Multiculturalism: (Re) Intellectualising Teaching

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

Except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is that of the

Candidate alone;

The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award.

The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

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ABSTRACT

Victorian Department of Education policy in relation to experiences of primary teachers in Melbourne's metropolitan schools (especially those in monolingual-Anglo schools) is contained in a series of proposals that relate to structural changes in multicultural policies and practices. It could be argued that there is a lack of concrete support for school policies and curricula that actively sustain the development of multicultural life. With this in mind, this study has set out with the purpose of exploring a new approach to multicultural issues in literacy teaching and learning. The approach has been constructed within a theoretical framework that recognises a fundamental relationship between social structure and individual experience.

This research shows ways in which a group of six students aged between eleven and twelve years, from a composite Grade 5 and 6 class, understand concepts of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. In so doing it has produced a case study that demonstrates ways in which Literature Study Circles, group discussions and journal writing in the classroom influence perceptions of a community of learners. In the process, it shows ways in which this community of learners grows in awareness of a fundamental relationship between socially constructed views, that is, opinions and belief, and individual understandings of multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

Chapter 1

Introducing the study

This is a story of a journey of exploration in a particular school in the south-eastern part of Melbourne. It explores some of the ramifications of pedagogies that emerge out of implementing government policies of assimilation. This thesis takes issue with pedagogies, commonly in use, that reflect older government policies, that is, policies of assimilation of migrant peoples of non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) to this country. It explores the possibilities for intellectualizing teachers' work in developing pedagogies that reflect current twenty-first century policies of multiculturalism. It hints at the possibility for students of developing a multicultural community spirit that expresses a real tolerance and celebration of diversity and sensitivity to others' needs through discussions of the contexts of multicultural literature.

Situating the study: multiculturalism and education

Working as a primary teacher in the Victorian Department of Education for many years, particularly in the 1960s, and into the 1980s, when NESB immigration and NESB students in schools became an issue for both state and Federal governments, the author was concerned about the decisions being made. The Education Department was concentrating on the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL). It was not at that time primarily concerned with what might be a cultural change within Australian society or even with policy concerning the assimilation of students into Australian society. This was at a time when assimilationist views, as explained by Martin (1981), were being discussed in the adult world.

To explain further, the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) in schools and society did not include a program of multicultural education, which would challenge and reject not only racism, linguistic, religious, gender and other forms of discrimination, but also the description of NESB[1] students and adults as ethnics. This approach also failed to recognize cultures of NESB migrant families associated with schools as part of the school community, and did not include pluralism as a basis for social change with associated democratic principles of social justice.

Part of the author's experience as a teacher pointed to a feeling that in general, teachers, including the author, were trapped within distance and time, as they were not conversant with NESB difficulties, as well as how to teach NESB students and relate to the new students' culture in a multicultural society.

The author's entry to PhD studies has been the result of an interest kindled through this experience of teaching in areas heavily populated by NESB migrants with numbers of NESB based schools. It became a necessity to step away from the focus on learning English and to challenge views about assimilation. He believed it might be possible to move from deficit theories in education, to a more open system of education that allowed teacher and student input into pedagogical change in general, and in relation to national policies of multiculturalism in particular.

Commitment to multiculturalism

There is in Australia, as Wilson (1998) points out in his Forward to *Race and Racism in Australia* (1998), recognition that a nonracial immigration policy has made cultural diversity a reality. It has not necessarily undermined the commitment of all Australians to national unity. However, despite this general appreciation and recognition, many Australians exhibit a fear of difference in their

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[1] The author is aware of current practices of referring to people from Non English-Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) as those of Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE). While the author prefers the latter, he uses the former here, as so much of the material in the field dates from earlier times when LBOTE simply was not used.

personal relationships. Wilson also contends that this extends to differences of colour, race, language and lifestyle.

The author's reading has taken him into investigations of reports, scholarly publications, reviews, claims and counter claims within discourses of higher education provision of which he was completely unaware. It has led him to the understanding that a generational change was needed to take into account Australia's developing cosmopolitan or multicultural outlook in the twentieth first century. Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting (1990) argue that education has been a most important factor in changing Australian culture and identity. However, the out-of-date attitude of assimilation still prevails in sections of society, that is, the belief that people of other cultures ought to acclimatize to Australian society; it is based on ignorance of new cultures. White (2003) contends that although Australia is complacent with its multicultural character, racial tensions still exist today.

Birrell and Birrell (1981) contend that NESB migrants began at the lower end of the social scale and had to prove that they could climb upward to gain better social status by education, and recognition of the work they did, and thus ward off slurs such as 'New Australians', 'ethnics', or 'wogs' (Johansen, 1988). These terms were in used after the Second World War to describe the increasing number of NESB migrants settling in Australia.

Nathanail (1985) defines the word 'ethnic' as a Greek word meaning national or nationality (p. 65). Ethnicity, Mooradian (1996) argues, should be used to describe the identity of a person in the manner of Japanese American or Greek Australian to prevent the identity being lost. 'New Australian' and 'ethnic' are regarded today as pejorative terms. This is an Australian phenomenon. Bennett (1986) and Aboud (1989) argue that slurs of ethnic abuse are not only based on racism, prejudice, and ethnocentrism, but reflect attitudes regarding the absolute superiority of one's own group or culture, prejudice or mistrust, or the despising of other groups and cultures.

Baruth and Manning (1992) argue that in the 1970s in countries such the United States of America (and Australia) that were possessed of a wide cultural diversity. This was identified as cultural assimilation or a melting pot. In the 1990s, they maintain, these became known as integration or 'salad bowls', as they encouraged each cultural group to maintain and reproduce its own particular cultural identity (p.22). Taking this metaphor a little further, the author attempts to transform these salad bowls to soup bowls in the new millennium, as each separate culture becomes an ingredient of an ethos or culture soup with its own special flavor or unique identity held within the national soup bowl.

Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting (1990) argue that multicultural education and multiculturalism are imprecise words to define. Baruth and Manning (1992) demonstrate that multiculturalism relates to or constitutes several ethnic groups or cultural groups within society, and refers to the practice of preserving the individual characteristics of the different cultures within society. Bennett (1986) proposes that one kind of multiculturalism is subtractive in that it assimilates migrant cultures into the major culture, that is, teaching and systems of learning ignore previous knowledge and experiences in the first cultures, thereby preventing the development of an amalgam of cultures, as other cultures are not absorbed into the complexes of cultures that make a multicultural society.

Multiculturalism, as expounded by Gollnick and Chinn (1994), accepts migrant cultures and integrates them into the major culture. In their view, multiculturalism becomes a philosophical movement that comprehends race, racism, gender, religious and sexual orientation. Klein (1993) argues that cultural diversity makes for a pluralistic society, and this is reflected in institutionalized structures of educational institutions. Banks (1993) identifies multicultural education as springing from the African American protest movements in the USA in the 1960s, demanding changes in the school curriculum and that greater attention should be paid to a

multiplicity of cultures in literature and historical backgrounds outside of Anglo-Saxon-Celtic culture.

Multicultural education therefore is perceived to have many different meanings and conceptualizations as it has evolved from different goals, assumptions and principles (Kendall, 1983; Bennett, 1986; Kalantzis, Cope, Noble & Poynting, 1990; Baruth & Manning, 1992; Banks, 1993; 1994).

