and to the contemporary movement within the field to question, challenge, and disrupt the transformational claims and to seek authentic and meaningful dialogues about the work. Therefore the findings from my

research must be interrogated with these same values, not simply advocating the successes, but also contributing to the wider discussion that seeks to illuminate the shadows.

As the project developed, data emerged about community building and these discussions grew to be a profound and compelling feature of the research. But within these dialogues, emerging questions and areas of critical thinking appeared, connected to elements of risk within the telling and performing of sensitive community stories. Although other dialogues have taken precedence within the thesis so far, these questions have remained and they continue to haunt my discussions about community development, ultimately leading me to ask, “What if, instead of building community, this work harms it?” This chapter therefore examines areas of risk and the challenges to community building that emerge within this work. This refers not only to the primary research question that relates to examining how community-based theatre can contribute to community building, but in particular also relates to the secondary research question concerning the ethical issues that arise from engaging in community contexts and how community-based theatre responds to these.

It must be acknowledged that due to the limited space within the thesis and the need to prioritise the information that is presented here, there are multiple questions of risk and ethics which have not been included in this chapter. This is particularly true of questions pertaining to how this work is carried out with vulnerable participants and also the impact of this work on practitioners. Additionally, this chapter does not examine the philosophical meanings of ethics or risk, nor does it seek to engage in a debate about the wider purposes or positive application of such concepts (Cahill, 2002; Hunter, 2008; Neumark, 2007). Many of these uncovered questions are important within the field; however, many of these are also explored elsewhere within the wider body of literature. Instead, this section is intended to concentrate on the immediate and direct impact that specific issues of risk may have on

participants and communities. The questions and issues that I have therefore chosen to raise within this chapter, although not constituting an overarching examination of ethics and risk, are the areas that I felt became most significant within the research project and which I believe require further attention within the field.

Furthermore, the discussion in this chapter is not intended to undermine or de-value my previous claims of community building and positive enhancement of community ties that are examined throughout the research. Instead it is my intention to position my work within a field that is no longer preoccupied with the certainty of change and which seeks instead to engage in critical and ethical dialogues. It is important to note here that the project and the thesis uphold the concept of young people being at promise, however, this does not exempt practitioners from carefully considering the risks that emerge when working with marginalised participants. It is vital that community-based theatre considers ethical dialogues as means to supporting young people who find themselves navigating these risks, thus creating a structure of practice that better enables participants to fulfil their promise. This area of the research therefore provides a necessary perspective into some intricate and complicated areas of the field which, in the search for meaning and the development of future practice, deserve a space for examination within the thesis. This chapter considers the ways in which the research project addressed these issues and how community-based theatre methods can serve to mitigate such elements. This is therefore an argument that I hope will contribute to the overall examination and understanding of community-based theatre within the thesis and additionally to the wider dialogues within the field, thus enabling the development and advancement of this work.

6.1 Personal Storytelling and Risk

As discussed in the previous chapter, personal storytelling became a strong feature of the narratives that were devised and performed by the young participants in the research project. In particular, personal storytelling was seen most strongly within Christian's development and performance of *Bob's Story* and within Gordana's war testimony. As previously discussed, the personal elements within each narrative were different in content and in intention and both participants contributed personal details that were highly sensitive and which were related to traumatic past events. For Gordana, this was her experience during the Kosovan war, whilst for Christian this was his experiences growing up with a violent and alcoholic father.

From an examination of the literature, storytelling can be understood as a process whereby "people construct and understand their experiences" (Little & Froggett, 2010, p. 459), where we "define our world and determine the way we think and behave" (Cockett, 1997, p. 9) and reveal or explore important social issues (Balfour, 2009b; Cahill, 2002; Donelan et al., 2006). In theatre, personal storytelling is typically framed as not only being beneficial to the teller, but additionally carrying an agenda of transformation and personal change. As Cohen-Cruz (2006b) states, "the very act of speaking one's story publicly is a move towards agency, with implications for social intervention" (p. 14). Personal storytelling also largely refers to the articulation and enactment of a traumatic event from the teller's life, thus becoming closely linked to the concepts of theatre of witness and theatre of testimony, where the "figure of the performing witness is typically a character (based on an actual person) that testifies to a personal, social and/or historical trauma" (Wake, 2008, p. 188). This approach is "thought to bear witness to an individual's unique experience" (Cox, 2008, p. 193), "render visible those subjects who might otherwise remain invisible" (Wake, 2008, p.

188), and acknowledge the “human desire to provide an account of oneself” (A. S. Fisher, 2008, p. 108). The interventionist paradigm also argues that in performing stories of witness or testimony, the teller is positioned to “transform their traumatic memories into narrative memories through speaking about or talking through their past” (Thompson et al., 2009, p. 33). In this way, the theatrical experience is regarded as contributing to a purging of the trauma, thus mitigating the ongoing impact of the original event.

The previous chapter of the thesis demonstrated that the use of personal narratives can offer participants positive experiences to convey and create meaning, enabling story to “become a site of negotiation and resilience” (Balfour, 2009b, p. 1). However, when working with vulnerable participants it is critical to comprehend fully the ethical complexities of this work (Thompson, 2006). Individuals who have experienced trauma can “have intrusive recollections of the traumatic event in which they vividly and repeatedly reexperience disturbing sensory impressions and emotions associated with the event” (Berntsen & Rubin, 2014, p. 174), the presence of which can cause significant distress (Holmes, Grey, & Young, 2005). It should also be understood that involuntary traumatic memory can be exceptionally vivid, both physiologically and emotionally, in comparison to recollections of nontraumatic memories (Berntsen, 2001). Within theatre and storytelling which ask participants to recall difficult memories and replay traumatic events, it must be considered that such activities may encourage or trigger intrusive recollections and it is therefore vital that this field considers the potential for retraumatisation and the risk of harm. As Bundy (2006b) states, “the danger of recalling a distressing event in this explicit way is that it can quite often trigger associated negative preverbal assumptions and conditioned emotional responses” (p. 11).

Therefore, rather than assisting the teller in moving on from the trauma, this form of testimonial theatre can inadvertently reinforce or recall the negative associations of the

memory, potentially causing further distress and secondary trauma and posing “significant mental and emotional health risks” (Hassall, 2014, p. 38). Additionally, the casting of tellers within their own narrative presents further questions and ethical considerations (Hassall, 2014; Leffler, 2012; Wake, 2008) as the embodiment and reenactment of the event or events carries a high potential to retrigger the traumatic memories. Although the approaches of exposure and reliving therapy are widely used in the treatment of conditions associated with trauma such as PTSD (Holmes et al., 2005), within the field of applied theatre and certainly within my research project, such therapeutic processes are often outside the realms of the project and the practitioners. Therefore, the risks present in using techniques that involve reenacting or embodying historical events associated with trauma, outside of a clinical setting, must be critically considered.

Within the context of my research project, it was important to take account of these ethical complexities and consider the element of risk within the telling of personal stories, particularly given the participants’ role in performing their own narratives. Gordana’s testimony about her experiences in a war zone is such an example of this and should therefore be carefully considered within this discussion. Gordana gave positive feedback about telling this story and felt that it had been important for her to tell others about this part of her life. However, although she expressed that telling the story “felt sort of good” (Gordana, interview G2), she also highlighted that it had caused her to remember events in her past that were painful: “But in a way [it] told real sad memories. Because writing it and then it reminds me that the time it actually happened and the outcome of it” (Gordana, interview G2). The telling and embodying of the narrative caused Gordana to recall these events in her childhood, reawakening the memory and creating an emotional response to this. Gordana’s statement

therefore exemplifies the risk that is present within personal storytelling, the potential for retraumatisation, and the further damage that this can bring to participants.

In addition to Gordana's testimony, similar ethical questions were raised through Christian's devising and performance of *Bob's Story*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Christian contributed many elements of his own personal experiences to this narrative and he also found himself closely identifying with several of the characters that he performed. In particular, it was his close connection to the character of Dad that raised a series of ethical questions within the project and introduced a complex interaction between real life and performance. Similarly to Gordana's narrative based around a painful memory, *Bob's Story* featured a scene of domestic violence that Christian had devised based on similar moments that he had witnessed within his own family. In the same way that Gordana expressed that the storytelling brought to mind her specific memories of the event, Christian also found that building a scene around these moments from real life caused him to dwell upon episodes of his past:

Actually, because I play the paps in the play, when I raise my hand to slap the mum,²⁰ it just took me back to when I was 4 years old, 6 years old, seeing my

²⁰ It is important to note here that the "slap" was stylised through performance techniques, becoming a frozen image of Dad's raised hand. The ways in which the participants first devised this scene are interesting, as their awkwardness around how to portray the moment manifested through comedy and it became a caricatured sequence of "play fighting" accompanied by high-pitched, unrealistic voices. Once the sequence was being rehearsed, the performer playing the character of Mum was removed and Dad instead spoke to an empty chair. This was another measure of protection for the participants, so that the young people were not subject to representations of violence against their person.

paps every day coming home drunk and beating my mum up. (Christian, interview C1)

The concept that the scene “took him back” suggests that once again the personal storytelling brought old memories into the present, thus requiring Christian to deal with the emotional consequences of this.

Additional considerations are also raised through Christian’s close personal identification with the character of Dad. When creating Dad, Christian introduced many aspects that reflected traits of his own father, such as violence, alcohol abuse, and an angry, aggressive demeanour. At the time of devising, this corresponded to the story that the group was creating and Christian chose not to reveal many of these personal connections to the character. It was only later on in the rehearsing phase, when Christian was being asked to enact this behaviour time and time again, that he expressed a discomfort with the role:

I know it’s just acting, but sometimes I can take my acting a bit too serious. I think I’m scared to connect with it so much to the point where, I’m just a bit scared ... when we rehearse it again, I will become this character again, and usually when I’m rehearsing at home. Because one thing I’ve learned as an actor is you have to be your character and therefore you are going to have to act as the character, that’s just one thing I was told²¹ and I’m just afraid that’s all. (Christian, video footage, workshop 18)

²¹ Christian explained in the workshop that this was something that his high school drama teacher had told him.

Here, Christian expresses a fear that he would connect too much to Dad and that as an actor he would embody the character to such an extent that he would be unable to separate the character's negative traits from his own personality. When this fear is placed alongside the knowledge that Christian has watched his own father exhibit similar behaviours throughout his life, it is possible to understand the full significance of his statement and the profundity behind these anxieties.

Christian's need to separate his own behaviour from his father's was also demonstrated at other points throughout the project. In the library scene, which was discussed in the previous chapter, Bob is bullied by Sean who says to him: "You're going to become nothing in your life. You're going to end up like your damn father" (Sean, *Bob's Story*, script extract). This line was devised by Christian and was designed to cause Bob distress by playing on his worst fear – that he would end up like his own father. When you consider this alongside Christian's expressed fear about "becoming" the character, it is possible to understand that Bob's fear is reflective of Christian's own fear and that he too carries an anxiety about becoming like his father. This is further compounded by statements from Christian, such as: "Bob's dad is a man that I want to be different to" (Video footage, workshop 18) and "I dislike my paps a lot and I want to be different to him" (Interview C1). In playing the role of Dad, it is possible to see that Christian developed and performed the actions that he fears connect his behaviour to that of his father, thus going against his desire to be different.

These points about Christian and Gordana present several ethical dilemmas and create some critical questions about the ways in which applied theatre work is carried out with participants who have experienced trauma and those who have vulnerable personal, social, and economic backgrounds. Within applied theatre projects where traumatic testimony is part of the

narrative, the process of drawing an old memory into the present at the very least means that participants must manage the memory and residual emotions, but at the worst it perhaps means retraumatisation and the triggering of further traumatic memories. As Cohen-Cruz (2005) states, “given the horrific acts that testimony often bespeaks, what assures that the telling does not merely traumatize the teller, leaving her isolated in the past evoked by the story?” (pp. 142-143). When you consider as well that trauma “is liable to return as a spontaneous flashback ... [and that] suffering from traumatic stress can thus mean that a person is controlled by, or at least struggles to control, that past event” (Thompson et al., 2009, p. 33), it can be understood that a participant may not only be unable to anticipate or prevent their reaction, but may also be unable to exert autonomy over it once the flashback occurs.

Cahill (2014) states that “as drama educators and applied theatre artists, we assume the importance of narrative, experiential and embodied ways of knowing” (p. 23). However, the risks outlined here place practitioners in an ethically challenging position whereby “narrative, experiential and embodied ways of knowing” (Cahill, 2014, p. 23) can have serious consequences for all involved. This is not simply a matter concerning the individuals at risk, but additionally other participants whose trust and ability to participate in the project may be destabilised by witnessing negative outcomes. Within a community-building framework, there are also additional ramifications to consider. Gaining the trust and support of the wider community is often a challenge for community-based theatre artists, especially when the intended community includes vulnerable people, or when there is already resistance towards a project’s agenda. If an organisation or project team has established an expectation of benefit and has advocated for such work to go ahead, then the consequences of unethical or harmful practice will be profound for the reputation of the work and the capacity of current and future projects to create a positive impact within that context. Of course, there is also the

harm caused to individuals and the impact of this on their own lives to consider. Balfour et al. (2014) acknowledge that “if posttraumatic growth is to occur, then safe, exposure-type techniques that protect participants into emotion are important” (p. 176). Ellis (2007) also notes that there must be an “ethic of care” (p. 25) and that practitioners should “strive to leave the communities, participants and yourselves better off at the end of the research than they were at the beginning” (p. 25), whilst Christians (2011) states that the contract that is made with a community is akin to a promise. When such a promise is broken and the practice is unethical or harmful, it must be considered whether the project outcomes can sit within a framework of positive personal or community change.

It is clear from this discussion that consideration of the ethical issues involved in such work is critical and that practitioners must be prepared to delve into the specific questions that each project raises if they are to manage these risks. Thompson (2005) argues for practitioners to take on a high level of ethical awareness, explaining that such elements can work alongside practice as a tool through which to gain a deeper understanding of the work:

Questioning and thinking about the ethics of the practice does not seek a proscriptive system that places unnecessary restrictions on the creativity of practitioners. It asks that we generate an understanding of the values that drive the work and how these are challenged by the necessary contingency of the practice. (p. 40)

Whilst I had already built an ethical framework for the research project through my application for ethical approval, once the contingencies of the practice came into being, new and unseen questions began to emerge, such as those discussed earlier in this chapter. I found that, in particular, my use of the reflective journal enabled me to examine the particular values of the work and the specific complexities that were emerging within the project. This

process of explicit and written reflective practice subsequently created a heightened awareness of these issues within the practical workshops and thus prepared and empowered me to take action as they arose. In this way, interrogating the ethical questions within the practice, as Thompson (2005) states, did not restrict the work but in fact opened up the possibilities of richer and deeper theatre making with the participants. Being able to anticipate many of the potential risks meant that I could create a framework that supported the participants, thus allowing me to navigate these issues throughout the project and maintain the sustained well-being of the young people and the feeling of safe space throughout the workshops.

In my response to the ethical questions being raised by Gordana and Christian's narratives, I felt that it was critical to support the values of authentic participation and participant leadership upon which the project was founded. Returning to Cohen-Cruz's (2006b) argument that "participants intervene, through the stories THEY choose to tell, and how *they* choose to tell them" (p. 24, emphasis in original), it is essential to remember that this value underpins this work, even in challenging circumstances. Both Gordana and Christian were in their early 20s and possessed a sense of maturity, self-awareness, and independence. It thus became essential to include them in the decisions around their telling of these personal stories, thereby acknowledging the autonomy and self-determination that they exhibited and that the project had been designed to support. As Zapata-Sepúlveda (2012) states, "participants, not theoretical models, must establish the limits" (p. 648). To assert my authority over whether they should – or how they should – tell their *own* narratives would have been ethically questionable. To intervene in the decisions around personal narratives without consultation with the participants would have been to place my voice over theirs and therefore assume that my voice is both more knowing and more important. Such an act,

driven by the fear of risk and harm, would potentially cause a different kind of pain to the participants by denying them the right to speak for themselves. As Henriques Coutinho and Pompeo Nogueira (2009) state, “a paternalistic attitude ... far from serving to free these historically oppressed people, can end up helping to prolong their situation of exclusion” (p. 175). It must therefore be considered that an overly paternalistic approach that assumes that workers know what’s best for others (Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2003) and therefore seeks to “protect” participants from the risk of harm, can disempower the participants and stifle the potential for good within the practice.

As a result, I endeavoured to develop clear lines of communication between myself and the participants: to ensure that any emotional discomfort or potential issues could be identified quickly and so that the participants were actively and consciously involved in making choices about these narratives. However, as Penny Bundy (personal communication, February 3rd 2014) reminded me, when considering issues of risk, this communication also needs to explicitly acknowledge the consequences of the risk, so that the participants’ decisions are appropriately informed. This is perhaps an important but often mislaid step in the communication process as practitioners can be so conditioned towards advocating the work (often necessarily so), that there is a potential to become distanced from articulating negative and risky moments within practice. On reflection of my own actions within the research project, this is a step to which I could have paid further attention; however, I did ensure that I stressed the importance of continuing only if a participant felt entirely comfortable and that I articulated to the young people the reasons why this was such an essential consideration. There is also perhaps a fine balance that practitioners must be aware of here, between laying out the consequences of risk and potentially intimidating participants into a terrified silence. Whilst informed decisions are crucial, how can practitioners make this knowledge explicit without creating a sense of fear

within the workshops? As these questions emerge within the context of practice, it becomes clear that the consideration of risk is complex and that the ethical tightrope is one that must be walked both carefully and consciously.

In returning to my research project, it is important to consider how I carried out these negotiations of risk through communication and the decisions that this particular context required of me. During Gordana's testimony, the story was captured in a one-to-one conversation between Gordana and me. Although Gordana initially began the story as a character from one of the devised scenes in the project, it soon became clear that she had used a thread of that story to connect to a real experience from her life. At the time, this conversation felt profound and important and Gordana, rather than becoming distressed from the memory, indicated that she wanted to continue to the end of the narrative. I therefore waited for her to finish before discussing how she felt about telling this moment from her past and how she wanted to proceed with the story. During this follow-up discussion, Gordana gave positive feedback about having told the story and about continuing on with the narrative as part of the group's theatre-making work. At each point of the process, I checked in with Gordana to ensure that she was happy with the progress of the narrative and that she consented to further development. Before joining the project, Gordana had no prior experience with drama and within the workshops she expressed a low self-confidence about performing. I therefore made several suggestions about the narrative, such as splitting the long monologue into the voices of the different characters to assist her in reading and speaking aloud her role in English. However, these decisions were always discussed privately with Gordana and her opinion sought before further steps were taken with the rest of the group. Equally, once Gordana left the project, it was agreed that this narrative should be

abandoned as it was felt to belong to her and it would thus be unethical to continue with the scenes in her absence.

I approached Christian in similar ways so that I could ensure that, if necessary, appropriate measures could be taken. Christian was confident and outspoken during the workshops and often took on a leadership role during the devising and rehearsing phases of the project when the core participant group was attending. These personality traits meant that he often spoke up about the relevance of a story to his own life and he openly revealed personal details in front of the rest of the group. He regularly discussed aspects of the project that he was unhappy about and with time it became evident that he was not only acutely aware of some of the elements of risk that I've raised in this chapter – such as feeling concerned about performing Dad – but that he was also comfortable expressing these to myself and to the rest of the core participant group. Such occurrences happened throughout the project but became more frequent towards the end, during the final rehearsing phase when Christian was the sole performer. Christian also demonstrated a great level of maturity and an acute sense of self which gave him a clear awareness of his own reactions to the theatre-making work. So part of my ethical consideration of this situation, and the management of risk, was to trust what Christian said and be aware of the fact that he could and would speak up if something was troubling him. Equally, on occasions when he said that he *was* comfortable with a certain aspect of the work, although I would initiate an exchange about this I largely chose to respect his decision to continue in that way.

Although this does not mean that I lapsed into a state of ambivalence, waiting for him to tell me if something was wrong, it does mean that together we were able to create an environment where he knew that his voice and decision-making were both acknowledged and respected. This mutual exchange of respect became more significant towards the final phase

of the project when Christian chose to take on the performance as a solo actor. As such, the rehearsals became more intimate as there was now only myself, Christian, Melissa, and Sarah, the young participant who had elected to be the stage manager. This changed the dynamic and intensity of the workshops and further encouraged open communication about these issues.

When Christian raised his concerns about performing the character of Dad, I took these comments extremely seriously and was always prepared to discuss them fully. This was particularly important because I was aware of his context at home and his concerns about appearing to be like his father. Initially I offered him strategies for de-roling from the character at the end of each scene and attempted to discuss further methods that he could use at home. I also made it explicit that he didn't need to rehearse at home, or use the method of embodying the character outside of rehearsals. Christian responded to this by saying that de-roling wasn't the issue and that the feeling of taking on the character was something that he didn't feel he could control. However, when I suggested further options, he neither wanted to stop playing the role, nor felt that the character should be removed from the play.

At the point where there were other participants involved in the project, Christian had taken on the dual roles of Sean (the bully) and Dad. I was acutely aware that these were the two negative characters, a scenario that I think emphasised Christian's feelings of wanting to show to others (and perhaps to himself) that he was different from these roles. I was aware here of Jeffers's (2008) warning to be cautious of encouraging "narratives of victimhood" (p. 218) and I wanted to avoid a situation where this might occur for Christian or one where he may be "re-learning a fundamentally disabling lesson" (Cahill, 2008, p. 24). However, this particular scenario presented a challenge for me as a theatre maker. Whilst I wanted to make ethical choices and maintain the well-being of the participants, I felt that it would be

unethical for the other participants were I to take a character that they had ownership over away from them, in order to give it to Christian. At the same time, there was no capacity within the project at that point to develop further characters or storylines. With Christian's insistence of continuing with the negative roles despite his concerns, it created a complex scenario that needed to be resolved in order for the project to continue ethically and within Christian's best interests.

Before I was able to take any action to resolve this, the other participants unexpectedly left the project and I offered Christian the opportunity of performing solo and playing multiple roles, including the main character of Bob who could be considered the "good guy" or the "hero" of the story. I felt that this would perhaps provide a balance to the negative roles that he was currently playing, a feeling that he confirmed in a discussion about these developments. Beswick (2011) presents the question that "if the 'young people' are representing themselves in the ways in which they resent being perceived, then where does an intervention which deconstructs or re-frames popular representations take place?" (p. 431). By performing only negative and destructive characters, Christian felt that he was being represented in ways which reflected badly on himself, both in the sense of the audience's perceptions towards him and his own attitude and expectations of himself. Through introducing the other characters into Christian's performance, he was able to reframe these negative representations and position himself in a space where the connections between him and the undesirable personalities of Dad and Sean no longer dominated his experience. This balance became critical in maintaining an ethical practice and a sense of safe space for Christian, thus contributing to his ability to continue with the project with a positive and empowered approach.

After Christian chose to perform the piece as a solo actor, he mentioned his concerns about Dad twice more during rehearsals. However, within the ensuing dialogues, Christian always expressed that he wanted both to continue with the role and to move immediately on with the rehearsal rather than engage in further discussion. Despite my attempts to discuss the issue further and introduce suggestions to modify or remove the character from the piece, Christian vehemently chose to continue on as before. Through these dialogues, I came to understand that these exchanges were not about Christian asking for my help or for the situation to be “fixed”, but rather about him searching for recognition and acknowledgement of his situation and the complexity and gravity of these stories. In creating this dialogue, Christian was able to move forwards knowing that he was in a supportive environment where there was awareness and understanding of this context. This was largely demonstrated by the fact that he successfully went on to perform these characters with great self-assurance and that he expressed no further discomfort during the workshops, post-performance reflections, or in the follow-up interviews. In his final interview, Christian even articulated that he was “able to play [the character] with no effect on [his] life whatsoever” (Interview C2). This is also comparable to Gordana’s experience who, despite her comment that the narrative raised sad memories, in her final interview stated that “it’s just a story at the end, if you want to tell it you can” (Gordana, interview G2), thus acknowledging the choice that participants had to tell these stories (or not tell them) and reaffirming the significance of their own decision-making in this process.

By creating a forum that introduced explicit dialogues about these issues, combined with my own critical awareness of the ethical questions within the project, the participants and I were able to navigate the complex interactions within these personal narratives and move towards successful outcomes for both the individuals and the theatre making. However,

it must also be recognised that each specific context demands a different approach and that each participant will require a different level of awareness and support, with some participants being more vulnerable to harm than others. This is exemplified by Leffler's (2012) statement that, "Whilst Howard's dance evoked feelings of self-confidence that *challenged* his feelings of isolation and fear, Zahn's scene reinforced her sense of weakness and vulnerability" (p. 350, emphasis in original). Here, two participants experienced varying outcomes within the same activity, thus making the questions around how practitioners create a safe space within their work particularly complex. How can practitioners become aware of the elements of risk within their work when the meaning of this changes from individual to individual and from context to context? The negotiations from my own research project which I have discussed in this chapter have emerged from specific decisions that I made in the context of that work and those specific participants. In writing this chapter and examining the details of the participants' personal narratives, particularly that of Christian's, I have often felt challenged with how I can accurately express the reasons behind my decision to continue with their stories and with Christian's performance of the Dad character. I maintain wholeheartedly that these decisions and the collaborative way in which they were made were appropriate within that context, and based on their interview data and feedback about the project, I believe that the participants themselves would express similar sentiments. However, I am acutely aware that the situation related to Christian and Gordana's personal narratives could have been drastically changed had I gone about pursuing those same outcomes in a different context or with different individuals.

A further point for consideration, therefore, when weighing up the element of risk within specific contexts, is perhaps that of the participants' own emotional position in relation to the event or memory of the event. The intensity of trauma memories declines over time

and as such it will affect the individual less as time moves on (Berntsen, 2001). This measure of temporal distance is essential in ensuring the well-being of participants and preventing retraumatisation. As Cohen-Cruz (2005) states, “storytelling experienced in a communal context must still negotiate closeness and distance with tellers in touch with but not overwhelmed by their past” (p. 144). It is perhaps this “relationship between detachment and contact” (Salverson, 2001, p. 119), measured by the quality of distance and an element of resilience that the participants have about their experiences that dictates the level of risk within personal storytelling and representations of these narratives within performance. In Gordana’s case, although the narrative that she offered was an account of a troubling and difficult moment in her life, she was not distressed by the telling of the story and when I asked her in a research interview about the risk of it bringing up difficult memories, she stated that, “you know the outcome, so it’s good, you know at the end. Everyone survives” (Gordana, interview G2). Her own reflections on the story demonstrate a level of distance from the emotions that exist within the narrative and it is perhaps this distance that enabled her to offer its telling as part of the theatre project. Christian experienced less emotional distance to his narrative and admitted that “it was too personal” (Interview C2); however, he showed a high level of resilience in relation to his past and he was able to shape his experience of performing *Dad* to have a positive outcome rather than allowing the negative associations to dominate his thinking.