Banks' (1994) findings about multicultural education have been particularly useful in informing this project. As Banks (1994) points out, multicultural education is a reform movement designed to change the total educational environment and provide basic education for all students; students from diverse racial and ethnic groups will experience equal opportunities and be allowed to reach their potential as learners. Further, Banks (1994) posits that, like any constructivist view, successful multicultural education should focus on how to learn rather than on the learning of specific information.

Importantly Banks (1994) points towards the factors that are the bases for this study when he stresses the importance of students sharing their stories and learning from others, particularly from literature. This view requires that educators deconstruct the myth that Australia is a homogeneous society by re-examining Anglo-Saxon-Celtic literature, and selecting literature that reflects the perspectives, experiences and values of all ethnic and cultural groups. It suggests that multicultural literature be integrated into the school curriculum, where literature discussions enable students to read, think, and become actively engaged with the text as this crosses cultural borders. It means that multicultural literature becomes a main vehicle for generating dialogue and change, and that conflict does not become divisive in the classroom as students' literary work will

create a shared body of experience, allowing them to voice their responses from the perspectives of their own individual cultural backgrounds.

It seems possible that this constructivist view of multicultural education would alleviate cross-cultural tensions that may be created by misunderstanding, ignorance, fear, prejudice and racism. In the 1960s and 1970s, La Belle and Ward (1994) claim that with rapid changes in race relations and schooling, the term, 'multiethnic education approach' came into usage as ethnic groups were assimilated or integrated into the school curriculum (p. 21).

Given the range of nomenclature in practice, this project identified the need to provide the students in this study with a multicultural vocabulary that went beyond slurs and ethnocentricity, so as to enable them to express themselves clearly and be understood in discourse and journal writing. This is a specific aim that arose from the evident increasing need for education in schools in which students would obtain the tools with which to identify and understand Australian racism and be able to work to combat its influence and effects.

The author's early journey

The author encountered major academic difficulties in the first institution where he started his research study. The consideration that a new pedagogical approach might be useful in combating racism was not accepted as a useful path. This resistance frustrated the author's attempts to explore multicultural educational processes in relation to the betterment of present and future Australian society. The author became a rudderless PhD student, as he had no supervisor to direct him. He was concerned at the possible academic dislocation of his multicultural endeavors, but just as the frustration of ideas seemed ominous, a new supervisor rescued him and directed him towards concepts regarding research in multiculturalism through multicultural literature in small study groups.

This event imbued the author with new enthusiasm to tackle multiculturalism in primary schools from a different perspective, one that had the potential to inform, in new ways, the primary school language and literacy curriculum, giving students opportunities to understand multiculturalism on their own terms, by developing their own new techniques of study, with learning motivated by their own initiative and co-operative learning.

About the same time of the meeting with his new supervisor, the author also met a school principal who indicated his interest in the idea of teaching multiculturalism, in relation to changing classrooms as communities of learners. The principal felt this was an appropriate concept to introduce into his school as more than one third of the students comprised NESB students. He offered his school as an appropriate research site, and purchased ten multiple copies of books with multicultural content and/or focus. The author changed the thesis title to *Multiculturalism: (Re)intellectualizing teaching,* as the study turned to rethinking about deficit models of assimilation, or melting pot theory as discussed by Baruth and Manning (1992), that had dominated many academics' and teachers' thoughts through most of the century (Banks, 1994). Thus, the author's focus turned to intellectualising the practices of teachers within multicultural classrooms as more than the teaching of macro skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and embedded concepts of melting pots and children's literature that explored such concepts within a framework of Literature Study Circles.

The purpose of the study

The research project is about empowering students to learn how to become active participants in Australia's multicultural society. The purpose of the research is not intended to show bias towards one section of the learning community, as the study aims to examine ways of assisting the learning needs of diverse groups of students. It is intended to further the view that promoting racial tolerance is not enough. Tolerance is an essential corollary of a peaceful and united

community. Wilson (1998) states that this might mean no more than sufferance. He goes on to argue that the development of a multicultural community spirit that expresses a rich and lively interest in one another, a real celebration of diversity, an instinct for compassionate sharing and sensitivity to another's need requires more than tolerance. It was expected that, in this study, students' literature as a catalyst for talk, would facilitate the meeting of this challenge.

The study had at its heart a continuing exploration of a range of theoretical issues about developing in primary school students a critical understanding of language and literacy, particularly the efferent reading of literature (Rosenblatt, 1991). The following chapter will explore the development of the students' concept of multiculturalism and multicultural education through Literature Study Circles, informed by Rosenblatt's (1991) concepts of aesthetic and efferential reading. It is sufficient to say here that efferent reading, according to Rosenblatt (1991), is about acquiring information to retain after the reading has finished, that is a nonliterary type of reading. It is the transformative possibilities of critical understanding of language and literacy that make visible social, cultural, and historical perspectives, within literary texts especially for and by NESB students. The aesthetic stance is also important as providing pleasure and encouraging the development of imagination that would enable the reader to stand in the shoes of the other, surely an important influence on the efferent stance.

The title of this thesis became increasingly prominent in representing an exploration of ways of enhancing students' capacity to reason, and to grasp ideas, as distinct from their capacity to make judgments based on their feelings and will; to become critical thinkers and readers employing metacognition (Brown, 1978). The focus of the investigation became the relationship of literature and literacy across the whole of the school's curriculum; on the developments within reading and writing pedagogies in a primary school context; implemented principally through oral communication and listening in a social situation of students in a group of no more than six. The author examined these phenomena as being evident in Literature Study Circles.

The author has so far outlined his approach to multiculturalism and multicultural education and the influence it has had on his teaching. He felt the need to assist all students in the literature circles in gaining learning skills, a critical approach to literature, and the need to update concepts in literacy. Bennett (1986) argues that this can happen if students are given confidence, self-esteem and independence in their own ability to cope with prejudice and discrimination; ways of learning and coping are skills based on the individual's ability and ways of thought, memory and recall. Teachers interacting with culturally diverse learners need to understand learners' cultural backgrounds that are different from their own, as learners have different perceptions of learning and achievement; their reality of actual experience is different in feeling, thinking, and action.

Bennett (1986) argues that the success of any multicultural education stance ultimately relies on the teacher's dedication to the program. This approach to learning is presented through Literature Study Circles as discussed in Chapter 3. The author found this exciting and challenging as he delved more deeply into his own experience and became aware of the underpinnings of multiculturalism informing democratic classrooms, and groups such as Literature Study Circles. Such underpinnings were based on new school practices of appreciating new people of different cultures, especially in relation to NESB students. Thus began the study of *Multiculturalism: (Re)intellectualizing teaching.*

That is not to say that previous pedagogies born of assimilation policies or melting pot ideologies such as those described by Baruth and Manning (1992) were anti-intellectual; far from it. What is argued is that new policies, such as those of multiculturalism, have enabled a re-intellectualizing of teachers' work in this area. In rejecting deficit models of students' engaging literature in their classrooms, the focus of the investigation became the relationship of literature and literacy across the whole school curriculum; on the development of a wider reading and writing pedagogy in a primary school context, exploiting the scope that a rejection of deficit models provided.

Setting the scene: theoretical underpinnings

The program focused principally on oral communication and listening in a social situation of students in groups of no more than six. The author investigated these phenomena as evidenced in Literature Study Circles moving away from previous NESB learning which was centred on learning vocabulary and grammar. The research was conducted in the state of Victoria at a time when Victoria led all other states in its 4,414,288-strong population, 23.8% of this number having been born overseas (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2001). The Multicultural Commission also gives figures for 44.5% of Victorians being born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas. In 2001 Victoria had the highest proportion, at 20%, of any state or territory of people coming from countries where English was not the main language, and of those born in countries where English was not their first language, at 17% (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2001). The figures suggest a demographic worthy of consideration by such research.