Although an understanding of context is critical in making decisions about how creative projects can proceed without doing harm, it must be noted that preparedness is also key to ensuring the safety of participants. In considering the concepts of distance and resilience to traumatic narratives, it is difficult to imagine how practitioners can accurately grasp these qualities before, or at the beginning of their projects. Once again returning to the

site of my own research project, in hindsight I believe that it is misplaced for me to define the participants as being traumatised by their experiences. Having witnessed their journey through the project and gained an understanding of who they are as individuals, it is clear that such a definition lends itself more to my own maternal instinct, rather than to an accurate description of their emotional and psychological positions. However, at the start of the project this is something that could not have been known and it was therefore necessary to be over protective and to consider fully (and be prepared for) the risks that might have emerged. For practitioners, therefore, it is not just an understanding of context that is necessary, but the anticipation of risk – an ability to consider “the risk of risk” – that builds the critical awareness needed to inform the specific and contextualised knowledge that arrives later on in the process.

It must also be remembered, however, that whilst understanding that the risk of risk is indeed important, practitioners should not find themselves frozen and unable to move for fear of causing harm. As Salverson (2008) acknowledges, “Our contemporary zeal for critical thinking is having the effect, however unintended, of creating a community of people ... who are stuck in a paralysis of caution, and who find it increasingly difficult to act in the world” (pp. 246-247). I can recognise Salverson’s paralysis of caution as something that has occurred within my own practice on the research project and from which I could only escape by achieving a sense of balance between the potential risk and the potential good of the work. For whilst Cohen-Cruz (2006b) acknowledges that “telling such stories can inadvertently reinforce such oppression rather than liberate from it” (p. 24), writers such as Nelson (2011) identify that “the students felt power in their shared stories of surviving life’s challenges” (p. 165). Although, in practice, the complexities of approaching a technique that carries within it both a great potential for good and for harm are considerable, the potential benefits of this

work must not be forgotten. This chapter has so far concentrated on the risks and challenges presented by Gordana and Christian's personal narratives, but the fact that both participants expressed an overwhelmingly positive experience from telling and performing these stories should not be ignored.

In her interviews, Gordana expressed a sense of strength and empowerment through being able to tell her story: "It's a good chance to open up and say this is what I've gone through" (Gordana, interview G2). She also stated that she was "glad" (Interview G1, G2) to have had the chance to tell this narrative. At the end of the project, Christian stated: "I am really thankful for having this project.... It has made me look at my life and say how long I am going to keep living this life you know" (Interview C2). Although initially he struggled with performing the representations of Dad, in his interviews Christian stated that the role had reminded him of who he was and who he wanted to be. He also articulated that creating and performing these stories had contributed to a process whereby he realised that he needed to forgive his father. He stated in his final interview that it was this awareness of the need to forgive that had allowed him to play the character without any negative effects. It is clear to understand from these statements that despite the risks involved in the telling of their narratives, there was a positive outcome for these participants and the experience of contributing personal stories enhanced their sense of the benefit that they gained from the project.

It is therefore essential that we consider Cohen-Cruz's (2006b) statement that stories such as these can reinforce oppression as a warning – a call to action and awareness, rather than as a measure to immobilise and stifle practice. It is significant that such warnings are not definitive or finite, but merely prepare the practitioner for the possibility of danger, rather than preempt its inevitability. We must take heed of these

warnings, being aware of the risks inherent within this work and engaging in a rigorous reflective practice that enables these issues to emerge and be accounted for. Such awareness of the potential risks can prepare practitioners for the complex “contingency of the practice” (Thompson, 2005, p. 40) and build support structures for the measures that must be taken if these risks manifest within the work.

6.2 Community Performance and Risk

This chapter has so far been concerned with risk in relation to personal safety and the responsibility of practitioners to ensure the well-being of participants. Much of the literature examined within this chapter thus far has also concentrated on illuminating ethical issues solely in relation to the teller, a discussion which has centred around the idea that “telling such stories can inadvertently reinforce such oppression rather than liberate from it” (Cohen-Cruz, 2006b, p. 24). However, when considering this statement in relation to the concept of risk in community-based theatre, my research project has also highlighted the need to enter into such dialogues beyond the immediate scope of the project participants. These considerations have largely emerged from my reflective journal and my reflexive and critical thinking of the practice throughout the project. Whilst the individuals who are directly involved in the work are necessarily the focus of close examination and analysis, if community-based theatre is to engage with a community-building framework, then the needs of the wider community (and communities) must also be brought into such discussions. This is especially pertinent due to the performative attributes of theatre and the widely used model of performing community-devised narratives to the community itself.

Donelan et al. (2006) state that “an adjunct to community empowerment is community strengthening through enhanced citizenship and community connectedness” (p.

68). This statement upholds the argument expressed within the previous two chapters that this field of practice has the potential to contribute to positive forms of community building. However, within this dialogue about risk, it must be considered that whilst community-based projects are often expressed to be empowering for the participants involved in making and performing the theatre, this cannot be assumed for the wider community and in particular, those community members who have interacted with the performance as audiences or through further dialogues. The point that “it may not be clear whether the outcomes are seen as being for the individual, community or organizations within the area” (Kemp, Chavez, Harris-Roxas, & Burton, 2008, p. 462) is critical to consider within community-based practice and those working in this area must question the assumption that the concept of benefit is automatically transferable between various sectors of the community. The implications of this and the potential consequences for a community audience are therefore integral to any conversation about risk and ethical practice.

Jeffers (2008) states that “applied theatre practitioners tread a precarious line between producing validation, on the one hand, and victimhood, on the other” (p. 217). Although within the context of her article Jeffers is undoubtedly referring to the risk for participants retelling their traumatic narratives, it cannot be overlooked that there is also a risk to the observers of such stories. As Neumark (2007) acknowledges, “this listening however is not without risk for the teller nor for the one who bears witness” (p. 143). It is therefore identified here that *watching* community performances of devised work that is born from participants’ painful memories, carries comparative risks to that of *telling* these narratives and can potentially serve to unknowingly retrigger audience members’ own memories and cause secondary trauma.

In addition to this, the inherent nature of audience presents further complications. Hopkins (1996) states that “I find it virtually impossible to tell a story with which I am not comfortable” (p. 294); however, Hopkins’s concept of being comfortable, or indeed the idea of informed consent that was discussed in the previous section of this chapter, is largely nullified in an audience scenario. As audience members will largely be unaware of the content of such performances, the “cost of listening” (Salverson, 2008, p. 249), may be that individuals can therefore find themselves in an emotionally compromised position that they have neither wanted nor chosen.

Whilst it is necessary to acknowledge the risk of retraumatisation for audience members and to consider the complicated state of witnessing individual stories and collective community narratives, my research project has illuminated further issues of risk for community audience members that I believe need to be explored in full and which have not yet been acknowledged within the thesis. Therefore, instead of returning to a discussion centred on the risk of triggering retraumatisation, I intend to continue by exploring points of risk around community empowerment, identity, and blame that were raised by the research project. Whilst this focuses largely on the impact on community, the following discussion also considers the potential ramifications that these issues hold for the project participants and how practitioners can negotiate the conflict between honouring the narratives being told whilst also considering the consequences of such storytelling on both community and participants.

I believe that it is important to recognise here that I do not intend to suggest within this chapter that participants and community inevitably belong to separate “sides” within theatre projects, nor do I advocate that this work creates such a division. In fact, it is essential to remember that the participants are actually part of the wider community (and communities)

about which I am speaking. In many instances and aspects of the field, creative projects such as this celebrate the community and bring people together. Several positive elements of the project were detailed in length throughout the previous two chapters and I maintain that this benefit is a fundamental component of the work. However, the unique context of this specific project has presented several points for discussion, which I believe demand further consideration and attention within this chapter on risk.

In the previous chapter I identified that the narratives emerging from the theatre-making process, and in particular *Bob's Story*, portrayed the characters in negative circumstances. Within my project the tensions around the representation of community can be seen in the negative portrayal of culture, or of a specific cultural group. Whilst the dialogues that surrounded the initial devising of Bob centred on the struggles that the three African participants – Christian, Catherine, and Emily – perceived within their African communities, the eventual performance was not intended to be overt in presenting the narrative as a reflection of the participants' own cultures and communities. Although it was specified within the devising process that Bob and his family were African and had arrived in Australia as refugees, this was not explicit within the dialogue of the narrative. However, it was still possible to identify that the characters were of African heritage through their performed characteristics, such as accent or specific gestures which related to archetypes such as the “gangster” figure. Additionally, Christian, who performed all of these characters, was African and as such it could be read by an audience that the characters therefore also possessed a similar race and cultural heritage and by extension were representative of African culture and community.

With this context in mind, the questions that I want to raise within this section of the chapter pertain to the circumstances of performing negative community narratives within the

community itself. Neelands (2007b) states that, “negative self images become internalised and prevent the formation of a healthy and positive cultural identity” (p. 310). Negative representations therefore have potential implications for audience members’ own identities, especially within disenfranchised or marginalised communities where factors of disempowerment and oppression already prevail. Within the research project we were performing a character that was facing immense social and personal challenges. This negative situation was particularly highlighted at the end of the performance where Bob contemplates his extreme loneliness and despair: “Now my heart is filled with scars that can never be erased and to be honest, sometimes I just feel like giving up” (Bob, *Bob’s Story*, script extract). It must be considered here that when a performance is brought into culturally diverse communities – even when it is devised and performed by members of that community –presenting a character from a similar background, language, culture, or faith and where the primary message that the performance offers to the community is how hard that character’s life is, how hopeless he feels, and how much his life is lacking, this sets up an incredibly challenging and difficult situation. Cahill (2008) states that “if the intervention reinforces identification with existing positions, then transformation is unlikely” (p. 21). Whilst the point made here by Cahill was addressed in the previous chapter in relation to the participants, in the context of this discussion it must also be considered from the point of view of the audience. Although the participants clearly carried values of education, awareness building, and change in their agendas for this performance, the negative representations can be seen as reinforcing the social positioning of vulnerable individuals or communities within the audience.

Due to changes in the circumstances of the project, the final performances were toured to schools and the audience members consisted solely of high school students instead of including wider and intergenerational community members. In observing these

performance events and from analysing the audience feedback, it is possible to understand that the students (who were a similar age to the character of Bob) found points of identification between the character and their own lives and between the social issues presented and their own communities. They also identified some of the issues presented as belonging to wider social problems, such as bullying or alcohol abuse, and many of their discussions in the workshop related to the impact of culture on how to best deal with these issues. A clear example of this was the moment in which a young student of Pacific Island heritage stated that the suggestions made by her peers on how Bob could tackle his father's alcohol abuse were not practical within her culture because of the need to show respect to elder family members. Overall, the students' examination of these issues mainly focused on the individual and personal, rather than moving into deeper explorations of community or social concerns. This can potentially be attributed to their age and also to the way in which they were asked to explore the themes within the play, as this focused on how Bob could manage his problems, rather than engaging in wider social analysis.

As the previous chapter discussed, Bob exhibited multiple points of personal strength and resilience throughout the play. However, the problems that he experiences in the performance establish him as a victim of oppression (which he must fight to overcome), rather than the perpetrator. Although the accompanying workshop demanded that Bob take responsibility for his own future, his problems within the play stem from the behaviour of others, but most explicitly from that of his parents. When viewed from a multilayered perspective the characters of the parents can themselves be seen as being oppressed through their sociopolitical status as refugees and through their poverty, alcohol addiction, and mental

health problems.²² However, when focusing solely on Bob's situation, the parents can be understood to be the oppressors. The young audiences, by identifying with Bob are encouraged to reflect on their personal engagement with the issues presented and how they might overcome the problems they face in their own lives. In contrast to this, had the project fulfilled its original intentions of performing to wider and intergenerational community audiences, then there would have been community members who were closer in age and social situation to Bob's parents, thus creating points of identification with the oppressors rather than with Bob.

If the play can be considered to be a reflection of the community itself (as discussed in the previous chapter), then the characters of the parents implicitly represent those members of the community who are older, who are in leadership positions within their families or the community, and who have influence over the well-being of children and young people. They also represent those community members who are struggling with events in their lives and who are potentially most vulnerable. Whilst the young actors welcomed the idea of developing the community's awareness of the social problems reflected within the play, the risk here is that the performance creates a scenario of blame and responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the older generation. Whilst the damaging behaviour of the parents needs to be acknowledged, it must be considered that reflecting this onto the community can also be a damaging act. Breed (2009), in relation to the community-based *gacaca*²³ in post-genocide

²² These issues were raised by the young audiences in the peer-led workshops with particular concern going to the role of Dad and his alcohol abuse. There was also interest in the mother's social isolation and several young people felt that Bob could improve his life by building a stronger connection with Mum.

²³ "Gacaca" refers to the Rwandan "participatory justice system used to try the perpetrators" (Breed, 2009, p. 148) of the Rwandan genocide.

Rwanda, states that “‘telling’ can quickly lead from a personal action of testimony into a public act of incrimination” (p. 154). Whilst Breed is clearly speaking from a context where public incrimination has a very different meaning and significance from that within my project, I believe her statement provides a warning that highlights a key area of risk within theatre that seeks to perform community narratives to the community. In my research project the aspect of personal testimony from the young people, combined with their desire to express specific social issues, carries within it a capacity for incrimination where implicit elements of blame and guilt can be projected onto the non-youth community.

The above point is especially important when the community context of the project is taken into account. The existing divide between the older and younger generations was expressed by Sarah during the project, when she said that, “parents don’t know what the children think and children don’t know what the parents think” (Interview S1). Melissa also stated that within the local community “there’s great levels of intergenerational conflict and misunderstandings” (Interview M1). In conjunction with the cultural implications within the play, it is therefore possible to consider that rather than creating awareness or mitigating social issues, the performance may in fact have been perceived as a derogatory and inflammatory comment on the community, especially towards the elder community members. Whilst the participants may see their intention as “giving back to the community” (Emily, interview E&C1), the audience themselves may receive a very different message and the performance may be met with reactions such as disempowerment, antagonism, defensiveness, and anger. There is also a risk that such incrimination will cause younger audience members to further question and challenge those who they perceive to be the perpetrators of these social issues, thus widening the divide between generations and creating further conflict.

Furthermore, discussions and considerations of risk such as this one should not only reflect on the potential impact from inside a community but also from outside and, in particular, the external perceptions of a specific community or cultural group. In the previous chapter I referred to witnessing a performance by the Flemington Theatre Group. I wrote of the group's desire to create performance work that would display positive role models for young African Australians and of their intention to dispense with the negative imagery that they felt was directed towards their communities. When I reflected upon this approach in terms of the theatre content that my group was devising, it was possible to see that the performance we had created perhaps only helped to enhance the negative perceptions aimed at African Australian communities. With this in mind, it must therefore be considered that our theatre piece, which was intended to highlight the social issues within these communities (and which the participants did not want to alter or modify despite the concerns documented here), might not only disempower African audiences, but may also reinforce negative thinking amongst non-African audiences.

The above is a critical element of risk when working with vulnerable or marginalised communities that is also acknowledged by Henriques Coutinho and Pompeo Nogueira (2009). With reference to work carried out by the theatre organisation *Nós do Morro* in the Brazilian slums of Rio de Janeiro, they state that some of the work “might be said to endorse the stereotypes that have impregnated the image of the favela²⁴ populations” (p. 175). Cahill (2002) also states that the violence in bullying dramas may “work to glamorise and reinforce the very behaviours it seeks to advocate against” (p. 20). When considering these statements in the context of my research project, it must be understood that negative imagery will

²⁴ “Favela” is the term used in Brazil to describe the shanty towns or slums which populate the country.

potentially cause further oppression from outside the community and thus assist in maintaining the status quo, rather than provoking development and change. Furthermore, instead of fulfilling the intention of building inter-cultural or inter-community relationships, it may actually contribute to building stronger structures of racist and discriminatory attitudes towards those communities. It must therefore be considered that representations of marginalised populations must be made with a critical awareness of the wider political and social contexts. Reflexivity must also be employed throughout the process to ensure that the theatre does not create further marginalisation of those peoples. This risk potentially undermines the intercultural community building that community-based theatre can achieve and which has been argued for throughout the thesis. Chapter 4, in particular, advocates for the powerful mechanism of intercultural relationship building through the interaction and embodied engagement with theatre. However, for these benefits to have any form of impact within and across communities, the portrayal and representation of community in performance needs to be carefully negotiated and I believe that this is an area which requires greater consideration within the field.

The inherent risk in sharing negative representations with community audiences and the challenge this presents to the community-building capacity of the work has been made clear within this chapter. Whilst the fact that the participants and actors are from the local community gives the work credibility (Govan et al., 2007), it also introduces a further element of risk. As Greer (2011) states, “bringing lives into performative representation may involve ... the exposure of the subjects identified in such dramas to punitive circumstances” (p. 59). For those who find that the consequence of voicing challenging social issues is that they are placed in a vulnerable position within their own communities, this work has far-reaching ramifications. As such, the concept of safe space “where physical harm is avoided

... [and] where the participants feel a sense of privacy and comfort” (O'Brien & Donelan, 2008, p. 183) must be considered beyond the obvious boundaries of the project.

The sense of vulnerability and the personal risk that participants take in performing to their own families, friends, and communities, and the need for recognition from those audiences, is acknowledged in the literature (Donelan et al., 2006; Greer, 2011; Hopkins, 1996; Nelson, 2011; Noble, 2005). However, Donelan et al. (2006) state that despite this element of risk, participants found performing to their peers empowering, a sentiment that was echoed by several of the participants involved in my project, despite feeling scared and nervous beforehand. Furthermore, Noble (2005) notes that affirmation and recognition from the community not only legitimated the participants' identities but also gave value to their stories and, by extension, their lives. In a telling echo of this statement, Emily, who had expressed fear around being on stage by herself during the work-in-progress performance, stated that it had been a good risk to take “because everyone enjoyed it” (Video footage, workshop 17). But as van Erven (2001) acknowledges, community support is critical and when this is considered alongside Emily's statement, there are significant questions raised about what might happen for participants if that support was absent or withdrawn.

Westoby (2008) states that community “is taken to mean a network of relations that contribute to a sense of belonging and connection” (p. 484). The participants in my project, in voicing hidden and sensitive community issues and in creating the potential for a negative response from community, are putting themselves at risk of damaging these connections and experiencing negativity – directed not only towards the performance, but additionally towards themselves as members of that community. Whilst the process of building narratives that are layered with personal risks may create empowerment, support, and strength within the project group (Nelson, 2011), the implications of performing these must be considered both in terms

of the risk to community and in the sense that there can be a risk from the community. If the community experiences a negative reaction to the performance, then those who created the representations are potentially placed at risk from those seeking to question or challenge the negative depiction of community.

Furthermore, many of the participants may be perceived as stepping out of their expected status within the community, especially as young people and even more so as young women. The literature often offers positive images of theatre's capacity to subvert these hierarchies and alter social positioning, even if only temporarily (Alrutz, 2013; Cohen-Cruz, 2006b; Govan et al., 2007; Greer, 2011; Hunter, 2008; Lev-Aladgem, 2008; Preston, 2009). Preston states that "it is the personal and political importance of being able to speak critically from a position of marginality that creates radical possibilities" (p. 67) and Lev-Aladgem states that "from the bottom-up perspective of the marginalised group, the theatre project provides an opportunity to articulate repressed and forbidden life materials that resist, challenge or negotiate in some way with the status quo" (p. 276). These qualities are recognised within the thesis and it is also acknowledged here that the disruption of social norms and the subversion of the power structures within which they live, may be a critical element of the participants' desire to engage with theatre. However, in the context of considering risk and the need to understand the ethical complexities of this work, it must also be acknowledged that a disruption of the status quo may create further consequences for the participants. Practitioners must therefore enter into community-based theatre work with the critical awareness that participants will return to their lives within that community once the project is over and that, as Noble (2005) states, "once aspects of self are released, there is no complete returning to anonymity or confidentiality" (p. 2). Therefore, any conflict caused by

a participant's involvement with theatre could have profound negative consequences for both the individual and the theatre's community-building capacity within that context.

Within the research project, the participants felt that these elements of risk to themselves were largely diminished by the "safety of fictional representation" (Donelan et al., 2006, p. 62). As Greer (2011) points out, participants want to be recognised for their stories, but not identified. As such, the layers of fiction that are placed over any truthful elements within the narrative offer – as one participant described – a "security blanket" (Kim, video footage, workshop 9) for those involved in making and performing these "dangerous characters and situations" (Donelan et al., 2006, p. 62). The notion of the narrative being just a story was discussed in the previous chapter and it was acknowledged that this functioned as a way through which the participants could reveal sensitive community or personal narratives. In the context of being at risk of repercussions from within or outside of the community, the use of the fictional world can also be seen as offering a further element of protection for the participants, not just enabling them to create those stories in safety (Donelan, 2002; Donelan et al., 2006), but also creating a safety for the performance and public discussion of controversial subjects (Christensen, 2000). Within the project, Kim acknowledged that the actions of young people often mean that they are subject to judgement or labelling by community, family, and friends. Kim's sentiment is also reinforced by Hunter (2008) when she recognises the risk that young people take "in presenting self and collective narratives publicly in a society where young people are often the object rather than the subject of attention" (p. 15).

By speaking through the filter of a character or a fictional story, the young people in the project felt that "it comes with protection" (Christian, interview C1) from such consequences. As Kim stated, "it gives people a way to express their own emotions in that

situation as the character, that they would never really say in real life how they are feeling” (Video footage, workshop 9). Further distancing between the actors and the characters was also done through stylised performance routines, humour, and through the Anglicised naming of the characters, with names such as Bob hiding the character’s ethnicity.²⁵ These multiple elements of distance created by the fictional and performative world which the narrative inhabited became an important part of the participants’ engagement with theatre and their feelings of safety in expressing themselves.

However, Cahill (2010) provides an additional warning of risk that suggests further consideration is required regarding the safety provided by the fictional membrane:

An assumption is made that the fiction provides a boundary which separates out “real” life and that the players are protected when working within this boundary.... the norms and expectations of the society direct the world of the character. Thus the naturalistic fiction does not necessarily provide the freedom to “be” different. (pp. 160-161)

Such concerns relate to points within the research project where specific audiences were perceived as being “too risky”. Throughout the project, certain risks were taken by Christian in terms of the performances that he undertook. In particular this refers to his decision to

²⁵ I would like to acknowledge here that these elements of theatre making and performance are all highly interesting and complex, especially in relation to how they function to create the sense of distance or separation between actor and character and what the purpose of this might be. I would like to give further space and attention to this discussion; however, within the realm of the thesis this has not been possible as other analysis has taken priority. However, I have recognised the importance of this aspect within my own thinking and I intend to explore this further within future dissemination of the research.

perform at his previous high school; however, there was another occasion where he happily continued with the performance after realising that he personally knew some of the young audience members from his community. In contrast to his willingness to perform on these occasions, he strongly rejected the idea of performing at the host organisation's annual general meeting. Here the audience was made up of his peers – young people closer in age and status to himself than had been the case in the previous events with the high school students. In addition to this, other performances at the meeting included a group of young men of African heritage presenting a hip hop and street dance routine. Christian also had a social relationship with many of these potential audience members, although several of them had also been involved in the drama project and were supportive of the performance. Whilst Christian had previously felt empowered and confident about performing the play in the schools, once the demographics of the audience shifted, the risks appeared to be too great and he declined to present even small sections of the play. It is unknown which element of this situation caused his reaction, but it would appear that the change in status of the audience and perhaps in particular the presence of other young men from various African communities altered his desire to perform the play. Although more needs to be known about Christian's reaction before further conclusions can be drawn, his reticence here supports Cahill's hypothesis that the fictional world of the narrative does not fully remove the element of risk for the participants and actors.

As with the earlier section of this chapter on personal storytelling, I have been speaking hypothetically when I present many of these considerations. It is important to recognise the difference between the risk of what could happen and what did happen in the reality of the project. Throughout this chapter I have presented the risks that I identified within my specific research context, as I believe these are issues which are necessary to

discuss and which bear an importance for the wider field. However, after critically observing and analysing the performances and taking into account the comments from audiences and participants, I am of the opinion that the risks of community performance that I have explored here did not manifest within the research project. This is primarily due to the context of the performances and the young audiences. I believe that performing to high school students alleviated many of the risks, as the audience perceived Bob as a peer who experienced similar issues to many of the young people who were watching. In addition to this, presenting young people with a performance about complex social issues – especially those which relate to the lives of young people – can be seen as a positive move. As McCreery (2009) states, “[art] which does not talk down to them or skirt round the issues, makes them feel *they* are being taken seriously” (p. 230, emphasis in original). In this sense, it is possible to see that the young people may have been particularly receptive to the negative narratives. Furthermore, from considering the audiences’ reactions to the peer-led workshops, it’s possible to understand that rather than seeing Bob as a fixed character of specific race or culture, the young audience members perceived him as a transmutable symbol of youth, which could be placed within discussions of multiple contexts, communities, and cultures. The range of issues presented also meant that many young people could identify with at least one aspect of Bob’s life and there was a great deal of support for Bob in the peer-led workshops, with the students expressing a strong desire to assist him in improving his life.

Whilst I don’t identify the risks discussed in this chapter as manifesting within the project, becoming critically aware of them was an important step in reducing risk and in approaching a more ethical practice. However, in the case of the research project, my critical awareness of the questions and issues discussed in this section was made particularly complex due to the explicit desire of the participants to create negative representations of

community. Through my consideration of how to balance the needs of both community and participants, albeit the assumed needs of the community, the research presented several complex questions and contradictions from within the field. As discussed at length throughout the thesis, the participants' intentions within the project were focused on highlighting several social issues perceived within their communities and they expressed a strong desire to speak up about these problems with the hope of creating a better future:

I think people have just added in what they'd like to fight for.... What they've seen that's not right and what they want to change. (Catherine, interview E&C1)

That's why I think it's very important for the community ... to see this, because it's actually educating the community to become a better community for themselves, for their kids, for their grandsons. (Christian, interview C1)

The above comments embody some of the core principles of community-based theatre such as voice, empowerment, self-representation, social action, and reimagining a better future for the community (Cohen-Cruz, 2006a, 2006b; Dennis, 2007; Govan et al., 2007; Horitz, 2001; Kelman, 2008; T. May, 2007; McDonnell, 2005; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009; van Erven, 2001). Such aspects are widely considered to be the backbone of many methods and techniques within community-based theatre and although many of the terms are contested, it is possible to see from the above list of references that they remain prevalent within the literature and practice of the field.

When considering these principles, especially in terms of voice, empowerment, and self-representation, there is also a strong focus within the field on participant leadership and autonomy and the development of this capacity through engagement in the theatre work. As

Kelman (2008) states, “the more this process includes the voices of the young people, the richer the work will be, both as meaningful art making and as research” (p. 94). In considering such statements and in returning to the arguments within the previous chapter and the section on personal risk in this chapter, there is a critical acknowledgement that “participants are free to talk about what interests them, regardless of what issues researchers want to address” (Zapata-Sepúlveda, 2012, p. 648). To repeat the quote which I have used extensively to demonstrate this point, “participants intervene, through the stories THEY choose to tell, and how *they* choose to tell them” (Cohen-Cruz, 2006b, p. 24).

However, the discussions on risk outlined in the above section demonstrate the potential dangers of honouring these principles in situations where there are negative community narratives. This raises challenging questions when there is a conflict between the needs of the participants and potentially those of the community, such as the one experienced within the research. Here, practitioners are placed in an ethically complex and oppositional situation, where they can pursue the desired agenda of the participants at the potential risk to the community, or modify the theatre content but undermine the autonomy and voice of the participants. Of course in practice this is rarely so clear cut and decisive and I have to consider what decisions I would have made and what alterations I may have sought, had my project eventually performed to wider community audiences – especially amongst the local African communities.

As I explained in depth in the previous chapter, the participants did not want to modify the narrative and had we pursued an audience with the local African community, I could have found myself faced with an uncomfortable conflict between making the script more acceptable for a community audience or upholding the participants’ desire to perform the piece that they had chosen. During the conversation with the participants about the

messages in the play and how these might be received by the community, I strongly felt that enforcing the idea of change would undermine the trust and respect that had been built within the project. Had the participants agreed with my points or raised these themselves, there would have been no conflict and changes could have been made. However, had this situation ever arrived at a point whereby my changes were imposed on their performance, I am critically aware that this would have created a heavy unease within the group and a betrayal of the values that we had previously worked by. On the other hand, it is necessary to understand that as the facilitator of the project it is my role to keep people safe and create a space of zero harm. As an educated professional, I also possess the skills to understand the complexity of this situation, whilst the participants cannot be expected to fully comprehend the depth of these issues. It thus becomes an impossible situation whereby there is no correct path and risks lie in either direction. Fortunately this situation was avoided and I was not required to make a decision one way or the other; however, this potential conflict presents questions about the field and reveals a dichotomy within the work that needs to be acknowledged and discussed further in both practice and research.

However, when considering these moments of contradiction and the tension between upholding the authentic voice of the participants and considering the potential risk to community, it must also be remembered that theatre has a historical legacy of provoking, challenging, and disrupting social norms. Furthermore, it is this very quality that has built a pathway for fields such as applied theatre to emerge. When one considers practitioners such as Ibsen, Brecht, or Boal, whose work helped influence the face of theatre and of society at those times (Boal, 1979, 2003; Wickham, 2000; Worthen, 2000), it is possible to understand that theatre's purpose has often been to shock and unsettle the audience, rather than to pacify or become a reflection of society's positive self-image. As Gordana stated within the context

of the research project, “we’re not trying to make anyone feel bad, but there are things happening and people are avoiding those things, so we try to make them aware” (Interview G1). It must be considered, therefore, that to avoid confronting social issues is to “dumb” the theatre down and silence the dialogues that can lead to change. In creating alternative content that reaffirms community instead of challenging it, the theatre is embodying a space that aims to eliminate risk, but also has the potential to mobilise, activate, and build community.

Whilst there are times when theatre may “not rest easily in community hands” (Sinclair, 2000, p. 66), it must be remembered that the potential remains for theatre to build dialogues within and across community and that this should not be lost or devalued through the fear and avoidance of risk. Nicholson (2005) states that “identity is created and performed in dialogue with others (p. 94). When this is considered alongside Bourdieu (1990) and Hunter’s (2008) theories on actions of representation that were discussed in the previous chapter, whereby community performance becomes a framework through which young people can speak to their communities, it is possible to see that community-based theatre can act as a positive point of communication and has the potential to open up dialogue surrounding the construction and exploration of identity.

Furthermore, Nicholson (2005) writes that “communities of identity are constructed when people recognise their own experiences in others, and share an understanding of each other’s values or stories” (p. 94). It is therefore possible to see the potential for community-based theatre to act as a point of connection between people’s experiences, thus building community rather than disempowering it or breaking it down. Here, as Nicholson suggests, it is the value of each other that builds the connection, a point which is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by T. May (2007) when she states that “the goal ... is neither agreement nor policy change, but a change of heart, a celebration of polyphony, a demonstration of the

multiplicity of experience and therefore of knowledge” (pp. 161-162). Whilst I uphold my argument that the risks discussed in this chapter require careful reflection and consideration, and even perhaps action, it is also important to know that when there is “reciprocated desire” (Arvanitakis, 2008, 2009) a community can be open to hearing the stories of others, even when those narratives are confronting or emerge from opposing sides (T. May, 2007).

It must also be recognised that a theatre performance, even when made by members of the community, represents only a version of the story (Cahill, 2008). A performance can feel like a powerful expression of truth for the participants and it is important for that version of events to be acknowledged and received by the audience. However, it is also critical for the community to know that any action of representation (Bourdieu, 1990; Hunter, 2008), whether in the form of performance, demonstrations, or more extreme displays of communication such as riots, “only embod[ies] one view, a personal one from a particular community perspective, whether informed or not” (Jan-Khan, 2003, p. 41). When considering the potential for risk, it is critical to recognise that for both audience and participants, “interpretations of experience are provisional, incomplete and contingent on time and context” (Govan et al., 2007, p. 75) and that there must be an opportunity for “legitimate external challenge or right of recourse in the wider society” (Neelands, 2007b, p. 309).

As a final point it must be understood that risk is not the ultimate component of this work and that becoming aware of the issues within practice should not overshadow its value or its potential for good. The previous two chapters refer extensively to the positive impact that was felt by the participants in the project and I have personally struggled with writing a chapter which offers a negative perspective of this discipline and potentially of my own work. However, as I wrote previously, I believe it is important to question and challenge the field. In a way, this chapter mirrors the step that the participants took within the research

project, raising difficult and sensitive issues with the hope that awareness may lead to a better future. In light of this, perhaps my final contribution to this section should not be one of warning, but rather one of growth and a nod to this hopeful future. For in addition to considering how to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes between participants and community, a further point for reflection must be how we can extend the benefits of this work to include community. As Hunter (2005) asks, “how does this ‘safe space’ become meaningful beyond its immediate community of participants?” (p. 141). It is my hope that this question opens up new perspectives around some of the issues presented within this chapter and that it leads to further examination, not only of the dangers within the work, but also of the potential for positive change that critical awareness carries.

I am not suggesting that my arguments in this chapter should be disregarded, nor am I advocating that risks should be taken without thought or care. The mere existence of a risk does not necessarily mean it should be eliminated, but rather it should be treated with consideration in the context of the project. Although this may mean that in many cases the practice will not visibly change, the reflective thought processes that uphold it will be more rigorous and practitioners will be ready to manage and mitigate risk should they need to. In the case of my research project, personal storytelling and performing negative representations of community, despite the risks, actually yielded many successes. Had I made the preemptive decision to redesign the narratives to avoid these risks, I believe that the performance, audiences, participants, and research would have been worse for it. As such, the negative content of the performance can be seen as something significant and effective, in addition to carrying the risks laid out in this chapter.

The duality “that representation in performance might both empower and weaken” (Greer, 2011, p. 59) is an important part of this work and it is essential that within the process

of becoming critically aware, the existence of both qualities is not forgotten. This chapter has demonstrated that there are many sides to this cautionary tale: where concepts of safe and risk are shifting and subjective terms, where a practitioner's critical awareness lies in both a specific context and a general preparedness, where moments of obvious risk can offer outcomes of great benefit, and where the techniques that are used to keep people safe can just as easily bring harm. The dichotomy of these arguments is visible in the literature of this field and within my own analysis of the research project, thus revealing the need for practitioners and researchers to extend their understanding of risk and place this within a wider framework of the ethical considerations that must be made within the field. In particular, this refers to being aware of the potential benefit alongside that of the potential harm and considering that an agenda of safety might merely result in silencing the participants and prohibiting their own agency and self-determination. Within the research project, the contingencies of practice (Thompson, 2005) created many challenging and ethically sensitive situations which required me to use and build upon my ethical framework and interrogate my own approach to the project. However, it was these ethically challenging situations that revealed some of the richest and most significant moments of the project. The concepts of safe space and ethical practice therefore refer not to the absence of risk, which serves to remove the potential for these moments to occur, but instead speak of an environment where risk is understood by both practitioners and participants and where further decisions can be appropriately judged by those who exist within that context.

Such issues are of critical importance within a field that engages with potentially vulnerable individuals and communities and these are "made ethically complex by [this] interaction" (Thompson, 2004, p. 151). The points raised within this chapter challenge the idea that community-based theatre can be upheld within the positive framework of

community building, or aspects within this such as empowerment or inclusion, without a critical analysis of the potential risks that may emerge. For “without the critical component, stories merely risk reproducing the dominant ideology” (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, pp. 139-140). Without a critical awareness of these questions and a careful consideration of how the answers relate to each specific context, practitioners risk entering into practice that fails to uncover the complexities that lurk beneath the initial layers of the work. It is therefore discussions such as the ones in this chapter that I believe can encourage and evolve the dialogues around concepts such as risk and thus serve to develop the understanding and application of this in practice. The capacity of the field to develop an awareness of risk alongside the creative practice can only assist in practitioners delivering work that better serves the communities they are working with and in and thus enable this work to move towards a more sustainable and unmitigated goal of community building.

Becoming critically aware of these issues throughout the research project not only contributed to the successes and achievements of the work, but it also made me think about the wider implications of community-based theatre that seeks to expose personal and community truths. Whilst the intentions are often transformative, I think that there are many questions that need to be asked about *how* and *why* we choose to illuminate these hidden elements of community. As Hughes et al. (2012) state, “these moments raise important questions for research and practice about choices relating to telling, including who is listening, what is being told and for what purpose” (p. 205). Through writing this chapter and within my own practice, I have come to realise that the issue of risk when performing community narratives, must be examined far more closely and carefully than is often expected. Whilst current literature explores some of the issues presented here, I believe that this is an area which requires further attention. If practitioners are to have a true and

comprehensive awareness of the implications of this work and if participants are to move through such projects with understanding and autonomy, then such issues must be brought to the surface of the field, drawing both reflection and further discussion to this area.

Chapter 7

Relationships, Representation, and Risk: Concluding the Research

In this final chapter I set out the conclusions that have been drawn from the research project and establish these within the context of the research questions. These are drawn together from the key arguments that are detailed within the thesis and the findings from each area of analysis. The following sections will therefore revisit the individual research questions and consider the ways in which these have been examined throughout the analysis chapters. Limitations of the research and recommendations for the future are also detailed at the end of the conclusion. The primary aim of this chapter is to establish the main themes and conclusions from the research and also to complete the story of the research project, thus drawing it to a close.

In bringing together these conclusions, I feel that I have achieved what I set out to do at the beginning of this PhD – to develop an original piece of research that was able to contribute knowledge to the field and further my own understanding of this work. I have further achieved the research aims to the extent that the research explores and documents the use of community-based theatre as a community-building tool within culturally diverse contexts. Furthermore, it is felt that the analysis of the data responds to the thesis topic in ways which are informative and useful to the field of both community-based theatre and community building.

The purpose of this research has been to examine the following core research questions:

- How can community-based theatre contribute to community building with young people in culturally diverse contexts?
- What are the ethical issues that arise from engaging in community contexts and how does community-based theatre respond to these?

The response to the above research questions has emerged through the examination of the practice-based research project that is detailed throughout the thesis. This examination has resulted in three chapters which present the data analysis and document selected research outcomes. These chapters should be seen as a progression that examines different facets of theatre and community building, each uncovering a new part of the research story. When seen in this way, Chapter 4 can be understood as examining the nature of community building between communities, looking at this through interpersonal elements such as relationships, contact, and interaction. Chapter 5, however, examines the nature of community building within community and explores this through dialogical elements such as narrative and theatrical representation. Chapter 6 finally discusses the challenges and risks presented by practice that engages with the techniques detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 and seeks to explore some of the ethical questions highlighted by the research. All three chapters address the research questions, although it can be understood that for the conclusion, the information that addresses the primary research question is principally drawn from Chapters 4 and 5 whilst that which addresses the secondary research question is drawn from Chapters 5 and 6.

7.1 The primary research question: How can community-based theatre contribute to community building with young people in culturally diverse contexts?

As the primary research question, this has formed the core element of the discussions within the thesis, with much of the analysis being dedicated to exploring the links between community-based theatre and community building. Throughout this process I drew on theory from the many disciplines that encompass both theatre and community so that the conclusions developed from the research are clearly grounded within both of these areas. As previously stated within the literature review, I found that the literature of community-based theatre and community building rarely interact in ways which respond to the complexities of both areas of discussion. Within my own practice in community-based theatre, I also found frustration in feeling ill-equipped to articulate the outcomes of community-based theatre in ways which move beyond a sense of *what* has occurred and which can examine *why* and *how* within a community-building discourse. As a result, the research responds to this need and is specific in examining how community works and where theatre fits into this and provides answers about how community-based theatre can contribute to community building.

In outlining the contribution that community-based theatre makes to community building, several findings are presented within the examination of the common ingroup identity model developed by Gaertner and Dovidio (2000; Gaertner et al., 1999). Using the qualities of effective contact (intergroup cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms) the literature situates this theoretical framework as a method to reduce intercultural prejudice, therefore building opportunities for positive interaction and healthier intercultural relationships (Cunningham, 2005; White et al., 2014) and thus impacting wider

community-building outcomes (Billett, 2014; Cahill, 2002; Hunter & Milne, 2005; Lev-Wiesel, 2003; Runyan et al., 1998; Townley et al., 2011).

One of the key conclusions made by the research is that several of the inherent qualities found within community-based theatre praxis correspond to the conditions for effective contact as set out by the common ingroup identity model. This conclusion is particularly significant as it positions community-based theatre as a community-building tool that can contribute to the development of intercultural relationships and reduce intercultural bias or prejudice. It is further concluded here that this finding has an impact on the way that many of the foundational qualities of community-based theatre can be perceived, moving discussions away from simplistic anecdotes about building relationships and working together, towards a more clear and tangible approach that explains the contribution that these elements can make towards community building.

In further examining the findings that emerged from this line of analysis, it is concluded that the qualities of cooperation and common fate were largely fulfilled through the creative collaboration of theatre making and performance, which required cooperation, compromise, and the negotiation of multiple ideas, disputes, or differences of opinion. It is also concluded that the element of play assisted the project in fulfilling the conditions of the common ingroup identity model by facilitating positive interaction and cooperation. As the quality of cooperation has been shown to have community-building outcomes within the common ingroup identity model, it is concluded that the interaction and creative collaboration found within theatre making and dramatic play can be considered as community-building tools which created opportunities for positive intercultural relationships to form.

The research also concludes that the collaborative aspects of play, theatre making, and performance created shared goals, both large scale (such as the final performance) and small scale (such as playing a game or developing a creative idea) which fulfil the condition of common fate as part of the common ingroup identity model. It is also concluded that the democratic and participatory framework of the theatre project was particularly beneficial in supporting the participants to develop their own sense of common fate. This is due to the fact that participants felt activities were set up so that the interaction could be driven by the young people, enabling them to be their own agents of the process rather than passive recipients of an external agenda. This was found to be important in terms of their positive feelings about the interaction within the group, their shared goals, and the development of the relationships throughout the process.

In relation to the quality of equal status, the research concludes that although the participants did not necessarily share equal status in the wider sociopolitical and economic contexts of their lives, the young people felt a sense of equality amongst the members of the theatre project. The research finds that this sense of equality appeared to be present regardless of the size or significance of the creative role that each member played, or how active they were in attending workshops and rehearsals. Most significantly, the research also finds that participants expressed a sense of equal status whilst simultaneously acknowledging the value of their differences. From the analysis of this concept it is concluded that the value which the participants placed on each individual's unique qualities created a sense of being a stronger and more vibrant ensemble. This supports literature which states that equal status may be detrimental to community building (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and that recognising distinct qualities alongside equal status may have more impact on reducing intergroup bias than equal status alone (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone & Brown,

1986). It is also concluded that the democratic, participatory, and collaborative framework of community-based theatre enabled a sense of equality to emerge whilst still maintaining space for the distinct ideas, skills, and identities of the participants to be valued and encouraged within the theatre-making process. It is therefore posited that this not only fulfils the necessary quality of equal status within the common ingroup identity model, but that the capacity to nurture both common ground and the celebration of difference enhanced the community-building potential of the community-based theatre project.

In terms of the final quality of supportive norms it is concluded that the project's strengths approach to working with young people contributed towards a culture where the participants were able to support each other. It is further argued that the depth of the interpersonal relationships formed by the various other qualities of contact documented in this section, also contributed to the levels of support within the project. The research finds that the support offered between participants strengthened the interpersonal relationships and assisted with building a stronger sense of community within the group. This subsequently assisted the participants in functioning more effectively as a team and enabled them to outwardly identify and express the contribution that different group members made to the process. As a result, this once again identifies that community-based theatre fulfils the criteria set out by the common ingroup identity model and demonstrates the community-building potential that the quality of support brings to community-based theatre.

Furthermore, the research concludes that whilst there were many aspects of community-based theatre that facilitated the qualities of contact described by the common ingroup identity model, the theatrical elements of narrative and embodied engagement played a highly significant role. The collaborative development of stories involved sharing information, which developed a profound sense of trust, connection, and respect that

transcended the degree to which these had been generated through other activities in the project. This was further enhanced when personal information was shared and when these personal stories came to be worked on by the group. The research finds that by introducing the element of performance and embodied engagement with these stories, the participants were able to “show” and not just “tell” these narratives, thus deepening their connection to the story and to each other. Furthermore, the research finds that these techniques opened up opportunities for intercultural dialogues amongst the group, thus promoting further engagement between the participants and developing new avenues for positive intercultural relationships to develop. Whilst the engagement with story and performance can be considered intergroup contact, it is concluded here that this should be seen as an enhanced and enriched form of interaction that deepened the outcomes and the significance of these for the participants. As a result, the qualities of intergroup cooperation, common fate, equal status, and supportive norms can be considered heightened by the introduction of the theatrical elements of story and performance.

Drawing on the findings from the research project it is therefore concluded that community-based theatre fulfils the qualities of contact as set out by the common ingroup identity model and builds relationships between participants. This subsequently positions community-based theatre as an effective tool for community building and outlines some aspects of the contribution that these techniques can make within a community-building discourse. Findings by White et al. (2014) that document the long-lasting effects of a reduction in bias also suggest that the impact from a community-based theatre project can potentially last beyond the direct boundaries of this work. It is also identified here that this contribution is particularly relevant within culturally diverse communities due to the capacity to build intercultural dialogues and introduce meaningful interaction between group members

of different cultures. Furthermore, it is concluded that the framework of community-based theatre enables the level of contact and the development of interpersonal relationships to move beyond the basic terms of the qualities documented by the common ingroup identity model. This not only establishes community-based theatre as an effective instrument through which to build community, but also suggests that this practice offers additional layers to intergroup contact, which can generate heightened community-building outcomes.

It is also identified that many of the elements of theatre practice documented here (such as relationship building, interaction, and support) will be well known to theatre practitioners and theatre researchers. However, rather than communicating something which is already known within the field, it is my intention to use the common ingroup identity model to offer a clear and concrete framework for examining community building and for articulating some aspects of the contribution that community-based theatre can make to this. As a result, these conclusions offer a pathway through which community-based theatre as a community-building tool can be recognised, understood, and expressed in clear and tangible terms. It is this which I consider to be the original aspect of this work and which places many of the qualities of community-based theatre discussed here within a new light.

Moving away from the framework of the common ingroup identity model, the research concludes that community-based theatre created a representational space which offered participants the opportunity for self-reflection and community dialogue. The research finds that the performance space became an arena where the participants could enter into a dialogue with community on their own terms. By using this space to create their own representations of community and by expressing a desire to convey these to their communities, participants were engaged in a process where storytelling, narrative, and performance became dialogical tools. This supports a range of community-building literature

which acknowledges the use of storytelling as a critical form of communication within a process of community action and change (Broad et al., 2013; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, 2006b). It is therefore concluded that community-based theatre can be seen as a mechanism for “giving expression to community” (Kuecker et al., 2011, p. 253). This discussion is therefore positioned within a community-building framework, whereby the representational space of theatre opens up a point of connection and communication between community members, enabling a process of storytelling and dialogue with and about community to emerge.

Whilst much community-based theatre literature suggests that narratives of community can be reimagined so as to engage with a better and more hopeful vision of the future (Beswick, 2011; Cahill, 2006, 2010; Govan et al., 2007; T. May, 2007; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009), the research project challenges this as the participants developed a narrative that explored several negative community issues. The research concludes that the participants used the theatrical space to represent their community as they saw it, rather than as it could be, thus reflecting the community back to itself and defining rather than redefining their position. Portraying negative elements of the narrative was found to be empowering and the young people identified positive outcomes from this in relation to having a voice and entering into a dialogue with their community. As a result, it is understood that the negative representation of community was not intended to portray a disadvantaged or disempowered version of the young participants, but instead was used as a means of demonstrating the strength and conviction of their collective voice. This also supports community-building literature which acknowledges that the recognition of a problem is one of the primary stages of community action and change (Figueroa et al., 2002). It is therefore concluded that the negative representations developed within the research project can be considered useful

within a cycle of community building. It is subsequently argued that the exploratory and dialogical nature of community-based theatre can be seen as playing an important role within the community-building process by providing a critical link between identifying the problem and exploring the solution.

The above finding was a particular learning point for me, as throughout the research project I found it difficult to reconcile the positive feelings of the participants in creating the negative narratives, with my concern that the character of Bob, and by extension the young participants, were represented only in terms of disadvantage. As a result of several discussions with the participants, the element of hope became an important aspect to the narrative. The research subsequently finds that whilst the negative representations of community were seen to be a critical element of the narrative and the young participants' voices, the presence of hope was significant in offering the character a way out of the cycle of disadvantage. The research further identifies that due to the representational space created by theatre, the element of hope also opened up a pathway for participants to consider their own choices and perceive a sense of hope in their own lives. As a result, the research suggests that if community-based theatre is to contribute towards community building, that negative and positive elements of narrative must be considered on a spectrum and that a balance must be maintained so that opportunities for change can occur. This is supported by the work of Cahill (2006, 2012) who warns that problem-revealing narratives can lead to disempowerment and a sense of an inevitable outcome if they do not generate the possibility of change.

The research further concludes that the representational space provided by community-based theatre allowed for self-representation within narrative and performance, leading to reflection upon and exploration of personal identity. This self-representation

enabled participants to interrogate their own experiences through characters and story, embodying these experiences in performance and thus positioning themselves within a performed space that is “both real and reflected” (Christensen, 2000, p. 169). This opened up opportunities for the discovery and reimagining of self whereby further understanding could be gained and change could potentially occur. The research also finds that self-representation within narrative and performance was used to communicate aspects of identity to the audience. In this way, community-based theatre enabled identity to be expressed, revealed, and extended, thus developing the participants’ sense of self. Whilst this is significant for individual participants, it is also important within a community-building discourse as individual change is essential to wider community change (Figueroa et al., 2002). Furthermore, within the context of the research which encouraged the development of leadership skills and supported the strengths-based “promise” (Wright, 2011) of young people, exploring an enhanced sense of self is understood as reaching beyond the realms of the individual and engaging with wider initiatives of community building.

The research also concludes that the use of narrative facilitated a process of intercultural dialogue to emerge within the project, where participants of different cultures were able to communicate with each other, particularly about elements pertaining to their individual cultures. This conclusion has been presented in relation to the common ingroup identity model, but warrants revisiting in order to highlight this contribution away from the framework of the model. The research finds that through the telling of stories (both personal, such as those that informed *Nora’s Story*, and fictional, such as the devised narratives in *Bob’s Story*), participants felt they had gained intercultural awareness and understanding, thus leading to a sense of community building within the group and the creation of shared meaning. Stories thus became a way not only to represent community and identity, but also to

explore, share, and learn about culture. Furthermore, it is concluded that the fictional frameworks of character and story enabled participants to introduce elements of reality into the fiction without risking feelings of exposure or vulnerability. As a result, it can be understood that the theatrical elements of story, character, and performance operated as a “membrane” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 145) through which the participants could contribute and explore aspects of both fiction and reality, creating a process of fictional storytelling and real-life dialogue. It is concluded here that the synergetic process of story and dialogue opened up the representational space through which participants were able to explore and communicate their reflections of community and self.

The research therefore concludes that community-based theatre can be understood as an act of representation (Bourdieu, 1990; Hunter, 2008) that can facilitate dialogue and expression within communities. This is a critical point within community-building narratives as “community is built on shared discourses about who the community members are – their identities, desires, and shared lived experiences – what their most important opportunities, obstacles and issues are, and what/how they should do to address them” (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a, p. 177). The conclusions outlined here demonstrate that participants used theatrical techniques to convey who they are, to communicate their most important issues, and to examine how they can address these. This consequently places this work firmly within the realms of being a community-building tool and clearly outlines the contribution that this aspect of the work can contribute towards such an agenda.