The particular theoretical frameworks, which were used to guide and underpin the research, are based on methods of ethnography and symbolic interactionism (for example, Mead, 1934; Blumer 1969; Borg & Gall, 1983; Denzin, 1992; Sherman & Webb, 1988; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Fetterman, 1989; Hammersley, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Stake, 1988, 1995; May, 1994; Woods, 1996; de Laine, 1997; Plummer, 2000; Hatch, 2002; Marvasti, 2004).

The author aimed to contribute to an understanding of how ethnography and symbolic interactionism functioned in a multicultural primary school, and in roles played that regulated, maintained and reproduced social orders of students in small groups, such as Literature Study Circles. As this thesis was based on a literature study of multiculturalism, it was necessary to incorporate the links between social constructivism as a theory of learning and the collaborative development of metacognition (Brown, 1978) with a transactional view of what it means to read (Rosenblatt, 1991).

This thesis, then, not only explored the assumption that students as readers in Years Five and Six in primary schools were able to learn to be sensitive to how well they understood what they were reading, it also followed Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner's (1973) use of the metaphors of a zone of proximal development to describe how knowledge is learnt. Vygotsky (1978) posited that learning and development take place within sociohistorical and sociocultural contexts, and that cognition develops in culturally suitable ways.

A number of writers haveidentified the growth of cognitive awareness in readers; according to Gold and Maclean (1987), students become conscious of their cognitive processing abilities as they engage reading. Flavell (1977) and Baker and Brown (1984) argue students become engaged in knowledge of self as a cognitive processor, aware of strategies and aware of variables, which readers place into action as they read for meaning. Brown (1980) found that good readers use this through self-regulation, and by constantly monitoring and redirecting their thinking. Bakhtin (1986) extended Vygotsky's (1962) concept of inner speech, which is the focus of metacognition (Brown, 1980), as a forerunner of social dialogue. These ideas signpost the necessity for talk in groups.

During the project, the students took over the entire group program. This occurred one day when the group was together and one member of the group suggested that the author should go to the staff room, sit down and have a cup of coffee and biscuits. A suggestion like this had to be complied with as this indicated to the author that something different from previous events was happening in the group. This notion of the students taking responsibility for their learning became an important factor in the learning process.

The author complied and this study took a new turn, becoming enriched in terms of the social, cultural and psychological literary theories, derived from such scholars as Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1986), Bakhtin (1986), Rosenblatt (1978). Theoretical frameworks developed by these

writers enabled connections to be made between social constructivism as a theory of learning, and the collaborative development of metacognition (Brown, 1978) within a transactional view of what it means to read. Such connections created questions to explore about whether or not students reacted in an investigation of a social constructivist perspective of learning and development. Vygotsky (1978), Wertsch (1985) and Rogoff (1990) have provided a framework for understanding the role of dialogue in learning to read literature.

At the start of this project, as the students establish their own identities and personalities, they were not averse to accepting new group frameworks. The author notes that students continued to redefine their attitudes, beliefs and values as they interpreted the meaning of literature and other cultures, together with the use of terminology such as prejudice, bias, race, racism, ethnic, gender, glass ceiling, and devil's advocate. This project tracked the students as they gained in self-confidence and as they performed in speaking, listening, and assisting others, and producing journal writing, at the same time as they became role models for other students in their classroom.

Multiculturalism and reading as a transaction

Rosenblatt (1978) proposes the concept of the reader as actively engaging in making meaning, and argues that meaning resides neither in the author nor the text, but is invariably being renewed in the interaction between the reader and the text. In the first instance an attempt was been made to investigate the nature of a literature curriculum that was concerned with intellectual growth (Bruner, 1986) and what intellectual growth there might be for young readers.

The study also explored concepts of efferential reading as congruent with such notions of reading *per se.* This was necessary because at the heart of the work was the question of the possibility of the students learning and developing attitudes about racism, prejudice and ethnocentricism. It

extended the field represented by noted scholars in the area of literacy and language development to encompass the work of Rosenblatt (1976; 1978; 1985; 1991; 1993; 2001). Rosenblatt's work deals with searching for a perceptive understanding of the process of making meaning from text, focusing on how readers make meaning as they respond to texts. This thesis is in large part informed by her work, basing the study on concepts developed by Rosenblatt (1976; 1978; 1985; 1991; 1993; 2001).

The research therefore adopts the position that while responding to words on the page it is through the lens of experience that the reader makes his or her own interpretations of the text encountered. Using reader response theory the author proceeds on the basis that literary work does not have a single correct interpretation, as meaning in a text is constructed by the readers' own interpretation of their experiences as they become involved in reading.

The author's use of Rosenblatt's (1976; 1978; 1985; 1991; 1993; 2001) posited theory of reader response to texts is summarized as follows: Determining meaning becomes a two way process that resides in the transaction that occurs between reader and text. The reader uses prior experience to select images and emotions that enable the characterization of the text, while at the same time the text shapes the reader by originating new experiences. The encounter of the reader with words on the page becomes a transactional process in terms of how the react on to transactions with the passage in the text. It is this continuing recycling of reader and text that forms the basis of what Rosenblatt (1976) refers to as transactional reading.

Rosenblatt (1978; 1991) also identifies two kinds of reading experiences: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading is a non-literary type of reading; the reader's attention span concentrates on constructing meanings and concepts for retention, while an aesthetic stance is concerned with reading for enjoyment of a story, play or poem, as the reader's attention shifts to the creation of personal feelings, concepts and attitudes.

Rosenblatt (1978) argues that the reader makes a choice of the kind of attention that he or she will give to the reading of literature, in dictating the way the literature text is read. It is important to note that the reader shifts along a continuum from the efferent to the aesthetic, and that these two modes may overlap at any given moment. It is in this notion that the reader may read a work of fiction moving between the stances that are important to this study.

Symbolic interactionism and making meaning

Underpinning the whole of the research, however, is the theoretical basis of symbolic interactionism. De Laine (1997) points out that symbolic interactionism was appropriately stated as a theoretical perspective in explaining behaviour and society. It was developed as a distinctive theory during the 1920s and 1930s. Mead (1934) and Blumer (1962; 1969) expanded the theory of symbolic interactionism, based on principles of language, meaning and thought. Two features of symbolic interactionism are that humans learn their own symbols, and that while everyone's symbols are different, they are only slightly different. This eventually leads to people having different cultural structures within society, based on their meaning-making structures and mechanisms.

Blumer (1962; 1969) defines meaning as the principle of humans acting together based upon the meanings they have given to people or things; language negotiates meanings through symbols and this has enabled human society to extend its knowledge, when engaged in speech acts with others. According to Blumer (1962), once humans identified meaning, discussions developed with a societal structure, and became a culture identifier for certain groups.

This is consistent with Rosenblatt's (1976) aesthetic, referential and transactional processes concerning students' literature and response. Rosenblatt (1976) is concerned that deficit models

become constant reminders to the students of their inadequacies and that this attitude of failure stays with them throughout their lives. The concept of symbolic interactionism, then, to some extent parallels concepts of reader response theories. This research then explores the interrelationships of reading, response, and rules for cultural engagement inherent in symbolic interactionist concepts.