The thesis also reveals the challenges that arise from working in community contexts and in considering the contribution that community-based theatre can make to community building, and these inevitably became a part of this examination. It is concluded that the challenges faced by the research project demonstrate the complexity of

working in community settings and highlight the struggle that participants and practitioners can face in engaging with this work. Community-based theatre often seeks to work with marginalised groups and it is therefore recognised that community-based theatre participants can have unstable and vulnerable personal lives, even when this is not immediately apparent within the context of the work. As a result, and as the progression of the practical research project demonstrates, the direction of community-based theatre can suddenly shift and turn and rapidly come to embody the messy, uncertain, and conflicted place described by Hughes et al. (2012).

The research finds that the complexity described above is potentially a threat to the community-building work, as projects which become destabilised may be unable to continue or maintain a positive impact in the context. However, this study also finds that although several participants were lost to the project, the participants who remained demonstrated considerable resilience and ownership over the work. It is concluded here that this was potentially a result of overcoming the challenges that the project faced. It is also thought that the sense of shared struggle contributed to deeper relationship building, thus connecting this conclusion to the earlier findings regarding relationships and community building. As a result, although it can be identified that the complexities of this work may jeopardize the contribution that community-based theatre can make to community building, it should also be recognised that the mess and uncertainty of community practice can offer positive outcomes and lead to enhanced community-building results. Furthermore, the research concludes that whilst community contexts are inevitably unpredictable, community-based theatre has the capacity to approach issues with the flexibility and responsiveness required in order to negotiate these contingencies. As a result, the research finds that part of the contribution that community-based theatre makes to community building is the ability to respond to challenges

in ways that support the participants and which enable the community-building principles of the work to be upheld.

In drawing together the different threads from within the thesis, it must also be noted that whilst the primary research question focuses specifically on culturally diverse communities and the conclusions support the use of community-based theatre within these contexts, there was an interesting finding that potentially challenges some of these assertions. As a result of the discussions presented within the thesis regarding the African young people who developed the origins of *Bob's Story*, the research concludes that the sense of mutual belonging to a cultural identity enabled deeper discussions about community to emerge. Furthermore, it is posited here that the cultural diversity within the wider group at times hindered the participants' capacity to explore these issues fully. This was a learning point for me as I had approached the research with the single focus of examining it through the lens of cultural diversity. Although the research identifies that community-based theatre can contribute towards community building in culturally diverse contexts, it is also argued that community-building work must be in place for specific cultural groups. As the findings from the research demonstrate, there must be recognition given to the need for participants to explore their cultural communities within the context of that specific community.

A further conclusion to emerge from the research project and the literature surrounding community building is the need for a catalyst (Baxter, 2014; Broad et al., 2013; Drake et al., 2014; Figueroa et al., 2002; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a). Although there is much literature that places an emphasis on community-led action, giving recognition to the fact that "communities know who they are and what they want" (Reardon, 2003, p. 3), there is also recognition that communities do not spontaneously initiate dialogue (Figueroa et al., 2002) and that external intervention is often required to begin the process of social change.

The key to this must therefore be a community-building practice that can provide the external catalyst and also uphold participatory values of change that are driven by the needs and voices of the community. In examining the answer to the primary research question, it is concluded that community-based theatre not only fulfils a community-building role, but that it has the capacity to provide the spark of an external stimulus and operate within community in a way which honours the discourses of that context, bringing community members together to cultivate authentic interaction, collaboration, and dialogue. It is therefore recommended that community-based theatre be seen not only as being able to contribute towards community building, but that its capacity to balance intervention and participation further positions it as an effective approach within community contexts.

The above paragraph, in identifying theatre as a catalyst, raises an interesting question about whether the performance is a necessary element of the community building process. Within this specific context, the participants expressed a strong desire to create and perform the theatre piece, with the intention of sharing their stories with the community. However, it must also be noted that due to the circumstances of the project, the majority of the young people did not participate in the final performances, and yet their interview data suggests that they still took away positive, community building outcomes from the project. As a result, it is suggested that the element of a performance is not necessary to achieve community building, however, it is noted that sharing the theatre work can be of great interest for young people and can enhance opportunities for community building by widening the reach and potentially increasing the impact of the theatre work.

It is also identified within the thesis that there is a need for interaction that fosters positive intercultural relationships, particularly within a local and global context where recent events have brought many cultural tensions to light (Barclay & West, 2006; BBC, 2015;

Burchell, 2007; Jan-Khan, 2003; Johanson & Glow, 2007; McCarthy, 2009; Sokhi-Bulley, 2015). The conclusions made here support a recommendation for community-based theatre to be recognised as a tool that can contribute towards building and strengthening culturally diverse communities. However, it is also important to acknowledge that these recommendations exist within a context that has expressed the need for further intercultural community-building work to occur. Whilst community-based theatre cannot act alone and must occur alongside other community-building initiatives, it is suggested here that community-based theatre must be seen as having a role to play within emerging community-building frameworks. It is further hoped that by improving awareness of the specific contribution that community-based theatre can make to community building, that the extent and scope of community-based theatre projects can potentially increase.

7.2 The secondary research question: What are the ethical issues that arise from engaging in community contexts and how does community-based theatre respond to these?

Whilst the preceding discussion addresses the contribution that community-based theatre can make within community-building contexts, the secondary research question interrogates this work for questions of ethics and risk. These questions specifically emerged within the research due to the sensitive nature of the theatrical narratives that were devised and performed by the participants and thus became a key element of the research project. The challenges that the project faced are also discussed, positioning this information within an ethical discourse. Although community-based theatre has been discussed in relation to the primary research question as a community-building tool, when considered in the light of the secondary research question it becomes clear that when engaging with community contexts,

this approach is complex and requires an awareness of the ethical questions that accompany this practice.

In considering the ethical issues that emerged within the research project, the research identifies that the personal stories woven into the theatrical narratives often positioned the participants within their own retelling of a traumatic moment and it was therefore important to consider their emotional and mental safety. This supports literature which documents the risk of engaging with traumatic stories, noting that in doing so, there is a risk of retraumatisation (Bundy, 2006b; Cohen-Cruz, 2005; Hassall, 2014; Leffler, 2012; Wake, 2008). The research identifies that when working in community contexts, it should be understood that participants may be vulnerable or marginalised and therefore that their personal narratives may be connected to traumatic memories, thus creating ethical complexities within the work. Furthermore, the research finds that there is a risk of retraumatisation for audience members watching community-based performances and that whilst participants have a choice about what to tell and how to tell it, audiences may not anticipate the content of a performance and are therefore unprepared to witness stories which may trigger their own traumatic memories.

It is also concluded that the close links between fiction and reality that were discussed as a positive element in relation to the primary research question, here must be considered in terms of the risk of retraumatisation. The research concludes that there were moments within the project where the connection between participants and the fictional characters and narratives became problematic. It is argued that in this context, this did not compromise the participants' wellbeing; however, it is identified that this is an ethical consideration that is posed by community-based theatre and which potentially carries the risk of retraumatisation for the participants. The research also suggests that when a connection developed between a

participant and a “negative” character that this created disempowerment and encouraged negative perceptions of self. This aspect of the research project can be placed in the context of literature which discusses the risk of “encouraging narratives of victimhood” (Jeffers, 2008, p. 218) and acknowledges the challenges of young people “representing themselves in the ways in which they resent being perceived” (Beswick, 2011, p. 431).

The research also finds that ethical issues arose in relation to the development of negative representations of community within the theatrical narrative. The emphasis on the character’s disadvantage and the struggle that he faced in his life, seemingly without end, created a potentially disempowering narrative. This is also important because participants and audience members could potentially identify with negative elements of the story, thus possibly promoting further disempowerment and, as discussed above, negative perceptions of self. As discussed in the previous section, the negative narrative was mitigated with elements of hope, which provided a balance within the character’s story and created an opportunity for the character to enter into a better future.

Ethical issues also emerged in relation to negative representations potentially disempowering community and putting the young participants in a position of risk. Regardless of the participants’ positive intentions, representing community and culture in a negative light may be received as derogatory and inflammatory by a community audience. This potentially introduces consequences for the young participants performing these representations, placing them within a vulnerable position within their community. Whilst participants may feel protected by the safe space within the project and the fictional boundaries of theatre performance, it must be recognised that these do not exist once the participants return to their communities. There may also be consequences for community groups who are the subject of negative representations within the theatre performance. In the

context of the research project and the nature of the narrative being performed, it is identified that had it been performed to a community audience, the performance may have reinforced the social positioning of the audience and projected a sense of blame onto elder community members. It must also be considered that negative representations may have consequences outside of that community, potentially enhancing negative (and even racist and discriminatory) perceptions of cultural groups, thus maintaining the status quo instead of challenging it.

Whilst the aim of much community-based theatre is to empower the participants, this agenda cannot be pursued at the expense of wider community members who may be in a vulnerable position themselves. Furthermore, it is argued here that it cannot be assumed that empowerment of the participants necessarily translates to the empowerment of the wider community. When engaging with community and responding to the ethical questions that arise in this work, the context must be considered beyond the participants themselves and practitioners must question for whom the work is prepared. It has already been acknowledged in the primary research question that the wider perspectives of the work must uphold community-building principles; however, the research identifies the need for the narrative and aesthetic elements of practice also to respond to this same call. Community stories and performance must be developed with an awareness of the wider political and social contexts of that setting and practitioners must engage in reflexivity when navigating the complexities of this work.

However, whilst there are ethical questions that emerge when working in community contexts, there is also an acknowledgment within the literature that the voices and needs of the community must be honoured. This is best articulated by returning to Cohen-Cruz's (2006b) statement that "facilitators provide the social context in which the

participants intervene, through the stories THEY choose to tell, and how *they* choose to tell them” (p. 24). Cohen-Cruz’s phrase causes us to reconsider the nature of community-based theatre practice and the values which uphold it. The positive outcomes discussed within the section attending to the primary research question, such as dialogue, voice, collaboration, and trust, can be undermined by the intervention of a facilitator’s external agenda. The research finds that although there were issues of risk surrounding the participants’ stories and performance, participants considered their own voices, agendas, and ownership over the work to be extremely important. As a result, it is concluded that enforcing change to avoid risk would have negated the trust and respect that had been built within the project and would have altered the values upon which the project was operating. This supports Cohen-Cruz’s statement about honouring the stories that the participants want to tell and also supports literature that recognises the danger in adopting an overly paternalistic attitude (Henriques Coutinho & Pompeo Nogueira, 2009; Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2003). Furthermore, this supports the resource model of working with young people by acknowledging the needs of the participants and enabling them to operate within the project as they desire. In order for theatre to achieve its community-building potential, young people must believe in the work that they are creating instead of feeling that their voice has been denied by an outsider to their community.

When negotiating ethical issues within community contexts, it must also be considered that the role of community-based theatre is often to disrupt rather than to pacify. The community-building discussions outlined in the previous section point towards a practice that can offer dialogue and connection to community and these elements should not be lost in order to avoid elements of risk. Furthermore, the research posits that in seeking to negotiate ethical issues, practitioners also face the possibility of crippling or paralysing their practice

for fear of the ethical complexities outlined here. It is therefore important that the benefit of the work is not forgotten and that practice is not immobilised or stifled through a “zeal for critical thinking” (Salverson, 2008, p. 246).

Bearing these arguments in mind, there are some considerable complexities that are faced when theatre engages with and operates in contexts of community. Whilst there are several questions about ethical practice and risk associated with community-based theatre methods, there is also a clear boundary within the field that the voices and stories of the community must be represented in ways which honour the needs of that context. There is also an acknowledgment that external intervention in how to tell these stories undermines the values of practice and that practitioners shouldn't necessarily avoid risk, but must also keep participants safe. The result can appear like a minefield of dos and do nots that might often seem to contradict each other. It must therefore be considered where the balance is and how community-based theatre can effectively and safely engage in contexts of community.

The research therefore concludes that in responding to the ethical considerations that emerge within community-based theatre, preparedness is key, and by anticipating and preparing for the risk of risk, practice need not be stifled nor its values undermined. The research also recognises that issues of risk must also be outlined to participants (P. Bundy, personal communication, February 3, 2014) so that informed awareness of the potential consequences is held not just by the practitioner, but also by the community members themselves. It is concluded here that this awareness and preparedness must also be dictated by the needs of the context and an acknowledgement that every community and participant will require a different approach. It is suggested that by preparing for ethical issues, a practitioner can become aware of the complexities of the work that may emerge. As a result, when the contingencies of practice (Thompson, 2003) reveal themselves, practitioners will be

in an informed and critically aware position and best able to respond to the needs of that context. As a result, this acknowledgement is not intended to limit the field, but rather assists practitioners in better understanding the ethical considerations of the context, therefore generating new possibilities for richer and deeper theatre making.

In responding to ethical issues, the research concludes that communication between the practitioner and the participants is essential for the safeguarding and well-being of those involved in the work. The research finds that communication played a significant role in mediating the ethical issues within the research project and in negotiating this complex space with the participants. Within the research project, ongoing communication also enabled the practice to uphold the values of voice and ownership by the community, whilst simultaneously creating awareness of the challenges faced by participants. By maintaining both an awareness of the risk and consistent communication with participants, ethically complex situations were jointly managed in an effective manner. This also maintained the sense of trust between participant and practitioner and acknowledged the young people's autonomy in making decisions about their stories.

The challenges faced by the research project have been highlighted in response to the primary research question; however, they also warrant further examination under the secondary research question. The ethical dimension of this issue particularly connects to the need to support participants and to recognise and work alongside the complexities within their lives, even if this is at the expense of other aspects of the project. As this section of the conclusion has discussed, the needs of the participants must come first regardless of what those needs are. It is concluded here that this is often a challenging position to maintain and within the context of the research project this frequently meant that other elements of the project were compromised in some way. It is also identified that this

compromise can create further issues for other participants and that a balance between different needs must often be negotiated.

In responding to these ethical issues, the research finds that community-based theatre must maintain a flexible approach to elements of practice and research in order to accommodate the needs of participants. The research also finds that in achieving a flexible approach that is responsive to the participants' complex lives, some issues can be mitigated and participants may be able to continue with the work in the best way possible. However, the research also concludes that in placing the needs of the participants first, the needs of the project and the practitioner are inevitably second. I often found the challenges within the research project incredibly hard. The project became so uncertain that in places it felt as though I was just "fighting fires" and that it was impossible to keep a sense of stability for long enough to achieve anything. At one point I feared that the entire thesis would be a discussion on how the project had "gone wrong". With the clarity of hindsight I can see that this would have been an interesting piece of research, but at the time it felt devastating. These feelings were particularly enhanced by my own investment in the project as my PhD research and my subsequent need for it to "succeed". This position raises some ethical questions regarding the needs (and feelings) of the practitioner and how these can be supported in practice whilst also maintaining the best approach for the participants. Although this tension is not fully addressed within the thesis, it is concluded here that this is an ethical issue that emerged within the research project and which subsequently warrants further examination.

In responding to the ethical issues outlined in this conclusion, the research finds that my own reflexivity around these questions and my preparedness for ethical issues were greatly improved through the keeping of a reflective journal. It is found that this reflective process also assisted me in processing the difficult emotions raised by the challenges within

the project, thus supporting my own needs and assisting me in overcoming these issues. It is suggested here that the reflexivity required by practitioners to consider the ethical issues presented here requires rigorous processes of reflective practice and it is therefore recommended that practitioners are encouraged to adopt such methods when engaging with and operating in community contexts. Furthermore, the research concludes that practitioners require support in developing their reflective skills and in preparing to engage with the complexities of community settings. The challenges highlighted in this section also reveal a risk that practitioners can be to blame when projects go wrong, thus supporting a call for work which examines the needs of the practitioners. As a result it is recommended that further investment needs to be given to professional skills development and support for practitioners who are delivering community-based theatre projects.

It is concluded here that whilst storytelling and community performance can have positive outcomes, there are considerable questions that need to be asked of these methods, particularly when engaging with the complexity of community settings and potentially vulnerable participants. Regardless of the positive outcomes of community-based theatre, a primary concern must be to keep the participants and communities in which we are working safe and the ethical implications of the work must therefore be considered by all who engage in this work. The challenges faced by practitioners who operate in community contexts not only demonstrate the complexity of this work, but highlight the need to have an informed awareness and sensitivity towards the demands of the context. It is suggested here that the field of community-based theatre (and the wider field of applied theatre) can only advance by engaging in a critical dialogue regarding these issues, acknowledging both the benefits and the limitations of the work. The answer should not necessarily be to eliminate or “fix” the ethical questions that arise, but rather

to acknowledge these as part of community-based theatre's engagement with community and allocate consideration to these within each context. As a result, it is suggested here that stronger foundations of practice can be built and that ethical issues can be negotiated within the context of the work.

7.3 Limitations of the Research

There were several challenges experienced within the research project which can be understood to have limited the scope of this study. Difficulties in recruiting young people to the project meant that there were low numbers of core participants in the theatre group. Furthermore, the loss of some participants throughout the research project meant that these numbers dropped even lower towards the end of the work. However, it must also be recognised that whilst a small group of participants may be seen as a limitation, this also afforded an intimacy and intensity within the research that would not have been possible with a larger group. Although the analysis developed from the research project is therefore based on a small-scale project, it is also felt that the conclusions that have been drawn from this are transferable to other contexts. In noting this, however, it can be considered that when the participant numbers fell and the project shifted focus, that a different methodology could have been applied. Although this did not seem necessary at the time, it should be highlighted that similar projects may benefit from this thinking.

Challenges in the recruitment of participants also resulted in an absence of Anglo-Australian and Indigenous Australian participants joining the project. It is unknown why this occurred and it is acknowledged that the project would have potentially benefited from greater cultural diversity, particularly one which included participants from the dominant

local culture. If the project were to be conducted again, greater attention would be paid to ensuring that these gaps did not occur.

The departure of certain participants also meant that potential data were lost from the project as it was not always possible to include these voices in the final round of interviews or the creative discussions within the theatre workshops. Furthermore, as discussed within the Methodology chapter, the absence of member checking following my analysis of the data has also limited the chance for participants to comment on the research findings. However, it must be acknowledged that these situations were beyond the control of the project and that at all times, the research process was required to act responsively to these complexities of the context rather than pursuing its own agenda.

Within the analysis of the data and the exploration of community building through the common ingroup identity model, it must also be recognised that this theoretical framework was not part of the initial scope of the study. As a result, the conclusions that I have drawn from this analysis can only position community-based theatre as a potential tool within this theory and cannot evidence the impact of community-based theatre as part of the common ingroup identity model. It is therefore recommended that further research is undertaken in order to develop knowledge in this area.

Furthermore, the research primarily examines community building in terms of localised groups of people. Whilst the thesis acknowledges that such communities can be formed through points of connection such as culture and interest as well as a local geographic context, the logistics of the research project required participants to have a degree of proximity to the local area. Whilst local communities are still recognised as an important element of community, there is an implicit challenge in conducting community-building work with local young people who may later move away from the area as they begin their

independent, adult lives. This thesis has identified that the effects of community-based theatre can have an impact on aspects that are transferable to other contexts, such as attitude towards others and sense of self, and so it can be concluded that community-building efforts are not lost if young people do not remain in the local area. However, this remains a question within the research and presents a gap that needs to be further examined.

7.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The arts have experienced increasingly challenging financial circumstances over recent years as governments and funding agencies have made cuts to arts budgets around the globe. Furthermore, within a community context, many community organisations and local councils are also experiencing financial pressure and for those professionals who have not previously encountered methods such as community-based theatre, there is often little recognition for the benefits of this work when budgets are tight. As a result, research is needed that not only supports community-based theatre, but which can also clearly demonstrate the outcomes of this work to those both inside and outside of the field and which can push understanding and comprehension of the field beyond its current limits. It is my belief that utilising theory and models from outside of the creative arts can strengthen the field and can potentially offer a more precise, and often scientific, overview of the outcomes of this work. Trends that respond to this need are already becoming visible within the wider applied theatre field, such as emerging research which examines links between theatre or performance and neuroscience (Century et al., 2013; Duffy, 2014; Shaughnessy, 2015). It is suggested here that research will continue to move in the direction of theory that can offer tangible presentations of this work and that such approaches will become increasingly useful in expanding the boundaries of the field.

The analysis conducted within the research project on community-based theatre and the common ingroup identity model has introduced a new area of inquiry that I have not previously encountered within existing psychology, community-building, or theatre literature, thus opening up exciting new opportunities to explore this connection further. As noted in the section on limitations, further research is needed in this area and I propose that research that specifically sets out to utilise the common ingroup identity model within a theatre context is required. This also responds to the comments made above regarding new directions for theatre research and the usefulness of looking outside of the field for new theoretical frameworks, thus situating this idea within an emerging future of applied theatre research. Due to the nature of the theory, the research may involve increased emphasis on experimental and quantitative approaches; however, it is hoped that the results would also be able to further evidence the impact of community-based theatre as a community-building tool, thus contributing to the bodies of literature across multiple disciplines.

It is also recommended that further research be conducted into community-building projects on a wider scale. Whilst there are some useful conclusions that can be drawn from the research project, for sustainable change to occur, projects must be able to reach beyond a handful of participants. The model of *Contacting the World* (Greig, 2008) from Contact Theatre in Manchester, UK, presents a framework which I believe has exciting potential within an Australian context. This process involves pairing or “twinning” youth theatre groups from around the world which then collaborate in the process of devising theatre work by communicating online and through sharing a series of mutual activities. The process culminates in a festival whereby all the theatre groups perform together in the same location. I believe that this concept offers some interesting possibilities to examine intercultural community building within a wider Australian context and that by replicating

or adapting such a process, a research project would be able to expand its scope to include different locations and cultural groups. This would also enable the inclusion of remote communities and could explore the benefits of connecting different groups of people with one another, such as Indigenous Australians, refugees and asylum seekers, and Anglo-Australians. There is also the potential for a research project along these lines to combine this concept with the above idea of integrating the common ingroup identity model into a piece of theatre practice.

There are also tensions and challenges from the research project that are not fully explored within the thesis. This is particularly true of the challenges faced within the project and the needs of the facilitator. It is my intention to publish further work on both the areas of the research that are explored here and the aspects that have not been included within the thesis. Furthermore, I believe that these are important areas of discussion within community-based theatre; however, they do not widely feature within existing literature. As a result, further research is recommended in these areas.

7.5 Final Thoughts

In wrapping up this conclusion and the thesis as a whole, there is a strong argument for community-based theatre to be seen as a community-building tool and an equally strong argument that highlights the ethical questions that arise from theatre that engages with community contexts. Rather than contradicting each other, these arguments present two interlocking jigsaw pieces of the community-based theatre picture that, when placed alongside each other, offer a more complete view of this work. Whilst the outcomes documented here have emerged from the highly specific context of the research project, it is expected that these conclusions are potentially transferable to other community-based

contexts. As a result, it is expected that the research will expand and extend the knowledge and understanding of community-based theatre and that it can contribute new dimensions of thinking within both the theatre and community-building fields.

Furthermore, the research has developed and presented its conclusions within a framework of analysis and theory from multiple disciplines. It is expected that this will have strengthened the weight of the arguments that have emerged and that this has built research that moves away from an advocacy role, towards one which is engaged with the critical dimensions of this work. This critical approach positions the research alongside literature that has moved beyond the original transformational discourse of applied theatre, thus situating the thesis amongst contemporary research in this field.

Delanty (2007) states that “community is never complete but it is always emergent” (p. 30) and it is my suggestion that community-based theatre must be considered in the same way. As a result, this practice – and its potential for contributing to community building – should not be considered complete or finished but rather seen as continually evolving and emerging. There is always the capacity to further develop our understanding of these methods and expand our thinking about how these contribute towards community. Therefore, opportunities must be made for the improvement and development of individual practice and the theory which upholds this, with practitioners and researchers alike engaging in these processes of change. This makes way for an exciting and unknown future to be built, with both community-based theatre and community continuing on their paths of emergence, never complete but always moving forwards.

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Appendix A

Community-Based Theatre Project Timeline

Time frame	Project stage	Activities	Participants present
January – April	Participant recruitment	This involved contacting local schools, youth and community organisations. Discussing recruitment strategies with the host organisation’s youth committee, designing and distributing marketing materials. This continued until April, when a core participant group began to form.	
8 th – 29 th March	Initial drama workshops. One 2-hour workshop per week. Total of four sessions.	Team building. Introducing drama games and image-based exercises.	Between four and nine participants. Three in regular attendance, others attending irregularly or as a one off.
3 rd – 10 th April	Intensive full-day workshops during the school holidays. Total of three sessions.	Further team building. Theme and character development through image making, devising, and discussion exercises.	Between zero and seven participants. One full-day workshop was cancelled due to a lack of participants. In other instances, some participants attended for only part of the day leaving low numbers in some parts of the workshop.
19 th April – 14 th June	Drama workshops. One 2-hour workshop per week. Total of 10 sessions.	Building on previous ideas around theme and character. Further character development. Devising scenes. Selection of two core narratives leading to further devising and script development.	Between zero and nine participants. A core group of six participants remained constant (these are Christian, Gordana,

		Participants also prepared and facilitated the warm-up exercises for each workshop and took part in a debriefing discussion with the rest of the group about this.	Sarah, Kim, Catherine, and Emily), although attendance of all six core participants was infrequent. Two workshops were cancelled due to lack of attendance.
20 th June	Midway performance event.	A staged reading at Footscray Community Arts Centre of <i>Bob's Story</i> and <i>Nora's Story</i> followed by a Q&A session.	Five of the core participants listed above – Gordana, Sarah, Kim, Catherine, and Emily.
21 st June	Debriefing session.	A celebration and debriefing of the midway performance event.	The six core participants and an additional member of the organisation's youth committee. Kim decided to leave the project following this session.
6 th July-12 th July	Drama workshops and rehearsals. Both full-day and 2-hour workshops. Total of four sessions.	Refining the scripts used at the midway performance event. Further script development and rehearsal leading towards the final performances. Development of facilitation skills and the peer-led workshop also took place.	Five participants remaining – Christian, Gordana, Sarah, Catherine, and Emily. Attendance was irregular, with numbers varying each week.
16 th July	Project development	Catherine and Emily gave notice that they would no longer be allowed to continue with the project. It was negotiated that these participants could continue for one final rehearsal and a performance. However, this was not possible due to a sudden death in the family. The participants	

		were not permitted to return following this.	
26 th July	Project development	The remaining participants were told of Catherine and Emily's departure from the project. Gordana also decided to leave the project at this point due to concerns that it was continuing for too long. Sarah expressed an interest in continuing, although not in a performance role. Christian also expressed a desire to continue with the project.	Christian, Gordana, and Sarah
24 th August	Project development	I met with Christian, who expressed a strong desire to continue with the project and to reach the performance stage. I proposed various ways forward and it was decided that Christian would perform <i>Bob's Story</i> as a solo performer and the script would be adapted so that one performer could play all of the different characters. Sarah would act as the Stage Manager. It was also agreed that Christian and Sarah would cofacilitate a peer-led workshop following the performance of <i>Bob's Story</i> . Melissa arranged performances at two high schools.	Christian and Sarah
31 st August – 13 th September	Rehearsal. Total of six sessions.	Rehearsal of the new adapted script of <i>Bob's Story</i> and development of the peer-led workshop.	Christian and Sarah. Sarah's attended regularly through this period but was absent on several occasions.