Blumer (1969) views the empirical world of human beings and focuses on the way they act both as individuals and collectively, and interprets the complex process of social situations, and the continuity of change. Preston (2000) uses the term sociocultural change and explains society and culture as interdependent, and that multifarious interlaced activities known as symbolic interactionism are created and recreated (Garrety & Badham, 2000). White (2003) records the demographics of the Australian population in 1901 as 3.7 million, and in 2004 as 19.5 million (p. 1), with post-war migration resulting in one in four Australians coming from a non-English speaking background. As this thesis is concerned with multiculturalism, and cultures may be regarded as quintessential (de Laine, 1997), there is therefore a potentially serious problem, that is, unless teachers understand the implications of an unproblematic engagement with multiculturalism, deficit theories of assimilation, including absorbing migrants into the mainstream culture, may underpin schools' programs to the detriment of a positive implementation of multiculturalist policies.

Research methods

Even so, the whole of this research was framed as a case study. This method was selected as most appropriate. This case study offers an ethnomethodology of a sociological analysis of six primary school students behaving as individuals in everyday situations, constructing and maintaining their own social order as in Literature Study Circles, with the author as a participant observer not interfering with the students' social construct and development. Wolcott (1988)

describes this type of situation as ethnographic research, undertaken as in a cultural anthropological investigation, resulting in a research process, fieldwork, and a written account of the activities of the fieldwork.

This research as an ethnographic investigation was to a large extent informed by the work of Sherman and Webb (1988). The latter explain that ethnography is a procedure for observing human beings responding in a holistic cultural context, where the ethnographer records comprehensive details of the culture in behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and values of the individual or group being studied. The ethnographer, Wolcott (1988) argues that culture as part of any society, cannot be observed; it can only be deduced. Goodenough (1988) also takes the position that the ethnographer ascribes culture to a society. An ethnographic study is described by Borg and Gall (1983) as a case study, where a detailed investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon, relies on qualitative research methods.

Case studies, Stake and Easley (1978) argue, are different from other research studies in that the case becomes the centre of attention rather than the population; the ethnographer or participant observer in a case study concentrates for comprehension of the particular case on its characteristics and its intricacies. This is described by Bell (1987) as a process appropriate for case studies as the ethnographer focuses on one aspect of a feature in some depth and case study appertains mainly to the interactions of components and occurrences.

Bell (1987) states that there are difficulties cross-checking information obtained from fieldwork because of the probability of distortion. So when the researcher has collected all the information it needs to be considered for truthfulness. In this situation Bassey (1987) advises that judging the worthiness of a case study occurs in the detail of sufficient and appropriate information of field notes. Woods (1996) argues that interaction and interpretation are not static, and are not fixed

characteristics like group norms used in quantitative research. By looking at the patterns in interactions and interpreting their meaning, the qualitative researcher is more able to gain useful information.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) as well as Stake and Easley (1978) advise that the fundamental way of establishing the equivalent of validity is by triangulation, that is, endeavoring to find identical meaning by employing at least three independent approaches. To evaluate and comprehend the researcher's conclusions, Stake (1988) maintains that the data must be accurate and conclusive. This agrees with the suggestions given by Woods (1996).

As the author's case study comprised a naturalistic methodology leading to relevant and communicable understanding about students' multicultural responses, and a school's multicultural programs, his study was developed from a qualitative perspective, and not a quantitative one. The concern was to understand the individual or individuals' perceptions of their milieu, and examine ways in which primary schools might affect such perceptions. It meant making visible the problematic aspects of deficit theory and the associated melting pot model or assimilation that formed an amalgam of one culture by eliminating traces of original cultures in the twenty first century.

Questions, purpose and necessity.

The purpose of this research has been to investigate and portray the teaching of multiculturalism in one school in general and one classroom in particular. The class consisted of a Five/Six composite grade of eleven to twelve year old students from varied backgrounds in a southeastern suburb of Melbourne. This research aimed to provide a descriptive account of ways that teaching multiculturalism operated in one particular classroom.

The research program had begun with the title: *Teaching multiculturalism: Transforming classrooms as communities of learners.* This was to be undertaken as a case study. Because of the developing nature of the thesis, it was decided to rename the research: *Multiculturalism: (Re) Intellectualizing teaching.* In addition, because the students' behaviour could be characterized by elements of symbolic interactionism within Literature Study Circles, this research also developed into observing how these students could reach an understanding of life through their own self-regulation of reading, without supervision or teacher interference.

The increasing cultural diversity in schools reinforced the need for a defined field of study called Multicultural Education (Mathison & Young, 1995). According to Murray-Smith (1989), there were many versions of what this might mean. One of the problems confronting multiculturalism in Australia, as stated by the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (1981), was that some people believed that multiculturalism already existed, while for others it appeared merely as a desirable proposal. Researchers such as Nieto (1992) and Banks (1994) established some guidelines. Critical elements in the establishment of multiculturalism were the establishment of relationships between schools and the community (Martin, 1978; 1981); affirmative practices (Fullinwider, 1996) to bring it to the forefront; opportunities offered for the students to view the world respectively from cultural and ethnic perspectives other than their own (Gillborn, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Aboud, 1989); teaching strategies that facilitated students' thinking on diversity (McCracken, 1993) and administrative support (Bennett, 1986).

Taking the above elements as critical, the question then arose as to ways in which this group of Grade 5/6 students, in a high density migrant suburban school in the south-eastern part of Melbourne, may embrace concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and ways in which they might be changed as a community of learners through literature group discussions and other events in classroom and school. The aim of the exploration was to gain an understanding of what was happening in a particular grade in a particular school from a multicultural perspective.

There were other questions that needed to be investigated in order to develop a response to the main question. To understand fully how the critical elements played out it was necessary for the author, as a participant observer, to note how those particular students embraced concepts of diversity. This enabled the author to gain knowledge of what was happening. Such questions opened up areas for investigation and exploration of pedagogical practices with a focus on diversity as occurring in a classroom and school.

Morris (1986) cites Baker and Brown (1984) as stressing the need for students to understand how they think and learn. Stewart-Dore (1986) states that, if they do learn to do this, students will become independent learners. This process of cognition is referred to as metacognition. Metacognition is reflected in the thinking process as 'knowing what you know' (Brown, 1978, p. 7) and 'how do you know' (Brown, 1978, p. 7). According to Brown (1978), metacognitive knowledge can be wide-ranging and include knowledge of self as a cognitive processor, knowledge of strategies, and knowledge of task variables that readers put into action as they read for meaning. Flavell, (1977) and Stewart-Dore, (1986) also explore these ideas. Brown (1980) goes on to explain that expert readers do this through self-regulation, constantly monitoring and redirecting their thinking.

This monitoring may be verbal or nonverbal. One issue is to find out how students acquire these functions – how do they learn to talk to themselves? Vygotsky (1962) proposes the self-guiding role of inner speech and emphasizes that the self-regulatory function of students' speech-to-self has its origins in social dialogues with others. Hence it became imperative that metacognition (Brown, 1978) had to be the initial function of this project. If students needed a rationale for future action, then they had to learn not just how to get a particular task done, but also what to do when faced with new problems. According to Vygotsky (1962) asking questions is the function of inner speech consisting of dialogues conducted with imagined audiences drawn from the many voices a person encounters. In reading literature, the word is half the reader's and half the text's.

The author based his research on an exploration of current school practices that lay at the heart of literature-based reading programs as being whole-group discussion about literature, engagement of reader response activities, and talking about text in small groups called Literature Study Groups. It must be emphasized at this point that the author at first dominated the group activities leaving students in a passive state. The students showed the author that they did not learn by rote, to absorb knowledge. The author was so wrong. He acknowledges that, by initially dominating the social and interpretive facets of discussion, he actually inhibited students' opportunities to express themselves fully.