14 th September	Performance	A performance of <i>Bob's Story</i> , followed by a peer-led workshop. There was also a debriefing session with the participants following this event.	Christian and Sarah
7 th December	Rehearsal	Rehearsal of the script and peer-led workshop.	Christian
13 th December	Performance	A performance of <i>Bob's Story</i> , followed by a peer-led workshop. There was also a debriefing session with the participant following this event.	Christian (Sarah was unable to attend).

Appendix B

Sample Workshop Plans

#2 – 15th March 2012

Warm up exercises

- Introduction
- Name and action
- Random chairs
- Impossible game

Introducing devising

- Mini scripts (four-line scripts with no obvious meaning)
- In pairs, identify what you think it means and develop performance of the script
- Break
- Performance and discussion of mini scenes
- Recruitment discussion
- Kings Court
- 1-10

#6 – 10th April 2012

Warm up exercises

- Introduction – briefly recap last session
- Name and an action
- Giants, wizards, and elves

- Splat
- 3 things in common
- (Break)

Developing themes

- Grandmother's footsteps
- Discuss exercise in terms of previously identified themes: community, young people and risk taking, normalising hurtful language, effects of discrimination
- Create an image or a scene considering points/questions from the previous discussion
- Perform and process the images and scenes
- Discussion – how can these images and scenes work together? Is there a central character that can come out of this?
- Character development – replay moments from the previous scenes using a 'lift the mask' function. Hot seating.
- Kings court
- (Break)

Character development

- Continue to build on previous scenes and character
- Identify interesting points about the character that we want to explore – create images/scenes that do this e.g., a scene from childhood
- Identify other characters in this world, how do they connect to the central character? What are the relationships? Create a 'visual map' of this.

- Further devising and improvisation that examines the relationship with other characters
- Check out

#15 – 7th June 2012

- Introduction
- Warm ups facilitated by Emily
- Discuss warm ups and get a volunteer for next week
- Discussion about commitment and motivation
- In two groups, develop and expand previously devised scenes: Nora's scene and Jessie's unsafe scene
- Perform to each other and discuss
- Check out

Appendix C

Peer-Led Workshop Plan

- Introduction – Christian (2 min)
 - Introduce yourselves
 - Introduce Jenny and Melissa
 - Explain the ‘freeze’ rule (or alternative word/action)
 - Ideas for ‘safety’ instructions that you can use
 - No wrong answers or silly questions
 - We are going to join in as well so everything we do we’ll do it together
 - If you haven’t understood something please ask us to say it again so that we can explain it better (focus is on you – the facilitator, not them – the participant)
 - (Pick the ones which appeal to you or create your own ones)
- Names around the circle – Sarah (2 min)
 - Ideas for different instructions
 - Add a clap
 - Fast and faster and even faster
 - Different directions
 - Loud/quiet
 - Specify different actions instead of a clap – e.g., stamp your foot, jump, etc.
 - Encourage them to be fast and loud to create energy and momentum
- Get into groups – Christian (2 min)
 - don’t give a number to the teachers – put them into specific groups afterwards

- Brainstorming – Christian (10 min) Sarah to give out questions (see below for a list of these) and pens to the groups
 - Every group has a different question that relates to the performance
 - Groups to write their ideas/discussions down
- Using your question, discuss ‘What can Bob do now?’ and as a group make a new scene or frozen image that shows one of these ideas – Christian (10 min)
 - Explain or give an example of a frozen image
- Perform and discuss – Together (10 min)
- Questionnaires – Christian (Sarah give out forms) (10 min) [only used in the first performance]
- Closing (3 min)
 - Shake out tension – Christian
 - Word (a thought from the workshop) around the circle – like the first game – Sarah

[It should also be noted that Sarah did not attend the second performance and therefore her facilitation role was taken on by Christian.]

The questions handed out to the groups to be used as stimulus for image making are as follows:

- 1) Is Bob right for “sucking it up”? Why?
- 2) In the play, Bob says he wishes his Dad could get a job, but in real life we can’t rely on wishes. What can Bob do instead of wishing to cope with his home situation better?
- 3) In the play, Bob says he wants to be better than his parents. In what ways can he achieve this?

- 4) Bob says he feels like giving up because of the bullying. How can he take control of this situation?
- 5) Bob feels like it's him against the world. Is this really true? How could he feel otherwise?

Appendix D

Scripts

D.1 Final Script – Bob’s Story

Performed by Christian.

Please note that for the final rehearsals and performances, there was no formal script and Christian improvised the dialogue from a list of scenes and key points. Whilst the meaning and some dialogue was consistent, the exact words changed with each rehearsal or performance. The script below is provided as an example only of the narrative. This was taken from a transcription of a live rehearsal (with the stage directions added in afterwards) and is therefore different from the exact version that was seen in the performances. It is also important to note that the shift between characters was stylized using neutral, deliberate movements as costume was removed or put on with a visible change in body language once Christian became the new character. Please also note that the dialogue is highly colloquial as it has been written using Christian’s own dialect and turn of phrase.

Intended for one actor to perform all the characters. Difference in characters is portrayed through costume and changes in body language and voice.

Bob: [Calls out] Jesse. I love you. I mean, um [clears throat] um, how was your math test? Oh, okay. Um, listen, I was wondering, um, do you maybe later, I don't know, want to come to my house? Um, do you um, want to answer that?

Offstage removes Bob’s backpack and re-enters wearing Sean’s cap.

Sean: Who let the dogs out? Owe, owe, owe, woof. Whattup son, what you doing? I see you're here with my girl. I see you staring at my girl boy. You better watch yourself. Whattup baby *[kisses]*. *[To Bob]* Look at yo punk arse. Come on baby let's get out of here.

Removes Sean's cap and replaces Bob's backpack.

Bob: Okay, see you tomorrow.

Enters house. Two chairs are CS, each representing the place where Mum and Dad are sitting.

Hi Mum. Hi Dad.

Removes Bob's backpack. Sits in Dad's chair, puts on Dad's hat and drinks from a bottle by his feet.

Dad: *[Aggressive]* Boy get your face out of my face now. God damn! Boy didn't I just say get your face out of my face and go to your damn room now. Boy! Damn! Look at you standing there. Why you don't ever listen? Why you don't ever by like us? *[Looks at Mum's chair]* What are you looking at woman? what, what? What do I want, this is my house. I talk to him the way I want okay. Now, if he doesn't get out my face in the next two seconds... don't talk back to me woman *[raises his hand in a slap]*.

Removes Dad's hat and puts the bottle down. Puts on Bob's backpack. Stands and speaks to audience.

Bob: My life. It's sad right? Very, very sad. *[sigh]* I never chose it to be this way. Never. It's always like this. It's always, always, you know, whether it's the school, whether it's at home, I get bullied. I don't even exist in this world. It gets so hard on me. What do you expect, me to

fight him? You know I can't fight him. Did you hear him? I don't listen to him. He never listens to me! And come on son, be like your old man. He wants me to be like him! But I can't. Do you know why? Because I want to be better.

The next day at school. A single chair is CS.

Bob: *Bob enters and sits and gets his books out. He reads for a moment or two.*

Places the books on the chair. Removes Bob's backpack, stands and puts on Sean's cap.

Sean: Who let the dogs out, owe, owe, owe oof.

Sean jumps on the back of Bob's chair.

Removes Sean's cap and sits on the chair. Performs a fear reaction in response to Sean and freezes.

Stands, puts Sean's cap back on and resumes Sean's position behind the chair.

Sean: Whattup son? What you doing? Did I scare you? Oh poor boy I'm sorry, did I scare you? Who let the dogs out? Listen boy, what are you studying? *[Picks up book and drops it on the floor]* Oh your book, look at your book oh I'm sorry did I drop your book?

Look at you, aren't you pretty cute. Yeah, aren't you pretty cute studying. Listen I got advice bro. Stop wasting your time with studying because you know what? You're going to become nothing in your life. You're going to end up like your damn father so you might as well just give it up. Peace out punk.

Sean exits. Removes Sean's cap, reenters to sit on the chair. Resumes Bob's frozen position in response to Sean.

Speaks to audience.

Bob: See that? That's what happens to me every day. By the way, that's my bully Sean. He's the reason sometimes I don't want to come to school. Like this morning for instance. And when I come to school and this thing happens, I just feel like going home and giving up. Then I think about, you know, if I do just go home and give it up, no education, I might as well end up just like my father. But, if I suck it up and then he bully me every day. If I care about my education and my future, I could become his boss.

Stand and begins to walk SL.

Sometimes I feel like, you know, just sitting down because I don't want to go forwards, and I don't want to go backwards, but that's just my only way home.

Enters house. Two chairs representing Mum and Dad are CS.

Hi Mum. Hi Dad. I want you to fill in this form, it's just a... It's due tomorrow... I just want ... I just.

Crestfallen, Bob walks to his room.

Speaks to audience.

You see that? I just can't handle it anymore. I just can't handle it anymore. I just brought home a letter that will determine my future education, and what do they do? He doesn't care. He sent me straight up to my room and then he say I don't listen to him. I get bullied at

school, I get bullied all the time. I come home to rest and it's even worse because I get bullied by the people that I love and trust the most. It's just not fair.

Sits down on Mum's chair. Puts on scarf.

Mum: Sometimes, he knows this drinking is killing him. I mean look at him. He's my husband and all but he doesn't love me like a husband supposed to love a wife. He never cares for his wife. I'm his wife god dammit and he doesn't even show me any sign of love or anything like that. All he does is drink all day, stay home with me. And because of him, his drinking, I get worried. Because of his drinking, it's affecting our boy, our only boy, our son, my poor son. When he comes home from school, he goes straight to his room, and the weekends, he's in his room all day. You know, I feel like I'm losing him. Slowly, slowly losing him. You know? If only I could tell him how I really feel. I would ask for his forgiveness and tell him that I'm sorry. You know? And tell him that I love him and that I care for him. If only I could tell him how I really feel.

Removes Mum's scarf. Sits in Dad's chair. Puts on hat. Picks up bottle from his feet and takes a swig.

Dad: *[Coughs]* You see, sometimes I do think what is this doing to my life and then I start thinking what would happen next, but you see, I don't know what would happen next, and I am not afraid of anything. Nothing that I know of at least.

Puts down bottle and removes hat. Stands and walks to Bob's bedroom.

Bob: If only, if only I could really tell my Mum how I really feel, because she really affect me in my life. If I ask her what she's doing, you know she'll probably be like, 'Oh you know your father is messed up and I'm the one caring for him'. You know what, it's good mama,

it's good that you care about your husband but you've got to remember you have a son too. You have a son to care about. Because you never care for me. If, if I could really tell her, I'd tell her, get a grip of yourself, get a grip of yourself and don't let him control you. That's never going to happen right!

If I could really talk to my father, really talk to my father, I'd ask him why he's doing what he's doing? Why is he drinking? Why doesn't he care about his son or his wife? And most importantly, if I had a wish, *[pause]* if I had a wish, I would wish that my father gets a heart and a job.

[Sigh] I guess that's never gonna happen right, because this family's not normal, we far from normal, normal. You guys remember when you would write, you would draw a drawing just you and your family? Yeah, at one time I did, I did that. You know, because I wanted my family to be normal. You know, my teacher would ask me to draw a picture of my family and I'm draw real fast, my Mum, my Dad, and me in the middle, and at the bottom of the page I would write, 'three against the world'. Because I felt like it was me, my Mum, my Dad against the world. That is the normal that I wanted. Was that too much to ask? It doesn't look like it's three against the world does it? It looks like it's one against the world. I mean, what I have to do to get that normal life? To get a normal life that just a boy and a father that goes to the park and play catch. A boy and a father sitting at home on the couch watching wrestling. What I have to do to get a normal life, to get a father and a son? Just having fun, you know? My Mum reading to me as I sleep, tucking me at night. What do I have to do to get that? What do I have to do to get normal? Get normal. My parents dropping me off at school as I wave goodbye and smile. Normal is all I ever wanted. Now my heart is filled with scars that can never be erased and to be honest, sometimes *[pause]* I just feel like giving up.

End

D.2 Scripts from the Midway Performance of *Bob's Story*

This selection of scenes was performed at the midway performance in June 2012.

These scripts were transcribed from live rehearsals and, as with the previous script, represent the core meaning of the narrative, but not the exact words that were performed. At this stage in the project, the narrative was still being devised and developed and these scenes represent where this development was up to at this point. These scripts are also taken from the period of time when multiple actors were working on *Bob's Story*. As a result, the following scenes were intended for multiple actors.

D.2.1 Jessie's monologue.

Performed by Emily

Jessie is walking home from school.

I see a homeless man. There is rubbish flying around. Minimal light. The buildings are run down and derelict. I can see that they're boarded up with wood. Old warehouses. As I walk down the street I feel scared. I'm scared because I don't know what's ahead. They'll be gangsters walking around. With guns. Weapons. I'm scared. I just don't want to go down there, but I have to. And Sean is with his friends. My friends. They're all together. And I'm here alone. No-one hears me when I say that I don't like walking home by myself. Now I see some men in the distance. They're just drinking, smoking. Hanging around. I can hear them. Yelling. Shouting. I can smell the smoke from their cigarettes and the air smells like dirt. Over my shoulder I can still see the homeless man and the old houses. I feel like just sitting down. Because I don't want to go forwards and I don't want to go back. But that's my only way home. My parents are at home, but they don't listen to me. I'm only this late because

I've been at a study session. And I got caught up talking to a teacher. And now it's late. And it's dark and cold. Nothing's ever happened but it's just such a dark place. And there are no people around here. It's just dirty and isolated and school is so far away. Normally, at school, I act so tough but now I'm scared and I have no friends with me. If I could just call Sean I would feel better. But I can't do that now. Now there's no-one.

D.2.2 Jessie's 'unsafe' scene.

Performed by Kim (Bob) and Emily (Jessie).

Jessie is crying in her room. Bob and Jessie are neighbours.

Jessie: *[talking on the phone to Sean]* How could you do this to me, it's so unfair. I know but I thought you loved me. You know what, forget it.

Bob: *[sees Jessie crying through his window]* Are you ok?

Jessie: Oh yeah *[looks up]*. I'm fine yeah.

Bob: Do you want to meet up on the roof again?

Jessie: Ok

On the roof

Bob: I hate climbing the stairs up to here! So what's been going on?

Jessie: Nothing

Bob: That's why you've got that 'crying look'! Puffy red eyes and your face is still wet from the tears.

Jessie: No, what are you talking about?

Bob: Come on

Jessie: I don't know what you're talking about

Bob: Look, if you don't want to talk to your friends about it...

Jessie: It's nothing

Bob: So why don't you have your friends with you?

Jessie: Sean broke up with me

Bob: What happened?

Jessie: He chose his friends over me. How could he ever do that?

Bob: Because he's an idiot

Jessie: But I love him. And he said that he loved me

Bob: He's a guy, he'll say anything! Why were you with him really?

Jessie: Because he was cool. Popular. Cute

Bob: Yeah but I wouldn't trust him

Jessie: Well all the girls liked him. And when I came into his life, they liked me too

Bob: So was it worth it?

Jessie: Well I got to be popular for a while

Bob: Well, but at what cost? Losing all your friends? All the girls hate you. Your boyfriend treats you like a jerk. You can do much better than Sean. You're pretty, and all the guys would kill to be with you. That's a fact.

Jessie: I wanted to be popular. And now everything is ruined.

Bob: It's not ruined! And it's only until the end of high school. What happens after the end of high school?

Jessie: I just want my friends

Bob: But do you really trust them? Did you even really like them?

Jessie: Well I trusted Sean

Bob: Who's probably been making out with every single girl in the school. I think you can do better, that's all I'm saying. You deserve better, and there's someone a lot better out there for you. You're amazing.

D.2.3 Bob comes home.

Performed by Catherine (Bob), Emily (Mum) and Melissa (Mum).

Mum and Dad sit on chairs CS. Dad drinks from a bottle.

Bob: Hey Mum, Dad

They ignore Bob

Bob: Mum. Dad.

I need you to fill in this form

Dad: Can't you see that I'm in the middle of something?

Go to your room

Bob: But I need...

Dad: I said go to your room

Bob: It's due tomorrow

Dad: Go to your room

Bob: If I don't hand it in...

Dad: I don't care. I need another drink

Bob: This is very important

Dad: Go to your room

Bob goes to his room.

Calls after Bob.

Dad: Why don't you ever listen to me?

Speaks to audience.

Bob: I feel [pause] sad. Because I just brought home a letter that will determine my future education and they don't give a shit about it. And my dad's drunk. And he's sent me to my

room. So what if I've been crying and do you know what he says to me? Why don't I listen to him! Why doesn't he listen to me! He wants me to be like them. But I want to be better.

Dad: He never listens to me *[laughs]*.

Mum: This drinking isn't right. He won't stop. He's killing himself. Almost every day he drinks. We're both at home during the day. I'm his wife and I don't even think he cares about how he behaves towards me.

All my son does is sit by himself all day. My husband always sends him to his room and I suppose now he's afraid to come out.

Bob: What can I do? I try my best. The idea of family was the only thing that makes me happy. You know, mum and dad. Now I feel like I hate them. If I could change one thing. If I had a magic wish. I wish my dad would get a job. And a heart.

Dad: Sometimes I think about what this is doing to my life. And then I start thinking. About what will happen next. I don't know what will happen next. *[Catches himself and pulls himself together]* But I'm not afraid of anything. Nothing that I know of at least.

Mum: I am afraid of losing our son. My husband treats him like this. And I'm afraid that we will lose him. This isn't going to stop. And Bob just hangs out in his room. But dad is always drinking and I don't have the time to talk to my son.

If I could talk to him now, I would say...I would say that I'm sorry. Sorry for arguing all the time. For the way that your father has been acting. The way that I've treated you. For everything. I would tell him that if he had anything to tell me, he could.

Bob: If I could talk to my mother. Really talk to her. I'd ask her 'why don't you do something with your life?' She'd say because of my dad. Why do you let him control your life? Why do you care about him? You want to help him, to do something about his drinking. But you don't just have a husband. You have a son too. And you don't even act like a mother. When was the last time you reached out to me? When was the last time you asked me how I'm doing? Last week, I was so low, that I was even thinking about suicide. But your husband was more important. Why are you doing all of this? Do you even want to change? It's been like this for years now. Sorry isn't good enough. You can't just say sorry. You can't just pretend that you care when you don't. It's just words, because all I hear in that sorry, is 'I care about your father'. But that man there, he's not my father. He's not a father. For 16 years, you've cared about me for 5. I come home and there's no food in the fridge. You don't buy anything. You just look after your husband. The money goes on alcohol. I had to go out on the street and beg like an orphan. You can't carry on being a saint to a man that doesn't love you and doesn't treat you right. It's common sense mum. Common sense. But there's nothing I can do.

Mum: It feels like he doesn't need us anymore. He's on his own. It's not getting better. It's getting worse. I should have listened. I should have made time for him. It looks like I care about his father more than him. All these years I've had to pay so much attention to my husband. I've needed to pay so much more attention to him than my son. When now, when Bob comes home, there's nothing here for him.

Bob: I feel really hurt. Betrayed. I feel betrayed because the whole time I thought we were a family. I thought it was three against the world. But it looks like it's just me against the world. My dad was never good to me. My mum hasn't been much better. It's true that she never held me. Do you know how it is going to the park and seeing a kid playing with his

mum and dad. They have a complete family. And I look at myself and I was just by myself. When I was a kid that's what I dreamt about. Being with my family all the time. And when I came to Australia I was watching wrestling and all I could dream about was me wrestling with my father. Going to the park with my mum. Reading me a story every night. I guess that ain't going to happen now is it. I have scars that will never be erased. I just feel like giving up.

D.3 Nora's Story - One Performer

This script was produced following the workshop where Gordana relayed the narrative to me. The video footage of this workshop was used to create the following script which was intended for a single performer. Gordana performed this script in the following workshop to the other members of the group.

Nora: My name is Nora. I live in Australia now but I moved to Melbourne about 5 years ago because I had to leave my country - because of the war there and everything that was happening.

My strongest memory of the war was the day it started. Although, it's not really when it started, because it started a long, long time before. But this is the day it starts for me. This is the day it hits our area.

I'm just 10 years old and I'm sitting, watching TV with my dad. We're not in our usual house. We had to leave our real home to look for somewhere that was safe. Even so, I still can hear the noises of the war through the walls of the house. But here the noises are far away and I can hide. I escape by watching old films in the small room downstairs where no-one else goes. This is how I grow up.

Only this time, today, the noises are right outside. They are loud and clear and they ring in my ears. My dad turns around to see what's happening. He looks out of the window and says to me, "it's alright", so that I won't be scared. But I hear the tremble in his voice and I know that it's not really alright.

And then, he asks me where my brother is and I answer that I don't know and I realise that he is missing. My mother and sister come back to where I'm sitting and ask me if I know where my brother is. And I say, "Its ok, it's ok". My father goes outside to look for him and I see him, through the window, looking everywhere, everywhere, outside. Looking and looking and looking. But I remember him coming back. I remember that he couldn't find my brother.

And I'm scared and no-one's really talking but you can see the fear in their eyes. And then there's a knock and lots of noise as soldiers and police burst into our house and shout "get out, get out". When they come in, everyone in the living room is looking at each other, and everyone knows what's going to happen.

I was sitting in the same place and I stood up and then sat down again, and then I pulled my legs together – sort of scared – and started to cry. And the soldiers pointed a gun at us, asking my dad for money and my mum for her jewellery. And my mum she just gave it to them. Everything she had.

And then they left and we still didn't know where my brother was. My dad went to go outside again but we didn't want him to go and my mother grabbed him and said "stay here with us". And he said "I'm going to go and find my son" and so he left.

I watched him through the window. Searching for my brother as the police and soldiers went around to the other houses to look for money and other stuff. And I am so scared and so

worried. Scared and worried about what is going to happen to my brother. Scared and worried thinking about where he is.

We had left our home to go somewhere safe. And we thought that this place, our new house, was safe, but this is where the police have come in and taken everything.

And then, RELIEF! They come home. My father *and* my brother. He was at another house, playing with our neighbours' kids, but because we didn't know where he was...

And now there is so much relief. Relief that nothing has happened to him. Relief that no-one got killed. Relief that all we lost were our things.

Pause

Two weeks after that the war settled down. After that we moved from there and went back to our house that we were living in before. I packed up my life for the second time, and we started the long walk back home. And we were so happy to be returning, but at the same time it was scary. Walking through those places. Seeing what had happened. Seeing soldiers on the street, the same kind that had come into our house and taken our belongings, and you think, what's going to happen?

But then we were home and we moved in and everything was so familiar and you feel like "you're home now, everything's going to be fine".

And it was fine. For us. We were all ok. But, I could still hear gunshots and bombs through the walls. The noises of the war. It makes you think, what's going to happen?

D.4 Nora's Story - Multiple Performers

This following script was adapted from the previous one. This was done as Gordana found the lengthy monologue a challenge and breaking the dialogue into different characters assisted her with reading her role. It also meant that she was not expected to be alone on stage, which gave her greater confidence. This following script was read at the midway performance in June 2012.

Performed by Gordana (Nora), Catherine (Dad), Emily (Mum), Sarah (Sister), and Kim (Soldiers).

Nora: My name is Nora. I live in Australia I moved to Melbourne about 5 years ago because I had to leave my country - because of the war there and everything that was happening.

My strongest memory of the war was the day it started. Although, it's not really when it started, because it started a long, long time before. But this is the day it starts for me. This is the day it hits our area.

I'm just 10 years old and I'm sitting, watching TV with my dad.

Dad: We're not in our usual house. This is not my usual chair, and the TV doesn't get a good signal. I took my family away from our real home to look for somewhere that was safe.

Pause

Even so, I still can hear the noises of the war through the walls of the house. And it makes me think, what's going to happen to my family?

Nora: But here the noises are far away and I can hide. I escape by watching old films in the small room downstairs where no-one else goes. This is how I grow up.

Pause

Dad: Only this time, today, the noises are right outside. They are loud and clear and they ring in our ears.

Nora: My dad turns around to see what's happening. He looks out of the window and says...

Dad: it's alright.

Nora: ...so that I won't be scared. But I hear the tremble in his voice and I know that it's not really alright. And then, he asks me...

Dad: Where is your brother?

Nora: ...and I answer that I don't know and I realise that he is missing.

My mother and sister come back to where I'm sitting and they ask me too.

Mum: Nora, where is your brother? Do you know where he is Nora?

Nora: And I say, "it's ok, it's ok".

Mum: Then my husband goes outside to look for our son and I can see, through the window.

Sister: He's looking everywhere, everywhere, outside. Looking and looking and looking.

Pause

Nora: But I remember him coming back. I remember that he couldn't find my brother.

Sister: And now I'm scared...

Mum: and no-one's really talking...

Nora: but you can see the fear in their eyes...

Sister: And then there's a bang and lots of noise...

Dad: ...as soldiers and police burst into our house and shout...

Soldiers: Get out, get out.

Sister: When they come in, everyone in the living room is looking at each other, and everyone knows what's going to happen.

Nora: I was sitting in the same place and I stood up and then sat down again, and then I pulled my legs together – sort of scared – and started to cry.

Dad: And the soldiers pointed a gun at us...

Sister: ...asking my dad for money and my mum for her jewellery.

Nora: And my mum she just gave it to them. Everything she had.

Mum: And then they left and we still didn't know where my son was.

Nora: My dad went to go outside again but we didn't want him to go.

Sister: My mother grabbed him and said...

Mum: No! Stay here with us.

Nora: And Dad said...

Dad: I need to go and find my son.

Sister: And so he left.

Nora: We watched him through the window. Searching for my brother as the police and soldiers went around to the other houses to look for money and other stuff. And I am so scared and so worried. Scared and worried about what is going to happen to my brother. Scared and worried thinking about where he is.

Mum: This is what we left our home for. We left our home to go somewhere safe. And we thought that this place, our new house, was safe, but this is where the police have come in and taken everything.

Nora: And then, RELIEF! They come home. My father *and* my brother.

Dad: He was at another house, playing with our neighbours' kids.

Sister: And now there is so much relief. Relief that nothing has happened to him. Relief that no-one got killed. Relief that all we lost were our things.

Pause

Dad: Two weeks after that the war settled down and we moved from here and went back to our house that we were living in before. My family packed up their life for the second time, and we started the long walk back home.

Nora: And I was so happy to be returning, but at the same time it was scary.

Sister: Walking through those places. Seeing what had happened.

Mum: Seeing soldiers on the street, the same kind that had come into our house and taken our belongings, and you think, what's going to happen?

Dad: But then we are home...

Nora: ...and we moved in and everything was so familiar and you feel like "you're home now, everything's going to be fine".

Mum: And it was fine. For us. We were all ok.

Dad: But, I could still hear gunshots and bombs through the walls.

Sister: The noises of the war.

Nora: It makes you think, what's going to happen?

D.5 Other Narrative Ideas

The following ideas are examples of narratives that emerged early on in the devising phase of the project but that were not developed beyond this.

D.5.1 Idea one – bullying.

The following summary of this idea was written by Sarah. This represents devising that was done during the workshop and Sarah's own extension of these ideas.

James tells his best friend that he is gay. The friend, thinking it's a joke, posts it online and James is bullied by other students at school because of this.

A: Great James. No lunch for us.

J: It sucks. It's just not fair.

A: What are you doing on tomorrow?

J: Nothing much. I am just going to Kate's house to study.

A: Are you two dating or something?

J: Nah man, as if. We are just friends. I am gay Antonio.

A: Whatever James! Don't tell me then. Be like that James.

Antonio puts on his Facebook status ' JAMES DOESN'T LIKE GIRLS, HE TOLD ME THAT HE'S GAY FOR REAL!!! NO JOKES!!!!'

The next morning at school, everyone at school was teasing him, calling him names and laughing at him. As he approached his locker, there were stickers saying 'GAY! GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM! LOSER! TRASH!'

James was about to go to class when Lisa and Christina came out of nowhere and pushed James on the floor.

L: Get out of my way loser. I can't believe I use to like you.

C: Good that you didn't date him. That's why he walks like a girl.

D.5.2 Idea two – DJ.

This idea came from a letter-writing exercise and was developed by Kim. The following words are a sample taken from a song, written by Kim. Her intention was for this to be sung or spoken by the character of the DJ, sitting by his newborn daughter's bedside.

DJ: Everything I touch seems to crumble

For what I wouldn't to keep you safe

There are some things I've seen and done

That I don't want you to see

I wish I could give the world

A life that you deserve

Pap on still parole

Were too young

There things I've done that I'm not proud of

Your mother, poor mother

Still a young girl

I'm sorry for all the bruises

From all those empty bottles

Cos of me she had to face

All the cruelty of the world

Appendix E

Ethical Consent

E.1 Information Sheet – Core Participant Group



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Community Drama Research Project Core Group - Information Sheet

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,
07 373 55688
m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies
0424171904,
jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

1. Who's running this project?:

- This drama project and the research are being done by Jenny Penton, a PhD student at Griffith University. Jenny has a lot of experience doing drama workshops and working with young people. She has a Victorian Working with Children Check and a Queensland Blue Card - please ask her if you would like to see these before joining in with the project.

2. About the Project:

- You have been invited to participate in a *community drama research project* run by Griffith University and [Name of the organisation].
- **Why you?** You have been invited because you are a young person (between 16-25) in Footscray (or nearby) and you have shown an interest in being involved in the project.
- **It's Your Decision:** This project is voluntary, which means you can choose if you want to be involved or not. It also means that you can decide to stop coming to the project at any time.

- **What you'll do:** If you decide to be part of this project you will be required to come to regular drama workshops at [Name and address of the organisation]. In these workshops we will use drama to look at ideas such as 'community', 'cultural awareness' and 'experiences of young people'. You will also have the chance to perform your work and run your own drama workshops with other young people. You can come along even if you don't want to perform but would like to do some writing, directing or just sharing ideas and you don't need any experience to be able to join in.
- **Money:** The project is completely free!! This is because Griffith University has given us some money to run the research. All you will need to pay is your travel to get to the [Name of the organisation] office and back!
- **Time:** You will need to commit to this project for approximately five months. This is because it takes a long time to make and rehearse a drama performance. You will need to attend a 2 hour workshop mostly every week, although near the performance we might have to do extra rehearsals.

3. About the research:

- This drama project is also a piece of research. In the drama workshops, your discussions and ideas will be recorded on camera, film or by writing them down (photos and film will be used so that we can remember all the different things that happen during the workshops). Jenny, her teachers and the staff at [Name of the organisation] will see these photos and films. You will also be asked to fill in questionnaires or do interviews about the project.
- **Why are we doing this?** All of this information will help to discover how useful drama is in bringing people together in the community. This is especially important when we're thinking about communities like Footscray, where there are young people from many places and cultures. At the end of the project, you can find out the results from the research and even read it if you want to!
- **What will happen?** It is hoped that this research will help to show that drama is a great thing to do with young people and that it can help to build better communities. It will also teach me how to run better projects for young people. Your participation in this project will help all of this to happen.
- **Risks:** The project shouldn't hurt you at all, physically or emotionally. If you feel upset by anything that we talk about in the group, you can let Jenny or someone from [Name of the organisation] know and we can make sure you're ok before we carry on.

4. Keeping your information private and where this information will go:

The university asks us to write this legal Privacy Statement:

"The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. As outlined elsewhere in this information sheet, your identified personal information may be reported to [Name of the organisation] for their organisational use. Other than this disclosure, the information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes.

However your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded, except where you have consented otherwise."

What this means is:

- In this project, your ideas, comments and thoughts will be recorded and used in the research. **Photos** will be taken of you doing the drama and you might also be **recorded on film**. This means that any information that you share (including the photos or films) will be kept by Jenny. These things will be written down in a PhD and could be published elsewhere. But your name or details will not be used and no-one outside of the drama group will be able to tell who you are. Of course, if you ask for something you've said or done to be left out, Jenny will make sure it stays private.
- Your feedback and any group documentation (such as photos, feedback questionnaires, scripts and ideas) of the theatre project and workshop activities will be shared with [Name of the organisation] so that it can help their work with young people. This won't include other research information, like my own thoughts on what we're doing. This might mean that they use some photos or comments in their marketing materials - like their website or their brochures. This means that people looking at these will be able to see your picture or what you've said - but, these things won't be given to any other individual or organisation to keep (unless you've said so) and all your personal information will be kept safe in Jenny's office and only Jenny and her teachers will be able to see it.

We do ask that you don't tell us about any illegal behaviour during this project because if you do, we may have to talk about this with other organisations or authorities - however if this happens, you will be told about it beforehand.

- If you want to find out more about this from the university, please look at their Privacy Plan at <http://griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or ring them on 07 3735 5585 or talk to Jenny if you need something explained.

5. Questions: If you want to ask Jenny any questions about this project, you can call her on 0424171904 or email her at Jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au. You can also talk to Michael Balfour (Jenny's teacher) at Griffith University on 07 373 55688.

- Griffith University does research in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any other questions or want to complain about this research, you can write to: The Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, QLD.

Or phone on 07 3755 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

E.2 Consent Form – Core Participant Group



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Community Drama Research Project Core Group, Consent Form

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,

07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies

0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffith.edu.au

By signing my name below, it means I have read and understood the information sheet and I have especially noted that:

1. I understand that to do this research, I will join in with the community drama project at [Name of the organisation], going to weekly drama workshops over approximately five months and doing a performance at the end for other young people. I will also do questionnaires, interviews and group discussions for the research.
2. I have had all my questions about this answered properly and I also know that I can contact the research team (above) if I have any more questions.
3. I understand the risks involved in joining the project.
4. I understand that this project is voluntary and also that I can leave any time (because it is a group project, any information, (including photos or film recordings) that have already been collected will still be used in the research).
5. I understand that I will be photographed and filmed during this project. (Please talk to Jenny if you have any cultural or personal considerations around being photographed or filmed). I understand that Jenny and her teachers will have access to these photos/recordings.
6. I understand that these photos and film recordings will be used by Jenny Penton for the research and to help make the performance.

7. I understand that I can complain about this research if I want to by phoning the Manager, Research Ethics at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3735 5585 or by emailing research_ethics@griffith.edu.au
8. And finally... I agree to participate

Additional consent is needed for the following information. Please tick the boxes next to the points that you consent for:

I agree that these photographs/recordings and workshop/performance outcomes can also be shared with [Name of the organisation] for ongoing use in their organisation. I agree that [Name of the organisation] can use these in their publicity and marketing materials to promote [Name of the organisation's] work. I understand that these wont won't be given to any other organisation or individual, but other people will be able to see the photos/films on [Name of the organisation's] website or read their leaflets/brochures. You will be asked before anything is shared with [Name of the organisation] to check that you are happy with what they will be given.

I give special consent (agreement) for all the information collected in this project, including **writing, photos and film recordings** to be kept by Jenny Penton after the project has finished.

I understand that they will be used for future publications (writing/pictures that are published for other people to read), presentations or for teaching/learning.

The original copies of the photos or recordings (not any copies that are published or given to [Name of the organisation]) will be kept for **five years** following the end of the project.

They will not be used for commercial use (to make money from them) and only Jenny Penton will have access to them.

Please note: this could mean that your involvement with the project and anything you say or do in the video/photograph can be seen by the people who might watch or see the films/photographs.

Please sign below to show that you agree to the points in this form:

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please Note: You must agree to be part of both the drama project and the research. You cannot be part of the drama project if you do not consent to participate in the research. (if you want

to take part in the drama but do not want to be included in the research, please speak to Jenny and she can direct you to other drama groups in the area)

If you are under 18, please talk to your parents or guardians about this project and all the information here.

We believe that you are old enough to make your own decision, but it would be nice if your parents/guardians were also able to be a part of the decision too (especially if they have to give you a lift to the drama workshops!).

If you would like to talk to your parent/guardian about this, they can sign the form here as well....

Name of young person: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

E.3 Information Sheet – Core Participant Group, Amended for Younger Participants



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Community Drama Research Project Core Group - Information Sheet

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,

07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies

0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

1. Who's running this project?:

- This drama project and the research are being done by Jenny Penton, a PhD student at Griffith University. Jenny has a lot of experience doing drama workshops and working with young people. She has a Victorian Working with Children Check and a Queensland Blue Card - please ask her if you would like to see these before joining in with the project.

2. About the Project:

- You have been invited to participate in a *community drama research project* run by Griffith University and [Name of the organisation].
- **Why you?** You have been invited because you are a young person (between 14-25) in Footscray (or nearby) and you have shown an interest in being involved in the project.
- **It's Your Decision:** This project is voluntary, which means you can choose if you want to be involved or not. It also means that you can decide to stop coming to the project at any time.
- **What you'll do:** If you decide to be part of this project you will be required to come to regular drama workshops at [Name and address of the organisation]. In these workshops we will use drama to look at ideas such as 'community', 'cultural awareness' and 'experiences of young people'. You will also have the chance to perform your work and run

your own drama workshops with other young people. You can come along even if you don't want to perform but would like to do some writing, directing or just sharing ideas and you don't need any experience to be able to join in.

- **Money:** The project is completely free!! This is because Griffith University has given us some money to run the research. All you will need to pay is your travel to get to the [Name of the organisation] office and back!
- **Time:** You will need to commit to this project for approximately five months. This is because it takes a long time to make and rehearse a drama performance. You will need to attend a 2 hour workshop mostly every week, although near the performance we might have to do extra rehearsals.

3. About the research:

- This drama project is also a piece of research. In the drama workshops, your discussions and ideas will be recorded on camera, film or by writing them down (photos and film will be used so that we can remember all the different things that happen during the workshops). Jenny, her teachers and the staff at [Name of the organisation] will see these photos and films. You will also be asked to fill in questionnaires or do interviews about the project.
- **Why are we doing this?** All of this information will help to discover how useful drama is in bringing people together in the community. This is especially important when we're thinking about communities like Footscray, where there are young people from many places and cultures. At the end of the project, you can find out the results from the research and even read it if you want to!
- **What will happen?** It is hoped that this research will help to show that drama is a great thing to do with young people and that it can help to build better communities. It will also teach me how to run better projects for young people. Your participation in this project will help all of this to happen.
- **Risks:** The project shouldn't hurt you at all, physically or emotionally. If you feel upset by anything that we talk about in the group, you can let Jenny or someone from [Name of the organisation] know and we can make sure you're ok before we carry on.

4. Keeping your information private and where this information will go:

The university asks us to write this legal Privacy Statement:

"The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. As outlined elsewhere in this information sheet, your identified personal information may be reported to [Name of the organisation] for their organisational use. Other than this disclosure, the information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded, except where you have consented otherwise."

What this means is:

- In this project, your ideas, comments and thoughts will be recorded and used in the research. **Photos** will be taken of you doing the drama and you might also be **recorded on film**. This means that any information that you share (including the photos or films) will be kept by Jenny. These things will be written down in a PhD and could be published elsewhere. But your name or details will not be used and no-one outside of the drama group will be able to tell who you are. Of course, if you ask for something you've said or done to be left out, Jenny will make sure it stays private.
- Your feedback and any group documentation (such as photos, feedback questionnaires, scripts and ideas) of the theatre project and workshop activities will be shared with [Name of the organisation] so that it can help their work with young people. This won't include other research information, like my own thoughts on what we're doing. This might mean that they use some photos or comments in their marketing materials - like their website or their brochures. This means that people looking at these will be able to see your picture or what you've said - but, these things won't be given to any other individual or organisation to keep (unless you've said so) and all your personal information will be kept safe in Jenny's office and only Jenny and her teachers will be able to see it.

We do ask that you don't tell us about any illegal behaviour during this project because if you do, we may have to talk about this with other organisations or authorities - however if this happens, you will be told about it beforehand.

- If you want to find out more about this from the university, please look at their Privacy Plan at <http://griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or ring them on 07 3735 5585 or talk to Jenny if you need something explained.

5. **Questions:** If you want to ask Jenny any questions about this project, you can call her on 0424171904 or email her at Jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au. You can also talk to Michael Balfour (Jenny's teacher) at Griffith University on 07 373 55688.

- Griffith University does research in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any other questions or want to complain about this research, you can write to: The Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, QLD.

Or phone on 07 3755 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

E.4 Consent Form – Core Participant Group, Amended for Younger Participants



**School of Education and
Professional Studies**

Community Drama Research Project **Core Group, Consent Form**

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,

07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies

0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing my name below, it means I have read and understood the information sheet and I have especially noted that:

1. I understand that to do this research, I will join in with the community drama project at [Name of the organisation], going to weekly drama workshops over approximately five months and doing a performance at the end for other young people. I will also do questionnaires, interviews and group discussions for the research.
2. I have had all my questions about this answered properly and I also know that I can contact the research team (above) if I have any more questions.
3. I understand the risks involved in joining the project.
4. I understand that this project is voluntary and also that I can leave any time (because it is a group project, any information, (including photos or film recordings) that have already been collected will still be used in the research).
5. I understand that I will be photographed and filmed during this project. (Please talk to Jenny if you have any cultural or personal considerations around being photographed or filmed). I understand that Jenny and her teachers will have access to these photos/recordings.

6. I understand that these photos and film recordings will be used by Jenny Penton for the research and to help make the performance.
7. I understand that I can complain about this research if I want to by phoning the Manager, Research Ethics at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3735 5585 or by emailing research_ethics@griffith.edu.au
8. And finally... I agree to participate

Additional consent is needed for the following information. Please tick the boxes next to the points that you consent for:

I agree that these photographs/recordings and workshop/performance outcomes can also be shared with [Name of the organisation] for ongoing use in their organisation. I agree that [Name of the organisation] can use these in their publicity and marketing materials to promote [Name of the organisation's] work. I understand that these won't be given to any other organisation or individual, but other people will be able to see the photos/films on [Name of the organisation's] website or read their leaflets/brochures. You will be asked before anything is shared with [Name of the organisation] to check that you are happy with what they will be given.

I give special consent (agreement) for all the information collected in this project, including **writing, photos and film recordings** to be kept by Jenny Penton after the project has finished.

I understand that they will be used for future publications (writing/pictures that are published for other people to read), presentations or for teaching/learning.

The original copies of the photos or recordings (not any copies that are published or given to [Name of the organisation]) will be kept for **five years** following the end of the project.

They will not be used for commercial use (to make money from them) and only Jenny Penton will have access to them.

Please note: this could mean that your involvement with the project and anything you say or do in the video/photograph can be seen by the people who might watch or see the films/photographs.

We need your consent to show that you agree to the points in this form but as you are **under 16**, we also need your parents or guardians to give their consent. Please talk to your parents or guardians about this project and all the information here. If they consent to this information, please ask them to sign in the space below.

If your parents or guardians would like more information about this project, they can contact Jenny on 0424171904 or jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

As you are under 16, you cannot join the group without your parents or guardians signature.

Please Note: You must agree to be part of both the drama project and the research. You cannot be part of the drama project if you do not consent to participate in the research. (if you want to take part in the drama but do not want to be included in the research, please speak to Jenny and she can direct you to other drama groups in the area)

Please sign below to show your consent to the points in this form:

Name of young person: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

E.5 Information Sheet – Audience Members



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Community Drama Research Project - Performance Event, Information Sheet

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,

07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies

0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

- 1. Who's running this project:** This drama project and the research are being done by Jenny Penton, a PhD student at Griffith University. Jenny has a lot of experience doing drama workshops and working with young people. She has a Victorian Working with Children Check and a Queensland Blue Card - please ask her if you would like to see these before the event.
- 2. About the event:** You have been invited to watch a performance by a group of young people and take part in their drama workshop. This is part of a *community drama research project* run by Griffith University and [Name of the organisation].
- 3. Why You?:** You have been invited to do this because you are a young person (between 16-25) in Footscray (or nearby) and you have volunteered to be part of the audience for this event.
- 4. It's your decision:** Your presence at the event is voluntary, which means you can choose if you want to come along or not. You can also come and watch, but decide *not* to take part in the research.
- 5. About the research:** This drama performance/workshop is also a piece of research. After the performance and workshop, you will be asked to fill in questionnaires, and perhaps do an interview about this event. Information (such as ideas, comments or discussions) from the workshop you take part in will also be used. Photographs will also be taken and the event will be filmed. This is so that we can remember everything that happens. Jenny, her teachers, the staff at [Name of the organisation] and the young actors will see your feedback and the photos/film of the event.

6. **Why are we doing this?** The information collected here will help to discover how useful drama is in bringing young people together in the community. This is especially important when we're thinking about communities like Footscray, where there are young people from many places and cultures.
7. **What will happen?** It is hoped that this research will help to show that drama is a great thing to do with young people and that it can help to build better communities. It will also teach me how to run even better projects for young people. The information you give at this event will help this to happen. You will also have the chance to **learn new skills in drama, share your ideas, be creative and have some fun.**
8. **Money:** This performance and workshop are completely free!! This is because Griffith University has given us some money to make the performance and do the research. The only thing you will need to pay for is your travel to the performance and back.
9. **Risks:** There should be no or little risk to you physically or emotionally in this project. If you feel upset by anything that is shown in the performance or the workshop, you can leave the room at any point. You can also let Jenny, someone from [Name of the organisation] or a member of staff at your organisation know and we can make sure you're ok before you return to the performance.

10. Keeping your information private and where your information will go:

The university asks us to write this legal Privacy Statement:

"The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. As outlined elsewhere in this information sheet, your identified personal information may be reported to [Name of the organisation] for their organisational use. Other than this disclosure, the information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded, except where you have consented otherwise."

What this means is:

At this event, your ideas, comments and thoughts will be recorded and used in the research. Photos will be taken of you in the audience and doing the drama and you might also be recorded on film. This means that any information about you (including the questionnaires, interviews, photos or films) will be kept by Jenny. These things will be written down in a PhD and could be published elsewhere. But your name or details will not be used and no-one will be able to tell who you are. Of course, if you ask for something you've said or done to be left out, Jenny will make sure it stays private.

After the event, your feedback on the performance/workshop that you've given in your questionnaires and interviews, and photos/films of the event will be shared with [Name of the organisation] so that it can help their work with young people. This might mean that they use some photos or comments in their marketing materials - like their website or their brochures. This means that people looking at these will be able to see your picture or what you've said (without your name). Your feedback comments will also be shared with your school/organisation (with no names) so that they can see if it was a good experience for you or not. These comments

and photos/recordings will also be shown to the young actors so they can see the feedback from their performance. But, no photos or comments will be given to any other individual or organisation to keep (unless you've said so) and all your personal information will be kept safe in Jenny's office and only Jenny and her teachers will be able to see it. Although we will share what you say, we won't tell anyone your name, so no-one will know what you've said.

We do ask that you don't tell us about any illegal behaviour during this project because if you do, we may have to talk about this with other organisations or authorities - however if this happens, you will be told about it beforehand.

If you want to find out more about this from the university, please look at their Privacy Plan at <http://griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or ring them on 07 3735 5585 or talk to Jenny if you need something explained.

11. Questions: If you want to ask Jenny any questions about this project, you can call her on **0424171904** or email her at **jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au**. You can also talk to Michael Balfour (Jenny's teacher) at Griffith University on 07 373 55688.

Griffith University does research in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any others questions or want to complain about this research, you can write to: The Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, QLD. Or phone on 07 3755 5585 or email research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

E.6 Consent Form – Audience Members



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Community Drama Research Project Performance Event, Consent Form

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,
07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, School of Education and Professional Studies

0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing my name below, it means I have read and understood the information sheet and I have especially noted that:

1. I understand that my involvement in this research includes watching a theatre performance, taking part in a peer led drama workshop and completing a follow up questionnaire. I may also be invited to do an interview about this event.
2. I have had all my questions about this answered properly and I also know that I can contact the research team (above) if I have any more questions.
3. I understand the risks involved in joining in with this event
4. I understand that this project is voluntary and also that I can leave the research at any time
5. I agree to being photographed and filmed during this project. (Please talk to Jenny if you have any cultural or personal considerations around being photographed or filmed). I understand that Jenny and her teachers will have access to these photos/recordings.
6. I understand that the photos and film recordings will be used by Jenny Penton for the research.
7. I understand that I can complain about this research if I want to by phoning the Manager, Research Ethics at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3735 5585 or by emailing research_ethics@griffith.edu.au

8. And finally... I agree to participate

9. **Additional consent is needed for the following information. Please tick the boxes next to the points that you consent for:**

I agree that any photographs/recordings can also be shared with [Name of the organisation] for ongoing use in their organisation. I agree that [Name of the organisation] can use these in their publicity and marketing materials to promote [Name of the organisation's] work. I understand that the photos or recordings won't be given to any other organisation or individual to keep, but other people will be able to see the photos/films on [Name of the organisation's] website or their leaflets/brochures.

I give special consent (agreement) for all the information collected in this project, including **writing, photos and film recordings** to be kept by Jenny Penton after the research has finished.

I understand that they will be used for publications (writing/pictures that are published for other people to read), presentations or for teaching/learning.

The original copies of the photos or recordings (not any copies that are published or given to [Name of the organisation]) will be kept for **five years** following the end of the project.

They will not be used for commercial use (to make money from them) and only Jenny Penton will have access to them. But, any photos that are published will

Please note: this could mean that your involvement with the project and anything you say or do in the video/photograph can be seen by the people who might watch or see the films/photographs.

Please sign below to show that you agree to the points in this form:

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

If you are under 18, we also need your parents or guardians to give their consent. Please talk to your parents or guardians about this project and all the information here. If they consent to this information, please ask them to sign in the space below. If your parents or guardians would like more information about this project, they can use the contact Jenny on 0424171904 or jenny.penton@griffithuni.edu.au.

If you are under 18, you cannot join the group without your parents or guardians signature.

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

E.7 Information Sheet – Interviewees



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Community Drama Research Project Interview, Information Sheet

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,
07 373 55688
m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, PhD student, School of Education and Professional Studies
0424171904,
jenny.penton@griffith.edu.au

Dear Interviewee

You are invited to give an interview as part of a PhD research project examining community based theatre with young people. This research is being conducted by Jenny Penton, a PhD student at Griffith University (QLD) and it is being hosted by [Name of the organisation] in Footscray. This research is being funded by Griffith University through their academic scholarship program.

The basis by which you've been selected for this research:

You have been asked to give this interview because of your close connection to the research project, and/or your specialist knowledge of the field. Your acceptance of this invitation is entirely voluntary, however it is sincerely hoped that you will be able to participate.

The expected benefits of the research;

This research examines the effects of applied theatre on community cohesion and specifically, the role of these techniques in building relationships across cultural or community divides. It is expected that this research will investigate whether applied theatre is an effective tool in developing community cohesion and community building amongst young people in diverse communities. It is also expected that the research will investigate the individual benefits of using these techniques with young people and that I will improve my own practice in conducting projects such as this one.

Project description:

The practice research project involves working with a culturally diverse group of young people and, using action research methods, creating a theatre performance and accompanying workshop that will be delivered to other young people in the area. The reactions from this audience will also be used within the research, as will additional interviews and questionnaires from the core participant group

What you will be asked to do:

Should you consent to give an interview, you will be asked to take part in a single session which will take up approximately twenty minutes of your time. This can be arranged at a time and location convenient to you. If it is difficult to arrange a face to face interview, it can alternatively be conducted over Skype or by telephone. There should be no costs incurred during this process, however if some travel is required, these costs will be reimbursed to you.

The interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of accuracy. This audio recording will then be transcribed into a written document. The recording will be destroyed after the transcription is finished and the written document will be retained by myself, and kept in a secure location. If you wish to see the transcription document prior to any data analysis, please let me know and I can arrange this. Additionally, if you wish to see the results of your interview after analysis has been completed, this can also be arranged.

Your participation is voluntary:

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to agree to give an interview. You are also free to withdraw your interview from the study at any time.