About mid-year the author's project faced a critical problem as more multicultural books were required. The students had read and discussed all the multicultural books purchased at the beginning of the year. Although the school had very good classroom libraries, and a school library, most of the books were biased towards Anglo-Saxon-Celtic culture. When the author discussed this with the principal, he immediately purchased another ten multiple copies of books with a multicultural focus. The author also found the lack of suitable multicultural books for primary school students in most booksellers' stores. Without this expenditure of money the author acknowledges that the research could have been in jeopardy. Hence, again, the author is grateful to the principal and staff for providing funds that could have been spent on other kinds of books.

Reading multicultural literature, and, using Brown's (1978) notions of facilitating the readers to become actively engaged in making meaning without teacher domination, enabled this project to be involved in a number of literacy activities. Thus students were enabled to engage in metacognition, think before they expressed their ideas, make criticisms, or ask themselves or others questions for clarification, or question other members of the social group, as Brown (1978) suggests. It was in rethinking issues regarding students' use of internal questioning to crystallize the fabric of memory, thought, build a new feeling of order, and a new experience in the process of free thinking, or in the process of reading text that a new thesis focus emerged: *Muliculturalism: (Re)intellecturalising teaching.*

Informed by the work done in the field by Peterson and Eeds (1990), the emphasis in this thesis is on how reading was done, how group discussions about literature might foster cultural pluralism, and how there could be a review of theories and practices of book talk groups. Finally the author explored the need to consider critical thinking and its role in learning constructively (Luke & Freebody, 1997), and literacy and literature in the education of these students as having a crucial role to play in the social and cultural recognition of themselves as learners.

The focus of the study

This thesis employed a case study of six students, three girls and three boys, aged eleven to twelve, to investigate the research issues. The research was conducted over a one-year period. As Woods (1996) argues, ethnographic studies that focus on the social framework of action and knowledge within schools and classrooms need to take place over longer periods of time, for example, more than twelve months. This research began with a critical examination of the understanding of the need for effective multicultural policies in education, both nationally and internationally, and the roles that Languages other than English (LOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) were given in the implementation of multicultural policy. Gilbert (1991), Swann (1992) and McLeod (2000) indicate that research on boys, especially LBOTE students, is disproportionately poor, that boys drop out of school, are suspended, and achieve far below their potential compared with others of their age group. Opposing views in the literature argue that multicultural education enhances feelings of being atypical leading to further divisiveness (Hollingdale, 1988; Vold, 1992; Diamond & Moore, 1995). At the same time, institutions may resent change, use passive resistance or simulated acceptance (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Schlesinger, 1999).

The author made an examination of the socio-political context of multicultural education aimed at isolating important and basic characteristics such as education for social justice; anti-racism and

critical pedagogy (Nieto, 1992). He was concerned with the possibilities of a non-biased curriculum as opposed to a tourist curriculum, which may be described as trivialising, tokenistic, stereotyping, misrepresenting ethnic groups and discounting cultural diversity in daily classroom life (Wood, 1978; McCreath 1981; Diamond & Moore, 1995). Students' culture, as Corson (1998) suggests, is not abandoned at the school gate. In addition, Edelsky (1999) reminds teachers of racial, ethnic or other groups in societies traditionally positioned as minorities; he prefers not recipes for how things are done, but rather practical solutions where teachers and students negotiate curriculum issues and important choices about their learning.

The significance of the study

This study is important as by exploring the complexity of one classroom case the information may be used to inform teachers about, and how best to develop, a multicultural curriculum, and also how best to implement it in Victorian schools. This classroom may not be typical of all classrooms but the findings may still be valuable in helping decide how a classroom might develop an enriched culture marked by tolerance and understanding of others. The research also explored pressures that could help or hinder such a process, particularly with regard to curriculum and assessment practices.

This study makes visible ways in which teachers learn about the political, social and pedagogical acts of promoting multiculturalism in their classrooms. The management of cultural diversity in the classroom, the introduction of policies of social justice, and provisions made for students to express their cultural heritage, including their language and religion, are issues the author considered as needing to be addressed. The study is also significant in changing relationships between teachers and learners as those learners undertake responsibility for their own learning with a minimum of teacher intervention. Rosenblatt (1976; 1978) shows that an important issue is for students to read transactively and not from the premise that text has one correct meaning, but

one where readers bring their own experiences to the realization of texts. Hill and Hill (1990) give consideration to various kinds of creative and critical thinking that happens in engaging literary events such as co-operative learning, and Samway and Whang (1996) also suggest giving attention to reading drawing upon oral language for constructing and understanding text and embracing cognitive and linguistic employment in reading acquired through social interactions and discussions of texts as in literature study groups.

This study, then, is significant as the author has found that examining, and selecting multicultural literature that reflects the perspectives, experiences, and values of NESB students, and engaging students in Literature Study Circles, goes some way towards enabling them to challenge their own and other cultural perspectives.

The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 situates the study and relates how and why this research problem presented itself. Chapter 2 is a theoretical framework to inform the research, and Chapter 3 presents a strategic framework for this research. Chapter 4 is a review of the literature consulted to inform the conduct of the research. Chapter 5 analyses the data in the transcripts of students' discussions, and analyses the data in the transcripts of their journal entries based on the theoretical framework for the research. Chapter 6 reviews the possibilities for Literature Study Circles and multicultural identities.

Chapter 2

A theoretical framework to inform the research

This chapter explores how the author followed the threads of the Western tradition from positivism to the interpretivist vein that supports this research project, and considered the possibilities and limitations of these in relation to it. Both the positivist and interpretivist approaches were explored in relation to selecting the most suitable theory to inform the research as to ways in which the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity could change in a community of learners through literature group discussions and other events in the school and classrooms. The author first explains why the restrictions suggested by positivism were not appropriate to this research, and then explores interpretivism as offering the flexibility necessary to explore classroom changes in relation to teaching and learning approaches in particular forms of children's literature.

Concepts of epistemology and ontology

In working through theoretical considerations, the author has explored concepts of epistemology and ontology. Denzin and Lincoln (1997) deal with questions of epistemology as a matter of the positioning of the enquirer within the world; that it is a matter of ways of knowing about the world. An epistemological stance based on the natural sciences, for example, would thus mean

generating hypotheses about formations and patterns in the natural world; one based on sociology would eschew hypotheses themselves and form questions as to why people behave in certain ways—it is this last statement that informed the present study.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1995) defines ontology as 'the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being' (p. 962), and metaphysics as 'the theoretical philosophy of being and knowing' (p. 856). In line with this definition, Hatch's (2002) approach to research is based on the need to find answers to epistemological and ontological questions that take an introspective view of the world and tie premises (assumptions) to the making of decisions.

Hatch (2002) poses questions that require compact answers, for example, 'What are the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed?' 'How do these interact with each other and with the senses?' (p.11). The answers to these questions concern how the world is arranged and is usually answered in the form of qualitative paradigms. De Laine (1997) agrees with Hatch (2002) that ontology introduces fundamental questions about the nature of reality, that is, what is known about the world.

Blaikie (1993) adds that ontology gives reality profundity. Reality does not lay claim to the generation of absolute, universal knowledge, because all knowledge is contextual and therefore relative to time and space in which it is created. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) argue that the analyst must put aside belief in reality, or in other words, suspend the making of ontological judgements. This means looking at how the separate and distinct empirical world becomes an objective reality for the viewer.