Risks to you:

Your participation in this research should present no risk to you.

Your confidentiality:

The information from your interview will be used within my PhD documentation and any publications or conference presentations that result from this research. It is requested that due to your position and the specialist knowledge that you hold, that your name and/or title be included along with the results from your interview, in the research documentation listed above. If you do not consent to this, your name and title will be kept confidential and a non-identifying title such as 'teacher' or 'researcher' will be used instead.

Sharing of results:

It is also requested that relevant information from your interview is shared with [Name of the organisation] in order to assist with their assessment of the drama project and the involvement of creative processes within their organisation. Your name and details can be kept confidential if you wish. If you do not consent to this, none of the information from your interview will be shared with [Name of the organisation]. Your interview will not be shared with any third parties besides [Name of the organisation] (if consent is given).

Additional use:

I would also like to request that the interview is kept by myself beyond the duration of this research project for the potential of conducting useful re-analysis at a later point. It is therefore additionally requested that your interview be used in documentation, publications, conference presentations or teaching/learning resources that do not pertain to the current PhD research indicated within this document. If you do not consent to these requests, your interview will be destroyed after this research project is complete and will not be used beyond the research aims specified in this document.

If you have any questions:

Please contact me if you require any further information about this research. You can contact me on **0424 171 904** or email me at **jenny.penton@griffith.edu.au**. If you have additional queries, you can contact my research supervisor, Professor Michael Balfour, at Griffith University on 07 373 55688.

The ethical conduct of this research:

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.

If you have any other concerns or wish to complain about this research, you can write to:
The Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University,
QLD. Or you can contact the office by phone on 07 3755 5585 or by email at research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

Once I have received your confirmation regarding the interview, I will contact you to arrange a convenient time and location.

I would like to thank you for your time

Yours faithfully

Jenny Penton,
PhD Student
Griffith University
Jenny.penton@griffith.edu.au
0424 171 904

E.8 Consent Form – Interviewees



School of Education and
Professional Studies

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road

Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122

Australia

Community Drama Research Project Interview, Consent Form

Research Team:

Senior Investigator

Professor Michael Balfour, School of Education and Professional Studies,
07 373 55688

m.balfour@griffith.edu.au

Research Team Member

Jenny Penton, PhD student, School of Education and Professional Studies
0424171904,

jenny.penton@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include giving a twenty minute interview on my experiences of the practical drama research project.
- I consent to this interview being audio recorded
- I understand that the recording will be destroyed after transcription is complete and the written transcription will be kept by the researcher in a secure location.
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- I agree to participate in the project

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Special consent is required for the following points. Please tick the boxes that you give additional consent for:

I consent to my name and job title being used within research documentation such as reports, the PhD dissertation, publications and conference presentations.

I consent to information from my interview being shared with the host organisation, [Name of the organisation].

I consent to the researcher's retention of the interview data after the end of this research project and for its re-use in further research documents such as publications and conference proceedings and also teaching/learning resources that do not pertain to the PhD research outlined in this document.

Please note the University's legal privacy statement regarding these last points of consent

"The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. As outlined elsewhere in this information sheet, your identified personal information may appear in the publications/reports arising from this research. This is occurring with your consent. Any additional personal information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded, except where you have consented otherwise. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone 07 3735 5585."

Appendix F

Reflective Journal Extracts

Extract from 8th March 2012 – Workshop One

In the session today we played ‘Whose story is true’. There were a couple of participants who told very personal and emotional stories – one about leaving home and defying family members, and one about her mother leaving for Australia as a refugee and not speaking to her for 12 years. These were very emotional stories, especially for a first session. How do you cope with or prepare for this disclosure? Do you let the group lead the reaction for you? This is what I did today a little. I then thanked the tellers and moved on. However at one point I tried to move onto a break and hadn’t realised that the rest of the group were still wanting to discuss the story. I realised and stopped, sat down and let people speak. It was the other group members who wanted to react to the mother story rather than the teller – who was dismissing it with ‘it’s all alright now’. How do you protect the teller from a huge reaction – or should you? Should you let everyone have their say on the matter? Is it ok to just sit and digest the information for a moment? Everyone’s energy was low after that point and it helped to sit together and think about it without saying much. A break came after and that helped to re-focus the group...

One group member had to leave halfway through this story exercise and without thinking I let her go at that moment. It was only afterwards that I realised her group was telling her story and that they now couldn’t participate in the exercise. Wanting them to be able to do something, I asked them for the story they were going to tell. One participant ended up telling the story from the original teller’s point of view, rather than as his own and it was too late before I realised that this was uncomfortable. I felt that after he started speaking he became uncomfortable telling the story and I definitely became uncomfortable that we were talking

about her story without her in the room. Everyone applauded him and this resettled the atmosphere, however the teller wasn't there to be part of this shift so was the atmosphere really completely restored? This raises questions about ownership of stories and who they belong to. I need to consider what it means to give authority of someone's story to someone else in their absence. How will this develop when we are putting stories together for performance? What happens when people don't show up to the session – is it ethical to still discuss their story? What happens when a character takes over the story and it becomes fiction? Who does it belong to then? What care do we need to take of the original owner? Where are the lines of ownership in storytelling when that develops into creative collaboration? This is something that I will need to gauge very carefully once we are putting performance ideas together and using personal stories or parts of them... Why are we asking for stories? What is the agenda and what are we compromising in the process? Can storytelling ever be completely ethical in this way?

Extract from 10th May 2012 – Workshop 11

At the end when Gordana comes up to them to explain what she's been doing, she says, "I've just been telling my story". This was the session where I recorded her aural storytelling and then wrote it up for her. Asking her to write things was quite unsuccessful and I don't think she knew where to begin. I'd made an assumption that because she was at university, her literacy levels were fairly good, however she struggled with being asked to write the story – even when I suggested it could be a letter to her friends, explaining what had happened. At this point, the story was about the film director and I'd asked her to create a story about his childhood and what it was like to grow up in that environment. Once I realised that writing wasn't going to work, I asked her to talk to me and I recorded her words. She told the whole story and it morphed from the film director, to her own story of the soldiers crashing into

their house during the war. We changed the character's name to Nora, but we both understood that it was her story.

Extract from 11th July 2012 – Workshop 20

Yet again this workshop was cut back in hours from all day to 4-6. More frustration. This is meant to be the last push and not much pushing is happening.

Catherine was running the warm-ups. Her brief was a school class that knew each other but didn't necessarily have good relationships. She had prepared properly and started with a great deal of confidence and assurity. It is amazing what a leadership role allows people to do – Catherine is unrecognisable as she speaks up and takes charge of the room. These opportunities are fantastic for the group to build confidence and 'rehearse' being someone different – or in a different role. I can see the lessons she has taken from the previous feedback sessions – she's created exercises that follow on from each other – 3 facts then 3 things in common. She also delivers a nice exercise where we have to pick a word she's provided – like friendship, trust etc., we have to discuss in pairs what it means to us.

She gives bite size instructions. Her confidence here is so different to how she in normal sessions. There is still a lot of inexperience – she asks us to walk like a dog out of the blue and doesn't control the room once we do it. She collapses with her own laughter at the exercise instead of managing the behaviour of others. She hasn't organised the materials she needed beforehand and asks me for paper in the middle. They are all learning points that we give her at the end. It is a good 'rehearsal for reality' and we all feed off the positivity and the confidence it gives us as a group. It is a great example of building leadership skills.

Extract from 19th July – Workshop 24

There is no video of this session – it was inappropriate to film. We talk to the group and explain the situation with Catherine and Emily, emphasising no blame and not revealing any personal details. We talked to Catherine and Emily before the workshop and asked them how they would like us to deal with this information – they could explain, we could explain. They wanted us to say it and we went over what to say. They have barriers down that are like brick walls.

We explain that we only have Catherine and Emily for one more week – this rehearsal and next Thursday. To the group we pitch the idea of the performance being next Thursday. We will have to go with the story we've got and the workshop will focus on completing it – What should Bob do?....

I want to protect Catherine and Emily but I also feel a strong need to show the others that there is a good reason behind what we're doing, we are not just mucking them around and letting them down for nothing. How can we look after the needs of both sides here? How can I continue to try and let Catherine and Emily feel like it's ok and not their fault, and also let the others know that this extreme disappointment and feeling of being let down is unavoidable and that we are presenting a best case solution to them....

The whole thing is devastating for everyone. We feel defeated and gutted. The hopes and dreams of everyone are shattered, just as we were getting going. Christian especially is outwardly disappointed. I don't know how to make it better. I can't make it better. I just have to explain that this is all we can do. The only choice we have. Catherine and Emily are gutted and are silent throughout. They have lost all spark.

Extract from 31st August – Rehearsal One

We go through the scenes that we have and discuss how we can adapt them. We start going through the scenes and workshopping each bit. The energy is quite low, but positive and not draining.

The swapping of characters enables Christian to move from Bob to Sean in the bullying scene and at the beginning with Jessie. Because at least two characters are invisible at any given time (Jessie and Sean/Bob) the switching allows Christian to ‘snap’ into the character thereby emphasising the emotions through physical language. It is extremely powerful and showcases Bob’s reactions extremely well – especially as there is only ever one thing to look at on stage. This is put to use further in the library scene where Christian returns to the chair as Bob and responds to the bully by sitting upright and dropping his books. Because the body switching causes a pause, the quick movement of Bob’s reaction stands out instead of being lost amongst the other happenings on stage. Christian’s return to Sean is also intriguing as he can slowly lower himself into the pose, thereby making the moment more menacing and troubling than if Bob was really sat there. The same later applied to Bob and Dad, and for Dad slapping Mum. It is an extremely powerful mechanism and conveys a great deal about these events, carrying the emotions to a higher point.

Christian has learnt the general essence of the scenes but needs to improvise some of the words – as such, a whole new performance is born with Christian bringing his own experiences and thoughts to the piece. The balance of playing Bob seems to help him with playing Dad and Sean. He is no longer identified as ‘the bad guy’, the guy he wants to be different from, he can put himself in there too through Bob. This is especially evident in the library scene where Bob is talking about the tension between wanting to leave school and get away from the bullying and staying in school to improve his life. He talks about wanting to be different to his father - to be better than his father – something that Christian has expressed about his own life and in his concerns about playing the Dad character.

Appendix G

Interview Samples

I have included the following documents as examples of the interviews that were conducted as part of the research. The full interview series is too long to all be included here, but it is hoped that including this sample will provide a sense of how the interviews were conducted.

G.1 Interview C1 with Christian

26th July 2012

Present: Christian and Jennifer Penton

J – I just want to ask you some questions about the project, this is all part of the research and finding out about the project, that has to come from the people who are involved as well, so it's to get your voice. So thank you because it's really valuable to me to be able to talk to you about it. And we're going to be videoing it and I will show it back to you to make sure you're happy with it.

C – Beautiful. No I'm alright as long as you don't take my points and make it in a negative way I don't mind.

J – No, that would never happen. And what we'll do as well, at the end of the project I have to go away and get all the bits of writing and all the videos and all the information I've collected in a big pot and I work out what it means and then I come back to you guys and say this is what I found out, this is what I'm going to say the project is about and get your feedback on that so I make sure that I've found the right things.

C – Beautiful.

J – So it's all about trying to find the 'truth' and that I'm not twisting it to be something else.

And if you do want to talk about negative things, that's totally ok as well.

C – Cool

J – So, just for a bit of context, how would you describe your involvement with the project so far?

C – How would I describe it? Wait, what was the question again?

J – How would you describe your involvement with the project so far?

C – Er...amazing. I think it's amazing and rewarding, yeah. It's cool.

J – And what have you been doing with the project?

C – Each week, each session rather, we create something new and we're trying to get the idea of family and bullying into more depth. I think that's what we've been doing and like so far we're trying to create a play based on the [unknown] and yeah yeah, trying to create something new.

J – And I just had a thought as well, I'm going to ask you lots of questions about the project and I know recently we've come up against these challenges. So I'm going to ask you questions about that afterwards because I understand that that's important as well. So don't worry, we'll get to that as well.

So, can you tell me what it's been like being part of the project?

C – It's been really - and I don't know, I'm going to use this word a lot – it's been really rewarding. It has allowed me to connect with myself more. It has allowed me to understand

the things that surround me, it has allowed me to understand the cause and effect of bullying, family relationships and stuff like that.

J – Can you talk to me more about what you mean when you say it's helped you get more in touch with yourself?

C – I mean now and then we have been bullied. You can say that you've been bullied, I mean who hasn't, but at the same time, we have bullied other people and we don't understand why, what effect it caused for those that had been bullied. I was in touch with myself when I, I just remember the time that I used to bully other people and I'm just like, 'oh man, did I really make them feel this way? Did I forget how painful it felt when I was being bullied?' And then I just bullied other people. So it just made me in touch with myself, it brought me back to when I was being bullied, how I felt and everything and then thinking about when I was bullying people as well you know. I think, yeah, I think that's what the project has done for me. It's really important for [men?] to be in touch with themselves, because if you're in touch with yourself then you are telling yourself the truth, there's no hiding, there's no lies and stuff. And I wish that I say I never bullied no-body, but the truth is that I have bullied someone somewhere.

J – Thank you. And what other ways has the drama project impacted on you?

C – I think it has given me a better understanding of our community. I knew all about community since I do other projects but not this far. You know, I knew that some families were challenged with violence within the family, but really never took time to discuss it and talk about it and see what exactly it does in an individual, until this project. Then I started, you know, you know that one plus one equals two but until you start to know why it equals two then... I don't know if I'm making sense but, that's what's up.

J – Ok. And obviously you’ve come to this project already having a high level of confidence and a level of knowledge about drama and acting, but do you think that you’ve seen any skills or traits developed for you?

C – Personally I think you’d be a liar to say that you walk into a room full of actors and you did not learn nothing from it or your skills did not develop. I think that is impossible. Even though I was confident, I was confident by design, if you know what I mean. I was confident because I told myself to be confident, but then with this project, just seeing how everybody was, now I’m confident with losing myself into the moment rather than me saying ‘don’t be scared, you got this’. Instead of that I just lose myself into the moment, and that’s one of the things that I’ve learnt, lose yourself in the moment and you’ll do great. And besides that I’ve learnt acting skills from you, from everyone in the drama project. And I’ve learnt, I’ve learnt facilitation skills, the feedback and then the stuff, you know. So I’ve learnt a lot.

J – Can you talk a little bit more about the facilitation and the feedback?

C – You know, being an actor and running a program is two different things. Yes, I maybe confident in being an actor because I got a script, but confident running a workshop, that’s a different whole stage. And me coming to that, honestly I was a bit nervous. And I was nervous and stuff and thinking that ‘oh I’m going to blow it’. So once I did it and once it was finished and there was feedback given, what was great about it, and you covered all the points of greatness within the workshops that I ran so which boost up my confidence even more, because I thought that I was going to be confident at the end but to find out that I’m actually confident! And they also gave like criticisms, not in a negative way, but to...we call it, as you call it, learning points. They gave the learning points, like one of my learning points was that it was really important, that really caught my attention, was that I need to break down the instructions when I’m giving them, not just feed people loads of instructions. And I think

that's very important when you're running a workshop, you need to slow down and make sure they are getting the instructions before you move onto the next one. So, that's one of the things in facilitation that I've learnt.

J – And you've talked a little bit about this already, in terms of the content of the drama performance that we've made, has that had any other effects on you apart from what you said about reflecting on bullying?

C – Most definitely. You know, personally I think that the play...it's almost as if the play is written, ok let me rephrase that. If there was a play that's written about my life, I think the play would be 'it'. Of course add more stuff, but it would be 'it'.

J – You mean your life isn't six minutes long!

C – Well....what can I say, it's actually longer than that but... The subjects that we touched on, it's actually what I went through, me and my paps. I mean me and my paps we were never...one of the strong lines [in the play] is "I want to be different to my paps. I want to be better than my paps". Based on how he treated my mum, you know when I was a kid my paps used to be on my mind every day because he was drunk and all that stuff and it's seeing that, it brought back memories to life. And so I think it has touched me, not just with the bullying but the whole play has really touched my heart. I think that's why I keep coming back each week. If I recall one day, you asked us to write about what are our fears. And I wrote, 'I am afraid that I won't be able to be here at the end of this whole thing, to see the end product, because I had work and everything going on, but I kind of cut off work and I told my boss, on Thursdays I need to finish at this time so that I can go to the drama, and I think what kept me coming back was because I was so in touch with the project, knowing that it was a reflection of what I've been through as well. Yeah.

J – Looking at the other members of the group, have you seen any of them develop over this time?

C – Yeah I think we've all developed, if you look at it, I remember when we all first came in and we were all nervous and shy and stuff. But as time went by, they develop the confidence, their confidence and their, some of their acting skills as well and they develop, some of their movements were much better than they were when they first came in and their facial expressions were much better than they were when they first came in. So I think everybody, looking at the members of the group, I think that everybody has really learned a lot from the project. I don't care what they say, but personally I think that they've learned a lot.

J – How do you think the group has developed?

C – Um, really well. Really really well. We came in every week, and we're trying to create something that is worth our time and we show that by the work that we are doing. And I think that it's going really well. And I like the idea how we've kind of created a family within the drama project itself. Yeah.

J – And what is it that makes that family? Is that the trust or the relationships or what we've been doing or...

C – Um, I think it's all of what you just said. I think it's the trust, the relationships, everything we've been doing. When we first came in, I personally didn't know anybody there, I've got to know them through this drama project and now we're friends, now we're like family friends. When I talk about me and the girls [Catherine and Emily], now we're family friends and they're telling me what's happening with their lives and everything. Last time when she was crying [referring to an incident where one of the participants started crying in the workshop] when I went home she told me, 'this is what's happening' and I feel

like they treated me like an older brother and I'm honoured that that's what they do. So within the project we have grown, we have grown as a loving family, you know how we have a family which don't care about one another, I think we have grown to a family that really loves one another. We don't put anybody down, I love everyone in the drama group equally and I think everybody loves everyone in the drama group equally which is beautiful. And if you look at the groups, Catherine and Emily, they're sisters, if you look at it right, they're actually real sisters, real siblings, but when they come in the project they don't really show they're siblings, you know, 'I'm going to treat her special because she's my actual sibling from Mum and Dad', no, they treat us exactly how they treat one another which is actually really beautiful to see that. Yeah. Cool.

J – Cool. So, this project or projects like this one, why are they important for young people or for communities? What role does this kind of work play?

C – It's projects like this that are very very important, first of all, just look in the community, they're very very important in the community. We have a lot of issues in the community and one of the greatest issues I think in the community starts with family. Family is very important, it plays a very important part in the community and when family has broken apart, you can't build a community after family has broken apart because if you look at it, if the family has broken apart, the community won't exist. The community only exists because of family. This project is very important because, not so much of like, show the negatives of the community like related to um, like give them a smack on the back and say 'Hey, what you doing is not right, that's affecting your son or your daughter, so you need to change for the better'. That's why I think it's very important for the community, that it's very important for the community to see this, because it's actually educating the community to become a better community for themselves, for their kids, for their grandsons, for whatever. Even if

[unknown] are going to come in the future, for all of them as well. For young people, who am I kidding, this is the 21st Century, there's a lot of bullying going around, at school, at home, with friends, at stations, everywhere, it's very poignant. I find that we don't really give a damn about who we bully until we get a smack in the back and be like 'Hey! Do you know what you're doing? How that affected that person? To become this person...to do this and this and this?' So I think that's why it's very important. And it's very important that us young ones know the cause and effect of bullying. So that before we bully next time, we know exactly what we're putting them through. So I think it's very important.

J – Ok, thank you. Ok, now you are really good at articulating yourself but this is something that I did with the other participants and it worked quite well, so we're going to do it as well. So what I did was I looked through all the stuff I've written about the project and all the stuff you guys had said about it and stuff that we'd talked about in the sessions and these were the words that stood out and kept being repeated. So what I want us to do, or you to do, is have a look at them, and if you think there are words that are missing – like Kim thought that this one was missing – we've got blank ones to write others down on. And I want you to pick the words, as many as you like, pick the words that really stand out for you about this project.

[C picks out the words]

C – I'm just going to pick those ones

J – Just those ones? Ok, what have you got?

C – Young people, voice, character, community, bullying and issues

J – And can you talk to me about why those ones stood out for you?

C – First of all let me start with ‘community’. I picked up ‘community’ because this drama project is very important to the community. I think if we’re not doing this for the community then we’re just wasting our time then, so that’s why that one stood out....Ok, I’m going to pick issues next. Well, with this project we really really tackle the issues that’s happened with our community and young people so...the next one is ‘character’. The reason I picked ‘character’ is the character we put on or we are, everyday character. The character we create. I mean youngsters they like to put a character on over who they are. Some of these bullies are not bullies, it’s just the character they put on to keep them safe. Almost like a mask they put on to keep them safe or a character they put on because their friends have put on that character and that’s why the character and this project is very important. The next one is going to be ‘bullying’. With character comes bullying. Like I just said about how some of the characters who are put on, they are like bullying. Like we’ve been hurt, in life we have been hurt and in order to keep us safe, in order to keep us protected we put on this character, this bully character. Because I believe behind every bully, there is a really soft side, a reason why this bully is doing this. So that’s why the bullying and the character are real connected. And last but not least I put on the voice. I believe that this whole project is the voice of the voiceless, so it’s the community issues, young people, bullying voice.

J – Ok, awesome. Can I ask you to tell me more about voice?

C – In our community today, community and young people, what sort of a voice does young people have in our community? In today’s society and today’s community, young people’s voices are negatives, there’s no positive. Young people in community are the reason why they have this and this and this, the smoking, the drinking and the crimes and everything. Is that really the voice that we wanted for our community? And I think with this project we’re trying to show that there’s more to that, to the voice that you think young people has. They’re

really going through a lot, and you just haven't...they've been screaming but you just don't hear their voice. In the community, does the voice you hear in community real or fake? Let me just talk big right now. Julia Gillard, she was running for President or Prime Minister, she was like, 'I promise when I become Prime Minister I will do this and do this and do this'. She used the voice of the community just to feed her timing and for her to be in power. But is really what she's doing because of the community or because what? Really, because she promised a lot and I didn't get what she promised. They said every kid in school would get a laptop. I waited for a laptop until I graduated and I didn't get a laptop. And she promised that, she promised a lot of things that aren't happening. She promised that she would take the troops out of Iraq, and how long did it take before? Until the next election and she was threatened and that's when she took them out. But you wait when she wins again, she's going to send them back. That's what I think about, community and voice. People use the voice of the community to get them what they want and not for the good of the community. That's why voice is very important in this project. And I know you might be thinking, 'How does Julia Gillard and this stuff involved with our play?' True, but with our play we are talking about what are the issues happening in the community, how does the community hurt and how can we make it better? And I think how we can make it better, maybe stop using the voice for yourself and start using the voice for the good of the community. Yeah.

J – Are we achieving that?

C – With the drama project? Personally I think there's a lot more we can do. But once upon a time before you learnt how to run you had to learn how to walk, before you learnt how to walk you had to learn how to crawl and I think step by step we are achieving that. Because so far I think we are achieving the voice not for the good of an individual but for the good of the

community and for the young people, so I believe that we are slowly, step by step, achieving that.

J – Ok, the other thing I want to ask you about what you were saying about character and bullying. You talked about how young people wear a character in their lives and bullies wear a character. What happens in drama where you strip the characters away from young people and you put them into a performance? What does it give young people to be able to go and become a character that's separate to themselves? Does that make sense?

C – Yeah. I think when we strip a character from young people and put them in a performance, it's like a reflection of themselves. It's like, a person is a two face. Let me go magic, media, voodoo kind of thing. Let's say you're a character, when he looks in the mirror he's the beast, but what people see is a beautiful person, just a normal person. So I think when you strip the character from a young person and put them on stage, I think there's that reflection where they're looking in the mirror, they're looking at the beast and as you're sitting down you're like 'I'm looking at my beautiful self but then when I look in the mirror I see a beast' and I think that's what happens, personally. I'm not sure if that answers your question correct but.

J – Yeah it does. And what happens for young actors who get to step into that character and explore the things that that character does?

C – I think they get in touch with themselves. Like I was saying before how this has allowed me to get in touch with that bullying side. I was that beast. And when I looked in the mirror I saw a beast. And when I go to explore a little bit about that, you know, the character that I was keeping, it allowed me to find more about myself. So it's more like a journey, a journey

to finding yourself. Yeah I think it's one of those things, you go on a journey to find yourself.

Yeah.

J – Is there anything else you want to say about these words before we put them away?

C – No.

J – Ok, thank you.

[a family member enters the room – there is some discussion and then the interview continues]

J – Ok, can you think of a moment in the project that really stands out for you, or has really stuck in your mind? And it can be from any point in the project.

C – The paps coming to smack the mum [referring to a moment within the performance material where the husband raises his hand to slap his wife]. That really stood out for me.

J – Ok, and is that when we were making it in the last couple of weeks, is that what you mean?

C – Yes. I think there are many moments that stand out to me but that's got to be the top one. Because if you do remember properly I did say about how I didn't want to step into the father character since I hate my paps. I don't hate my paps because hate is a very strong word and the Bible says if you hate somebody you just kill somebody but I dislike my paps a lot and I want to be different to him. And me stepping into that role, I know I'm an actor but there were times that I came home and that was still running in my head while I'm trying to practice my lines, you know what I'm saying. Actually, because I play the paps in the play, when I raise my hand to slap the mum, it just took me back to when I was four years old, six years old, seeing my paps every day coming home drunk and beating my mum up. So that

really stood out to me. But yeah, it's beautiful. I don't want to say it's a negative. And yes, it is a negative image to see that but it's a beautiful image, yeah it's a beautiful image. Because sometimes I do lose sight of who I am and whenever things like that from the past happen, I don't want it, but when they come it kind of like reminded me of who I am and who I want to be.

J – Is there anything else you want to say about your feelings about that moment?

C – I don't want to go into details about what I felt that day but I'm just saying that's what it is for me. Yeah, the reason that stood out to me so much is because after we done that I went home and started thinking about a friend of mine who was moving to New Zealand, she's now 16 or 17, or 18. She went through an experience because her mother died when she was giving birth to her and so the father was always hurting her because the father blames her for the Mother's death. So the father really hated her and was always beating her up and everything. So I came home that day and surprisingly she said hi on Facebook and we started talking and I that moment came back and I just started remembering that, I started writing a song about it. And the second part of the story of the song is about a woman who was left on her own and she started prostitution to get money for food, for the kids while her husband is caught being with other women and stuff like that. Then when I first performed that, for the first time in my performance life, I cried on stage. I try and cry and I just can't cry, it's not because – I'm a man I just can't cry, my tears are dry. But for the first time, I actually went on stage and cried. Because I was performing and the words itself I think were really strong words and just remembering that moment, it just collided together. So I think that's why that moment is a very very important moment. Yeah.

J – Thank you. So coming back to the usefulness of drama, do you think drama is useful? I mean we've talked about the way it looks at bullying, but maybe other community issues that

we've explored as well like discrimination, or awareness, inclusion, do you think it's useful to look at those different things?

C – You know, people say music is a universal language and it's a very powerful weapon, and so is drama. Drama is a universal language, you don't have to speak for you to be able to understand it. You can be deaf and dumb but you can still speak the language of drama. I think it's a very powerful weapon so if you use the weapon to look at the issues like racism and stuff, I think it's worth it because it's really effective, it really affects you like...[snaps his fingers]. It affects you more than that, it hits you hard, so I think it's worth it, for racism and for other issues as well.

J – Ok thank you. I suppose we've talked about this a lot already, so if you feel you've answered it that's fine, but from my point of view in our project, the way we've used drama is either to talk about important community issues like bullying, or people have told quite personal stories – like Gordana's scene that I don't think you actually saw as I think she did that in the gap in the middle, but I think that there's been two ways of making stories and one of them is to talk about important community issues and one of them is to recreate our own stories. Can you talk any more about that idea?

C – Ok, let's say I'm a very very rich guy, and you're a very very poor person, and I come to you – you're working hard and you're about to give up. Now, I'm a rich person who has never worked hard and never done anything and you're about to give up. And I come to you and say, 'don't give up, someday you'll be as rich as me'. You know what you're going to ask me? 'What do you know about it? Have you experienced being poor and see how hard it is?'" With that being said, I'm about to tell you an example, but with that being said, you can't tackle an issue in a community like all the issues like bullying and racism, you can't tackle that issue without putting that personal experience. In English class when you're writing an

essay and stuff and you're talking about tactics, evidence, proof of what you're saying, if it's right. If you're saying that bullying is bad, what's the proof? What's the evidence that it's bad? Have you ever experienced that? If you have experienced that, because I think people who believe things if you experience, if you just tell them 'yes you can do whatever it is that you want', but unless you experience it and know how you feel, how would you even talk about it unless you know how it really really feels? It's like, let me go back to the rich guy again, let's say you're a very very rich girl and I'm a director, I give you a role to play a poor girl. How are you going to play a poor girl if you've never experienced being poor? So in order for you to convince my audience that you are playing this poor girl, you must somehow go out and experience that. So that's why I think it's very important that, for us or any drama group to include personal experiences to tackle the issues that they are trying to get across.

J – And what about using stories and characters to do that rather than telling our own stories?

C – It comes with protection. So when I'm acting, yes I can act like a poor guy and everything, if I do use my personal experience and people who know me they'll be like, 'he's not acting, he's just being himself and that's sad' and the judgement will go on and on, but if you're playing a character, even though you'll be playing personal experience, they'll be like, 'man he's so not playing himself'. But just because you have a character, it's not you, it's automatically like, you know, you're touching them with a different character. For example if I was to play, if there was a movie about a guy who was beating up his wife, and I played the character and my name was Christian and my character's name was Christian in the movie and I just played me, people would be like, 'we're not interested, we've seen you a million times, we just want something...when you're given a character it's something that you know sometimes and sometimes it's something that is you, if that makes sense. So it's not you, but it's you.

J – And that helps protect you and ...

C - ...and the play itself and helps you get your message across. Yeah, without any confusions or judgements.

J – Ok. One of the aims of the project was for it to be multi-cultural and the young people in the project have come from different backgrounds, different racial backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds, faith backgrounds, language backgrounds. Can you talk about that a little bit more?

C – I'm not sure if I'm going to answer your question right.

J – That's ok, there's no right answer

C – But I'm going to try, there's no right answer but there is a wrong answer. That's a joke.

J – The only answer is your answer

C – I think whatever I'm saying here is real because I want it to be. Even though I talk a lot I do think before I talk. Communities, powerful communities, powerful society is built from different backgrounds. Let's look at Australia, Australia is a very multicultural country and you can't build a community just with one nation. I know they have the Burundian community, Sudanese community, Italian community, but really, they're not really as strong as if they could join those communities. They would be more powerful. In order for our aim to touch that, you know for us to be successful, for us to touch different communities, we need different people from different cultures. For example, and no offence, I'm not trying to be racist here, I'm just saying the truth, the way you would touch England, English people, is not the same effect that I would have on them. The affect I would have on African's is not the same affect you have on them. In Australia we have England, African, Italian, you know

whatever, so that's why we need different multi-cultures, to open them all, not to just touch one community, rather all communities. That's how I see it.

J – So building on that answer, one of the moments that really stood out for me was that day in Easter, when it was Emily, Catherine and you, where we created, I think it was right at the beginning of making Bob. We had this amazing day and it was just the three of you, I don't even think Melissa was there. We had loads of discussions about what it was to be an African person growing up in Australia and African identity and what it was to be a member of an African community. And it felt like those discussions were a lot deeper than maybe some of the discussions we've had when the whole group is there. So I suppose there's two parts of my question. One, what do you think about that statement and what's your reaction to it and two, do you think it's important for young people to be able to talk about their own culture with other people from that same cultural background or heritage?

C – Yes, I do agree with this statement, most definitely. And I think the reason that conversation was deeper was because we were able to be not the character we're given. Not Bob, none of that, it was just Christian, Catherine and Emily in the room and we're talking about from like, remember how I said my personal experience, we'll engage more than just that, I think that is why it was important. And your second part of the questions was...what was the second part of the question?

J – Is it important for young people to be in a forum with other young people from the same culture or background?

C – Yes, I think it's very important for young people of different cultures to be with people of the same background, to discuss about those kind of issues. Because it's kind of like they're reminding themselves, they're reminding each other where they come from, why they're

here. Let me just talk on Africans a little bit, most of our younger Africans we come here, we just totally forget where we come from, we think that life isn't part of here and we think 'do you know what, when I first came from Africa my plan was to come here and study, work hard and get a better lifestyle for me and my family, but we come here and all of a sudden we're chasing girls, we're going clubbing and smoking and drinking and we're forgetting that. And then you go to a project like this and you meet other people who still has the African roots in them and they're telling you 'this is why I came here and this is what it's supposed to be about, this is what it's supposed to be'. And you're thinking, 'damn, I've forgotten who I am. All of a sudden I'm chasing girls and that and I need to stop doing that' and ok as fun as chasing girls and doing all that stuff sounds, I need to be that. It very important for people to come like that and discuss about that because as an African, as a proud African, they should be proud of their heritage, of where they come from and not to be scared to share it. So I think it's very important and very beautiful for people to come from the same background as to discuss that kind of issues. Because everyone needs to be proud of where they come from, whether they're from British, England, London. I just realised that England and London are the same.

J – And Britain!

C – Yeah [Laughs]. It took me like 6 years to know the difference between UK and London, I'm not going to lie, I only discovered two years ago that London and UK is...

J – But that's alright, I don't know very much about Burundi so, you know, we know about where we're from and where we are.

C – Yeah.

J – And do you think you could have those sorts of discussions in a multicultural environment, or is it lost?

C – No no no, it depends how much each wants to share. Because I think in order for us to be a strong community, we need to be able to understand different cultures, to respects each other's cultures, to understand each other's cultures, and only way to do that is by educating each other's cultures. So yes, there will be some secrets hidden because no-one wants to tell all this or you know or I'm not going to tell you that like, 'in my African community we're lost' they're not the kind of things I'm going to educate you about, I'm going to educate you like what really, some of the things, and if that comes up then it's not come up because I want it to, it's come up because I don't know, out of the blue. So I think it's very important for multi-cultures to meet and talk about that, and I think it can work. It's not a think, I know it can work, because we done it before and it worked before and we got so much out of it, I got to understand different cultures. And I don't want to talk about it but just to give you a little background here, I'm a very proud African, I'm proud of my African heritage so when I came here, you know what I'm saying, I don't want to enhance the Australian heritage because I'm not Australian, even though I'm a permanent resident. And then we had this conference where we were talking about each other's cultures, and I realised that in order for them to respect me, I need to educate them about my culture, and in order for me to respect them, they need to educate me about their culture and understand them. So once I understand their culture, then we can sort of all live in peace and harmony. Because at the conference, one of the things that came up actually was I was at the conference with a guy that I really really didn't like, but at the end of the conference, I was just like 'so that's what you were trying to do the whole time', and he was like 'so that's what you meant the whole time', It's all just misunderstandings.

J – So what's our project gained for being multicultural?

C – What has our project gained? I reckon it has gained a lot. It has gained the power of not one but many. It has gained the power of being able to touch the Greek community, the African community, the Vietnamese community and the Chinese community I think, I'm not sure where Sarah...

J – I think Vietnamese

C – Vietnamese yes.

J – And Gordana is from Kosovo, not Greece

C – Oh, well, you know what I meant, and England and Melissa is, you know!

J – Melissa's Australian.

C – Yeah! Really?

J – Yeah, she was born in Melbourne.

C – She doesn't look Australian, your everyday Australian.

J – You think so? What do Australians look like?

C – I don't know! But she doesn't look like it, she doesn't even speak like it.

J – She does!

C – I don't know. I've been around real Australians [laughs]

J – Maybe she's only half Australian [laughs]

C – Maybe it's because I don't spend a lot of time with her but, from where I stand I thought she was mixed.

J – No, I don't think so. Well, she was definitely born here.

C – Because I remember she said she was born in the country, or she moved to the country? When she was young.

J – I don't know. Maybe we need to talk to her more. So what else have we gained?

C – Besides that which I said before, we have gained love, trust, you know unity. And besides that, the cliché stuff, we have gained self-confidence within ourselves, within the group. We've been skills not just drama skills but skills that we can use in everyday life. Yeah, we have gained, I'm not sure if it's me that's crazy but the way I view it, the drama thing, is that I was on a hero's journey. I was on a journey of finding my own hero, and I've gained that. I found him and oh boy, I do need to stay with him.

J – And what has helped you find him?

C – All the exercises we did. The play itself, like I was saying before, has allowed me to get in touch with myself and more importantly, I'm not sure if I showed it, I'm pretty sure I was trying my best not to show it, but I think it has touched my feminine side a little bit more. Because I used to be shy of my feminine side, but I think since then I'm not really afraid to admit. Well, I'm afraid a little bit by bit you know, I think. Like I knew that I was in tune with my feminine side, obviously, being raised by a single woman, by my mum, obviously you're going to have a feminine side whether you like it or not, but I didn't realise that that, how extent I had a feminine side, because I thought that I had just a little bit but to find out that's all I am, I actually don't have...yeah.

J – It's half past six already, and all I've got left is a couple of questions about the challenges we've been facing recently. Would you rather pause and do it another time?

C – Let's do it, let's do it. I just want to get it done with.

J – Ok, so what are the different challenges that you think we've been facing? Particularly recently.

C – Commitment. I think. Commitment and passion, lack of passion. The other day, when we almost had a break down and you and Melissa went to talk in the other room and I was writing there with the girls and was writing on the white board, that was actually what we were talking about. Commitment and honesty and trust and all of that stuff, because I think we lost that commitment along with our passion. At first we were so passionate about this and when you are passionate, commitment is in the bag. But the moment you lack passion, commitment is not there. So, I think that's one of the challenges we're facing.

J – And how have those challenges impacted on our progress and also on the experiences that we've been having?

C – I felt like because of the problems we're facing, my experience of the drama project dropped by like 90%. Honestly, I wouldn't lie to you, the only experience I had was 10%, 90% was lost. I felt like, 'what's the point in doing it anymore, I'm done', but all I had to do was just get a little passion back, and once I got that passion it was easy for me to regain...yeah, one of the things I think I've lost doing that is experience.

J – And how do you think that we've dealt with these challenges, both as a group and you as an individual?

C – As a group, I think we did slap each other on the back and be like, ‘Hey, turn around man, what ya doing,’ and we kinda regained passion and commitment and stuff. As an individual, it’s going to make me sound cocky, but as an individual I think I reminded myself why I am doing it and realised I am doing it because I am sick and tired of what has been happening in the community and I demand change and I need to do this right now. I personally believe that my thing can change everybody’s...affected, not everybody but can affected some people. Like in the drama project, when I came up with the talk about the car talk. And when it was time for me to do my first facilitation and stuff, the first time when I was giving them what to do, I had this fun, only fun things to do, but then I kinda of sat and thought about how we’ve lost all our commitment and our agreement of how it was supposed to be and so I thought, ‘d’ya know what, how about I focus on what’s fun but with a focus on how to keep this project going.’ And I thought, ‘even if I do this exercise a bit, maybe we can kind of’...yeah. And from where we were before and then all of a sudden we start carrying each other, it kind of brought back, personally I think it kind of brought back the essence of togetherness and commitment and it kind of came back a little bit.

J – And both myself and Melissa I think feel that you’ve really been able to lift the group out of the slump we were having. And to be honest, at times you’ve lifted me and Melissa out of it as well. So, you’ve really emerged as a leader and as a point of inspiration that other people can aim to be up with your energy and your passion and your commitment. And that’s definitely something that’s happened, and so I think don’t, you don’t need to feel cocky or that you’re sort of imagining things. And it’s been so valuable to have you in the project.

Is there anything else you want to say about that point before we move on?

C – No, I think that really goes to everyone, you can be a, like you said, an inspiration, you can be as inspiration as you want, and as the group itself, or as individuals if you want to do something. So I think credit goes to everyone. Everyone was equally, yeah, equally...

J – And do you feel like you had those skills already, or have these challenges forced them to come to light?

C – I do a lot of programs where I'm in your shoes, like last time, I'm not going to lie to you, there are things that you didn't know. Remember that day we came in and it was just me, Emily and Catherine and the day that I started with the car talk, I was actually ready to go home. Because I was like, yeah I'm going to go home', because I was tired, I didn't sleep at all that night, I was awake the whole night, I only slept for an hour and I woke up and so I was tired. But then I remembered being in your shoe, giving my time and people not being able to give their word to me. And I've been on programs where I'm let down and my mum was telling me, also that's the bible telling me, do to others what you would like in return. And I remember what people used to do to me and I didn't want you to go through that, and so I thought that like I needed to step in a little bit and kind of give up my sleep and think whatever I can use to regain my energy and whatever.

J – And just feeding on from that, both me and Melissa were so grateful to you for that day and you turned the whole day around singlehandedly. And I know you say credit goes to everyone, you were the spark that changed it for everybody and that ended up being a great day because of you.

C – I always say, 'I'm not going to be the guy to change the world but I'm going to spark the brain that will change the world.' Well, Tupac said that, but still I always say that.

J – And what do all these challenges teach us about community theatre? Like what are our learning points from the project?

C – You know, never ever ever, I mean these are things I learnt from even scripted productions, even when it's like something you're getting paid for and like you know it's going to get done, but never expect it to be smooth. Go there expecting challenges, because one thing I've discovered in life is when you're expecting to get it easy, you get it hard and when you're expecting to get it hard, you get it easy, so never expect that. I think our learning point is never expect it to go, go into a project and expect that it's going to run smooth and no challenges and stuff. Get ready for the challenge and if it doesn't show up then yeah yeah yeah, but if it does show up, you're ready prepared and you're ready to fight. So I think that's our learning point. For me anyway that's our learning point.

J – Ok, awesome. Is there anything else you want me to ask or anything else that you want to add?

C – Oh yeah, ask me if the group rocks.

J – Does the group rock?

C – Yeah!! I think one thing I need to add, I think we all grew as leaders. Probably besides you and Melissa who are mature, I'm saying for us kids who haven't matured, and we come here and even though we might have leadership skills whatever, every group is different. So I think we have come a long way and have really got a lot of leadership skills. And I'm pretty sure on behalf of the group, they won't mind me thanking you and Melissa for putting, sticking with us and putting up with the shit, our shit and so. And also like when I think about giving up or sometimes it's felt like, 'this is it' you know, and there was a point where I felt like giving up at this point wouldn't be a problem, but you guys, you don't give up on us, you

still compromise, and I love how you're always trying to compromise like how I was, 'I can't make it today' and so you came to my house and stuff like that. I like that you know. So thank you very much. And in the future just keep doing this.

J – Thanks Christian, thanks for saying those things. And you're just amazing, all these things that you've talked about are incredible and that is why this was so important to do, so thank you for giving your time.

C – Thank you for giving me a shot

End

G.2 Interview G2 with Gordana

21st Dec 2012

Present: Gordana and Jennifer Penton

[some general conversation at the beginning of the filmed interview]

J – So talking about the drama project, when was it that you were last involved?

G – I'm not sure. During the school, when I started uni so I think June/July.

J – So it was just after the photography performance?

G – So that was in April?

J – No I think it was in June, something like that.

G – Ok so it was just after that

J – You've had six months away from it so this is thinking back a little bit, but I suppose in a way its good because it means that you're removed a bit now from the project so you can think about it in a different way. Why was it that you decided that it wasn't for you and you didn't want to do it anymore?

G – I think just because the time, school commitment and the timing of the drama project. So I didn't have time to do both at the same time and the [youth committee] stuff as well so I think drama was really good but the timing it went sort of, you know...

J – Do you mean the timing as in the length?

G – The length as well as the time that we had, because I had uni and after that I had to do the drama, which was good but I think it got, I had to do assessments and all that uni stuff , so yeah.

J – I think for me, the drama project went on for much longer than I had imagined, because of people dropping out and that sort of stuff.

G – Yeah yeah. Which happens

J – Right, it happens. But do you think that made it more difficult for everyone, not just you, but the whole group to keep going?

G – Yeah I think not knowing the core group of the project, because at the start we were new and didn't know where we were heading. But then people sort of dropped in and dropped out which changed the project. I think you had really good commitment and Melissa's commitment to continue with Christian was really good.

J – In my experience working with other projects, when I've worked with young people and they've been at that stage where they've made the performance and they're practising it. Normally I think everyone gets really committed and they feel this sort of ownership over the work. Why do you think this group didn't have that?

G – I think some of them didn't take it as serious. You know they just came for the sake of, to see what it is, and then once they came and then see how long it's going to take to get to where we want to go then they just gave up.

J – So do you think the length was a big factor?

G – Yeah, but apart from that I think it was really good. I think the workshops were very interactive and that sort of thing to get people involved.

J – If there was another drama project in this community like this one, what do you think needs to happen for people to have good commitment and ownership?

G – I think having it shorter and sort of, having a group of young people who are really passionate about drama, who are really into drama. I mean for me I would prefer to get involved with young people who are from different backgrounds. But using drama in different ways, not seen as a drama project so young people come into it and its seen more as a project that young people want to do, instead of drama.

J – So it could be a racism project or a bullying project?

G – Yeah but using drama.

J – Do you think young people would come to that more than a drama project?

G – It would have different, a way of getting people involved. Because young people when they see drama they tend to stay back because they're not confident or they don't want to perform. I think that's one of the reasons why they stayed back. And suddenly using drama in different contents but still having called it performance and you know.

J – I think at the beginning I remember you telling me that you weren't that keen on doing performing and that you didn't feel very confident about that either, and then at the end you performed in the taster session at the photography launch. And even after Emily and Catherine left you still took a part in Bob's play and were performing. Looking back, how does that feel to have done those things?

G – Really good. Because after the scene, the scripted part, it came together. My story and Bob's story. Because the group came together and worked really hard on it and seeing the

result was really good. So you see the result and you think that's a good thing, but it's hard to get started.

J – So what was the main effect for you being part of the project? What did you come away with?

G – I came away with how a simple story can have a huge impact to people and how that comes together, how you can tell a story. For me, because I always see drama as performance and a lot of people on stage telling different things, but this one was because it came from my own experience, and the Bob story, young people can actually have a story and put it together. Tell the story together and to others.

J – Even though we never really got to perform Nora's story except at that photography launch, what are your feelings about making that story?

G – Yeah I was glad that I sort of had the chance to tell to a small group of people. You know, I would have love to have it in a different format but not me in it.

J – Well maybe if [the organisation] carries on using Bob's story there's no reason why we couldn't also use Nora's story.

What was it like, I remember you telling me that you hadn't really told that story before, so obviously at the photography launch no-one knew it was your story, but how did it feel telling that story to people?

G – It felt sort of good but in a way told real sad memories. Because writing it and then it reminds me that the time it actually happened and the outcome of it. But then you're telling a story to those people who don't actually know that side of you and what you've gone through in detail so it's a good chance to open up and say this is what I've gone through, because not

a lot of people know how, they know how you came to Australia but they don't actually know how your life has been before that.

J – Were you ok afterwards?

G – Yeah.

J - So if it's brought up these sad memories...

G – Yeah I got used to it it's just a story at the end, if you want to tell it you can. You know the outcome, so it's good, you know at the end. Everyone survives.

J – And what do you think the impact is for the audience listening to your story? What do you think it did for them?

G – I think they sort of took on things that they've never heard of before. So they've seen this young person who started this story but they don't actually know if what she had been through or if she started someone else's story you know. So it's often a bit of mystery. It's good to leave them with that, with that anxious time.

J – I like that idea that they're left not knowing.

G – Yeah not knowing the truth.

J – And what about Bob's story, do you feel connected to Bob's story too or do you feel like it's something different that other people made?

G – I felt connected to Bob's stories because we were putting it together and took our own experience and everyone's experience in one big story. So all the talking that we did and the planning I helped in that bit as well because it's something that I might not experience everything that Bob does and you know there were some pieces where I felt, yeah I've been

there you know, so that meant there was a connection, because it came from young people and I was involved in it so it's good.

J – So how do you feel now about us performing it to schools?

G – I think it's a great great thing to see. Especially students to see some parts and it's a young person who is performing those different characters and the passion that Christian has for drama and his excitement so it's really good. I'm so happy that, even though it didn't turn out the way we all wanted it to, it still carried on telling the story to young people and those students who Christian is performing to. Telling the story that young people think, the idea of young people and with your help, putting it together, so I think it's great.

J – And what do you think those school students take away from that experience?

G – I think they will take a lot of inspiration by Christian and him being confident and telling the story that they might have seen it before or heard of it but the actually performance seeing the emotion and the things that Bob goes through and the part of being bullied or being the bully, so it's really relevant to the students.

J – In terms of the work that [the organisation] does and now having this performance that goes into schools, how important or beneficial is that for [the organisation]?

G – I think it is because we work those issues of bullying people. The bully is one of them and the escalation and education we want to do and the family. And that's what [the organisation is] all about so I think it's really beneficial. I try to work towards it. With your help it's done really good work.

J – Do you think things like art and drama and storytelling, how are they at getting young people involved in these issues?

G – I think storytelling and drama and art performance it has to be coming from your heart. If it's not your, because it's not something that I would do as my profession but I would do it because I want to gain experience in a way. But for example Christian is one of those people who wants to perform and wants to tell stories so finding someone who has the same passion, like Kim who has a special thing for photography or whatever, finding those people who have a passion for drama it's good. Young people love arts and some people they are into art but not as much as others. Arts is one of the way that [the organisation] delivers projects, so it's really good.

J – So six months on now, do you think for you personally there is any impact from having done the project that is still with you now? [long pause] Maybe a feeling that the project gave you or a knowledge that you use in your work now?

G – I think the storytelling bit and the facilitation part of it that we've done activities that we've done, I think I still carry those with me, because of the feedback I got from you and from the young people.

J – So you think you'll use those in your work?

G – Yeah definitely. Everything that I've learned from [the organisation] and from you, the work with [the organisation] and young people, of course I'm going to take those with me, even though as a youth worker you might work for a completely different organisation but still work with those principles and your previous experience. It might be totally different but at some point you use them. I think being more confident and seeing others how they were confident and I think I can do this you know. When I go to schools and talk to people I have get to the young people and talking to them about it. Because of being in drama, no matter

how hard it was to perform in a way I'm glad that I did it because you can get confident and talk in public speaking or facilitating.

J – Do you think that you still carry that confidence now?

G – Yeah of course.

J – That's really good. Is there anything else at all that you want to say or ask about the project?

G – Not really. I'm just glad that we had the chance to do the project. The idea and how we didn't give up.

J – That's really interesting, can you talk really quickly about not giving up?

G – So how we didn't give up on the project and the passion the young people had for the project and the hard work we put in and Melissa and the people who were involved. And seeing Christian get involved with the project and performing to students and then the feedback you got from the students. It makes me feel like I'm glad that it turned out that way. Because they saw the hard work you'd put in and Melissa and Christian so it all paid off in the end.

J – Just for the sake of the interview, because we both know what the reasons are, so feel free to say whatever you like in response to this question. Why would we have given up? Why did we want to give up?

G – Sorry why we didn't give up or why we wouldn't we...?

J – No, what are the reasons. What was the argument for giving up? Because you said that it was important that we didn't give up, but that means that the project wasn't just easy and

smooth, there was a reason or a time when we would've just given up. So what are the reasons?

G – I think because we didn't want. People who are passionate about drama you could say to them it's not happening and then your hard work, you as a facilitator say that's it. But because of the respect and the hard work everyone put in even though young people dropped out and didn't have as much passion about this, there were people that still worked really hard. For me I see that as being committed to the project. So standing to, up to the end of the project and seeing the results and that's what makes me really happy just seeing the result.

J – Is there anything else?

G – No that's everything!

J – Has it been alright doing the research as well, has it been alright doing these interviews with me and talking and thinking about the project in a different way?

G – Oh yeah definitely. I think one of the good things about the project we had a lot of reflection on the project and I was very glad that those reflections were taken on board and changed to suit. So definitely I felt that being interviewed made me feel I was heard by you and by Melissa and reflecting on the drama.

J – That's really good. Just really quickly, you said that it was good to reflect and then things changed because of what the group said. Can you think of an example where that happened?

G – Um...I think seeing young people as taking those people who weren't in two minds of doing drama so we came together and talked about it and talked about how improve the different ways of approaching the project. So it was good.

J – Well thank you. Is there anything else?

G – No

J – Well happy New Year! And I would like to say a big thank you to you for all your time and commitment to the project.

G – Anytime. Thank you.

J – Thank you.