Introduction to a Theoretical Framework

In any research, Fetherston (1998) argues, a theoretical framework is essential as it reveals to readers the results of the research. The method used for the framework conveys to the reader social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which the investigation is established. Given this, a number of possible theories were explored as a basis for this investigation.

Mathews (1989) suggests that the theoretical stance taken up by a researcher depends on what is required in an exercise such as research; one theory would be more applicable than another. The research method that the researcher uses, Ngwenyama and Lee (1997) argue, is strongly influenced by the manner in which the research proceeds, and the selection of this method is dependent, in no small degree, upon the selection of a research paradigm.

Hammersley (1990) contends that theories need to be properly developed and tested in social situations otherwise they become mere speculation garbed in verbosity. Theory is not exclusive to science. It is practical knowledge based on common sense, a point taken up in this thesis. Because the author was engaged in a research project designed to explore social behavior, in this case of a small group of six primary school students, he encountered the need to establish a theoretical framework acceptable to the research community in the Western research tradition. This means that the author adopted Fetherston's (1998) argument that a theoretical framework gives the readers of the research knowledge, not only what new knowledge has been generated, but also the direction the researcher has taken. Fetherston (1998) argues that a well-outlined framework conveys political, social, cultural and historical contexts in which the study is situated, which is what this particular study aimed to do.

On a slightly different note, Shulman (1988) is concerned about research methodology and makes the distinction that research in using human discourse is the utilization of methods. Woods (1996) applies the idea that theory and methods interact. Research methods in education, Shulman (1988) maintains, embrace types of disciplined inquiry where rules and principles are

invoked. The author's research was education research that embraced the sorts of disciplined enquiry that Shulman (1988) suggests.

Positivism was unacceptable to the author as it placed certain types of restrictions on this type of research project. As Cardwell (1999) states, positivism presents borders which limit observation, as it relies on the study of observable behaviour. That is, positivism relies on approaches to knowledge that can only be proved by so-called scientific means. It eschews what it considers to be meaningless emotion and belief. Further, positivism as a scientific research method claims that knowledge can be replicated time and again, to enable the postulating of theory to further inform research (Scott & Usher, 1999). Thus, positivism is independent of human affairs, a supposedly realist view, de Laine (1997) points out, that positions reality as existing independently of the observer and the activities of the social sciences. As the author was studying a school and a particular group of students at this school, as embracing concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, he had to take a broad view in opting for a positivist approach, or not, in the design of his research paradigm.

Borg and Gall (1983) and Silverman (2000) note that theories are an explanation of the principles of a subject, a system of ideas that concentrate and organize knowledge about the world and seem appropriate to known facts. A theory should be usable, predictable and explainable as well as be controllable by the researcher (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). May (2001) argues that theories are often defined as micro or macro theories. Micro theory relates to research of a small group of people in face-to-face interactions in everyday life, and macro theory relates to the behaviour of large numbers of people in the inquiry of social systems. As the author was researching a small group of primary school students in a school situation, such considerations of theory to inform his research activities were most pertinent.

Considering paradigms

In developing his ideas of ways in which to conduct his research, the author further explored the notion of paradigms. A paradigm, Allen (2003) considers, is a specific theoretical perspective. Kuhn (1970) maintains that paradigms give scientists a direction to follow because in understanding paradigms scientists procure insights into theory, methods, and standards. Kuhn (1970) goes further, however, and questions the claims of science made by positivist and deductive approaches in producing new discoveries and new theories, maintaining that theories contribute meaning to facts rather than appearing out of them; that all scientific thinking and practices function within theoretical frameworks, or paradigms. Kuhn (1970) questions the idea that new universal knowledges have arisen out of the ideals of scientists unaffected by personal interest, and of scientists making cautious observations and conducting experiments to produce rigorously analysed data. For Kuhn (1970), scientific methods may fail because they are inadequate ways of viewing the world and of practising science within it.

This point is taken up by Guba and Lincoln (1987), who argue that in relation to the position of an involved or engaged inquirer, the paradigm becomes more important than the questions of method. Guba and Lincoln (1987) argue that paradigm selection is fundamental to the researcher's world belief systems, determined by ontological and epistemological positions taken up by that researcher. Such thinking is consistent with that of Kuhn (1970), who argues that the history of science is a cycle of the emergence and establishment of new paradigms, leading to the overthrow of the prevailing paradigm, rather than offering a process of verification and/or falsification to weed out any but the best theories, as is claimed by positivism.

While the author's research was not attempting to generate the sorts of paradigm shift that Kuhn outlines, it was nevertheless based on particular ontological and epistemological positions. Ontologically speaking, the author rejected positivistic representations of the world and new knowledge being produced through objective measurements of what might be considered to be

observable. The author's research was based on the social world behaviours of students in a given social context. Epistemologically speaking, the author sees knowledge as being produced via methods more broad and general than the hypothetical - deductive approaches basic to positivist ontology.

Thus, the author accepted Kuhn's (1970) argument in that established so-called scientific research paradigms do not necessarily deliver the sorts of objective knowledge that they lay claim to; that interpretivist paradigms have features that are more suited to the generation of new knowledge that emerges from subjective, participative research paradigms. The author used this approach to examine the sorts of developments and events that marked a number of shifts in the practices of qualitative and quantitative methods, as shifts could occur in conceptualizations and practices of multiculturalism and diversity and the ways students could be changed into a community of learners through literature.

The author in this research project did not seek to generalize about the views of Kuhn (1970), Burns (1990), or Guy, Edgley, Arafat and Allen (1987), in relation to setting up his project embracing the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and how they became changed in a community of learners through group literature reading and discussions. Rather, the author benefited from these authorities to inform his own research, to deepen his understanding of a number of perspectives.

This led to the rejection of a positivist approach. This is because positivism could not provide an appropriate ontological and epistemological foundation for researching human interactions for this investigation. The basis of this research was the students' personal experiences and understandings that were particular to one student and ways in which this could be seen in interactions with other students.

Considering interpretivism

As the author has sought to increase his understanding of the perspectives of a group of students forming a community of learners through literature discussion groups, he considered the discussion by Scott and Usher (1999) that suggests that interpretivism relates to everyday experience and ordinary life and how meaning is devised and social interaction viewed in social situations. Interpretivism develops what de Laine (1997) defines as a distinction from the positivist-realist paradigm, in that the social scientist is not merely observing individual behavior, but interpreting its meaning. The author therefore positioned himself within the interpretivist tradition, using this to frame the research.

Interpretivism, Stake (1995) suggests, places an interpreter in a field or situation to observe, such as in a case study, to record what is happening and simultaneously examine its meaning. In this research, the author considered interpretivism to mean a focus on human action, thoughts and feelings, with the supposition of these being meaningful and capable of interpretation and understanding. The creation of meaning, argued by Deetz and Kersten (1987), is that of social reality pertaining to establishing why a certain meaning system endures by investigating its social construction, one that Smyth (1987) states reveals the sources of that reality.

Denzin and Lincoln (1997) emphasize the creation of social experience and its interpretation of meaning as processes. The author acknowledges that his research was based on a socially framed nature of reality in observing how people behaved and interacted in social situations, and in particular in regarding students reacting in a potential community of learners.

The author's focus was to understand meaning making by the participants in Literature Study Circles, both as producers and products of that meaning being constructed. This kind of focus was consistent with research in an interpretivist vein. An interpretivist approach emerged as the appropriate approach for in investigating a classroom in the south-eastern part of Melbourne,

particularly in exploring changes in the classroom in relation to forming a community of learners through literature group discussions.

According to Plummer (2000), meaning becomes an interactive procedure, evolving out of interaction. Taking up Plummer's (2000) point, the author suggests that the significance of this study lies in the implication for understanding meanings, especially of students' meanings as they evolve in Literature Study Circles. An essential aspect of taking up research in the interpretivist vein is the concept of interpretivist ontology. This research takes up the argument presented by Marvasti (2004) that the assigning of meaning through description of objects, elements, events, conditions and characters, presents scope for examination of multiple possible relationships and interpretations of relationships, a feature of symbolic interactionism which is discussed in detail below.

The research raises questions as to the ways in which interpretations are used as part of meaning making, acknowledging the expectation that discussion regarding interpretation offers possibilities for new insights into ways the author might understand this research. The author attributes to these major areas of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism the ability to expand understandings of features of his own research. As tools for understanding, they do not dictate the nature of the research itself, or how it is conducted, but rather provide an insight into issues that inform the aims, methods and process of the research.

Symbolic Interactionism

Considerations of ways in which symbolic interactionism underpinned research design enabled a development in the understanding of human behaviour and attitudes. This was an important informing feature of the research, designed to generate understandings of possible outcomes of six primary school students conducting and shaping their own learning in their own Literature Study Circles. A number of discussions of symbolic interactionism were considered.

Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth and Webster (1996) argue that symbolic interactionism is the essence of human interaction; that it is an intensely personal, subjective and individual process of meaning making that is constructed by each person in each situation rather than being imposed on them by means of socialization into an external collective culture. While culture is not to be dismissed out of hand in such a process, symbolic interactionism nevertheless focuses on the meanings individuals ascribe to symbols, such as spoken and written words, actions, rituals, and so on. This view of human interaction implies a theory of social order negotiated by the individual, inter-subjectively working in many social occasions of interaction. It assumes that humans are interpretative beings and essentially meaning makers.

Symbolic interactionism, then, is the big picture that describes people talking with each other and making meaning of this talk. The meaning is subjective because it is made by interpretation of words. The words could be described as symbols; what happens is that each individual's viewpoint is used to develop their personal theory of the meaning of the words used at any particular time of the interaction with other people. This type of meaning making can be analysed as a typology. At the same time, the texts construct a reality that is meaningful for the participants in the interactions. The resulting spoken and/or written texts that are created in particular interactions emerge as data for the researcher to analyse.

The author takes up Blumer's (1969) suggestion of the three simple premises underpinning concepts of symbolic interactionism: that human interaction is based on meaning making; that meanings made are derived from human relationships; and that these meanings are subject to constant redefinitions, clarifications, and refinements.

Flick (2002) holds that by analysing interactions symbolic interactionism provides a perspective on the subjects' viewpoints. Blumer (1962) agrees that symbolic interactionism privileges communication between people. The aim, as Flick (2002) points out, is to understand what is

happening when people interact in social contexts. The author uses symbolic interactionism because it provides a description of the processes associated with human interaction, that is, it provides a theoretical framework for understanding of people's behaviour and viewpoints.

Central to symbolic interactionism is the concept of people as constructors of their own actions and meanings (Woods, 1983). The focus rests on individual action rather than the wider social structures (Allen, 2003). Individuals construct their own social realities and perspectives of their world using responses from the environment and different sociocultural relationships with which they interact (Berger & Berger, 1972; Berger & Lickmann, 1976; Pollard, 1985; Plummer, 2000; Hatch, 2002). The symbolic nature of human interaction, Mead (1934) argues, is that linguistic and gestural communication constructs reality. Mead holds these to be integral as to what is communicated reality. He regards symbols as significant, as symbolic interactionism positions the individual as responding to objects in relation to their ascribed symbols, those symbols expressed as words. More recent scholarship about symbolic interactionism takes up this essential argument of Mead's (1934). The author explored this research in establishing his own research (see for example Bilton et al, 1996; Flick, 2002).

The author's intention was to be a participant observer of events and happenings in reporting Literature Study Circles' activities, and also to present an overall view of how certain happenings occurred through the sequence of events. The author made sense of the actors' behaviour in scenes, images and arguments that emerged from the interaction of the students in the classroom situation as part of the processes of interpreting symbolic interactionism. Because the author was exploring the social context of a diverse group of students within a classroom, May's (2001) concept was adopted, that is, that people are the product of their milieu, as were the students involved in this project in the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and in what ways the children were changed into a community of learners through Literature Study Circles discussions. Both interpretivism and symbolic interactionism became central concerns for the author, demonstrating that these concepts provided a framework for interpretation of the data,

generating possibilities for new insights into the ways social researchers might understand socially-based research, particularly into primary education.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) maintain that a symbolic interactionist perspective pertains to organizations, cultures and groups that are, by their very nature, involved in the process of interpreting the world around them. In taking up this discussion, Garrety and Badham (2000) argue that the most important principle of symbolic interactionism is that meanings are created, and recreated, during social interaction. Symbolic interactionism, Plummer (2000) maintains, provides opportunities to analyse how different socializing experiences affect an individual's life cycle. In following this argument, Plummer (2000) examines how individuals make sense of their milieu; for symbolic interactionists, individuals do not react automatically to special stimuli, but through their own constructive processes use symbols to define their actions and meanings thereby acquiring values and beliefs. Symbolic interactionism assisted the author by explaining the ways in which the thoughts and views, of a group of six primary school students, played their parts in his study of human group life.

Thus symbolic interactionism became the focus of students on a micro level, rather than on a level of broad social structures. This research adopted Plummer's (2000) argument that symbolic interactionists are concerned about the ways in which meaning is constructed and the reasons why individuals and small groups prefer particular actions over others.

Plummer (2000) regards human group life as being continually inter-subjective and that close observation of a group's activities leads to an understanding of a group's pattern of behaviour (Plummer, 2000). Manning and Maines (2003) maintain that symbolic interactionism enables academics of different generations to understand and improve its perspectives, that is, it is always open to the development of new concepts. Symbolic interaction, Plummer (2000) proposes, is the most sustainable social theory of the last century, because it is concerned with gathering behaviouon the lives of individuals through the fundamental concept of self. Symbolic

interactionism resolves around concepts of self, the symbols relate to meaning and facilitate interaction between people.

In accordance with Woods (1986) and Plummer (2000), the author as an ethnographer observed actions and perspectives in the sociocultural milieu of the students, and endeavoured to ascertain patterns of actions that emerged in the students taking part in the Literature Study Circles.

The author used symbolic interactionism in his research on students, aged from eleven to twelve years, in a classroom in the south-eastern part of Melbourne, to examine ways in which these children embraced concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and in the ways in which the children engaged as a community of learners through involvement in Literature Study Circles discussions in the classroom. The author used symbolic interactionism as its characteristic forms enabled focused research, not on large-scale functional and quantitative studies but on a qualitative study of a small group in the Literature Study Circles selected for this thesis.

As a participant observer, the author's concern was to observe the interaction of students as they shaped their meanings and expectations as part of patterns of communication in symbols and signs, that was as part of social construction suggested by LeCompte and Preissle (1992). The author's concern was not about quantitative research as an ostensibly objective approach of teachers' and children's interaction, or as Bossert (1992) suggests, how the construction of a classroom is organized by teachers and students, or even of the type conducted by Bennett (1992) regarding children's grades in reading being a function of students conforming to teacher conceptualizations of social behaviour to the detriment of students' potential abilities. Rather, the author was concerned with qualitative research of the subjective nature of the involvement of one-to-one interaction as described by Allen (2003). This is discussed in a further section on data gathering and sorting.

Considerations of the use symbolic interactionism

It can be argued that symbolic interactionism as a theory has experienced varied fortunes over its history in the field of sociology, see for example Stryker (1980, 1987), Denzin (1992) and Plummer (1991, 2000). Plummer (2000) maintains that symbolic interactionism has undergone arbitrary periods, in which it has been difficult to make a chronological sequence of its development, that there is no determined meaning of symbolic interactionism, and that the origins and history of the theory are conflict areas.

Symbolic interactionism had its pre-eminence in the 1920s and 1930s in its theoretical application in the field of sociology provided by Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969). By the early 1950s the theory had suffered a decline in sociological importance on the grounds that it was deficient in academic rigidity and replicable methods by which evidence could be developed or produced (Stryker, 1987). However, by the mid-twentieth century, Plummer (2000) argues, symbolic interactionism had made its impression both empirically and theoretically, especially in the development of participant observation and case study method. Plummer (2000) regards the attacks on symbolic interactionism as a premature burial as symbolic interactionism became institutionalized in the early 1970s, and at the same time revitalized as a radically different phase had taken place in the development of the theory that had grown from oral culture in the first part of the twentieth century. Meltzer et al (1991) argue that Kuhn's work (discussed above) had damaged symbolic interactionism unfairly when he argued that it was part of an oral tradition and not replicable. Importantly, Waters (1994), who had made an extreme attack on symbolic interactionism, recanted by acknowledging that the theory had been successful.

Stryker (1987) establishes the argument that in the 1980s the resurgence of symbolic interactionism was evident in the increase of studies, which were based on symbolic interactionist precepts. De Laine (1997) supports this contention with the argument that symbolic interactionism in the 1980s showed vitality, something not previously conceived when it was

rapidly declining as a valid theory for sociological research. Meltzer et al (1991) explain that Denzin (1992) criticizes the concept of self as used in symbolic interactionism as being too vague; that empirical observations could not be comprehended; and that symbolic interactionism did not cater for large scale arrangements of social organization. The position taken by Denzin (1992) is that symbolic interactionism has many styles and renditions and that its transformations are exhibited across the fields of sociology and psychology: social problems, deviance, the emotions, social organizations and bureaucratic structures, race and industrial relations, gender related experiences such as rape, family violence, divorce, the mass media and small groups.

Lauer and Handel (1977) state that there are endless questions about humans and human life, and that action is normative as people's definitions and values are expressed in conventions of appropriate demeanour for particular situations and become institutionalized. However, as Lauer and Handle (1977) argue, there are other situations where norms are pliable and change quite quickly and where humans have the ability to adjust their situations and their values, as this is essential to the preservation of law and order. This is possible as humans interact in compromising in negotiating procedures for action to be implemented (Lauer & Handel, 1977).

Stryker (1980) points out that there is no single symbolic interactionism, and that a criticism of one version may not be applicable to another; that the virtues of one rendition of symbolic interactionism may become the vices of the other. Stryker (1980) also maintains that there can be criticism or appreciation of symbolic interactionism when there are internal variations existing within this framework, a point which the author has taken up in his development of his own research designs within this approach.

For appropriate reasons, therefore the author has adopted Skidmore's (1975) idea of symbolic interactionism as having the potential to make a worthy contribution to domains of sociological knowledge and understanding, as people are likely to be concerned about themselves and how they are involved in society. In similar vein, Burgess (1995) has recognized the relevance of

symbolic interactionism, particularly in education. Burgess (1995) refers to Becker's work (cited in Burgess, 1995) as being useful in researching different educational environments, in developing an understanding of social situations and social procedures when investigating teachers, children, schools and higher education institutions. This is the position the author has taken.

Thus, the author examined theoretical principles and fundamental concerns of symbolic interactionism, coming to the conclusion that it provided a powerful tool in his research, enabling him to engage in analysis of how a particular group of young students communicated with each other and interacted with the literature they encountered. The author's canvassing of the literature on symbolic interactionism led him to conclude two things: the first is that while some research presented the inadequacies of symbolic interactionism as evidence of its being neither a properly formulated theory, nor a satisfactory framework for dealing with many intellectual problems that a researcher may encounter; the second is that symbolic interactionism can be used comprehensively if the framework integrates concepts concerned with social structure rather than with some versions of the theory.

Using symbolic interactionism as a research tool, then, in his research the author observed individual students, each playing an active role in his/her socialization. The socialization processes under consideration in this research involved interaction between the individual and social context of the classroom in the school, which, as Goslin (1969) suggests, assists in shaping his/her social environment. Mead (1934) argues that such processes are life-processes, which need to be understood and contemplated in terms of their interrelations. The author worked with Literature Study Circles as constituting such processes within a social environment, employing a methodology that proceeded from the central significance of the self to the symbolic interactionist position of the self in relation to others, while stressing the collective construction of meaning that related to different purposes of social reality as suggested by Lyman and Vidch (1988).

The author's research applied theories of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework in guiding and underpinning the research concerning students' reactions in Literature Study Circles. On the basis of his understanding of the symbolic interactionism literature, he considered it to be appropriate informing principle to provide an understanding of how students made sense of their world, using their life experiences at home, school and the environment. The theoretical framework facilitated the author's understanding of primary students' behaviour and perspectives, in the development of their thinking activities as the students become the constructors of their own actions and meanings, with the author becoming a participant observer.

Developing a typology for analysis of interactions

Symbolic interactionism enabled the author to develop a typology as part of his analysis of the Literature Study Circles interactions under consideration in this project. To inform the development of the typology, the work of Rosenblatt (1976; 1978; 1985; 1991; 1993) was used, particularly that of her focus on how readers make meaning as they respond to texts. Her explanation of reader-response theory is described as transactional.

The importance particularly of the transactional theory of reader response reading of literature as articulated by Rosenblatt (1991) is a crucial element underpinning of this study. A particular focus is on the importance of what the teacher does in creating contexts for responses among the students. Teachers can help or constrain the aesthetic and/or efferent responses of their students by the settings they create. It can be seen that Rosenblatt (1991) regards teachers as being not only the creators of a particular kind of community of readers but also as creators of communities of responders who share their unique interpretations of the literature.

Rosenblatt (1978) believes that a reading stance is basically an expression of purpose. Children read efferently, for example, in order to arrive at some desired result, some answer to a question, or some explanation of a puzzling situation. Aesthetic reading, by its very nature, has an intrinsic

purpose, the pleasure of an experience for its own sake. Paradoxically, when experiences are lived through for their own sake, Rosenblatt (1978) argues, they will probably have as by products the educational, informative, social, and moral values for which the purpose for reading literature is often given.

An aspect that is particularly explored in this study is the students' cultural responses to literature. It should be emphasized that, although the group come from diverse backgrounds, the emphasis was not specifically on cultural responses. It was on the students' responses to literature in a pluralistic society and to multicultural literature. The selected books are discussed later.

Adopting this position suggests that it is the transformative possibilities of critical understanding of language and literacy that make visible social, cultural, and historical perspectives, within literary texts. This is especially so for and by the NESB students in this research project. The purpose of the author's research was particularly focused on whether students could learn to understand bias and racism. It was about whether they as individuals could gain a positive understanding of what it meant to be truly multicultural in their views.

Literature Study Circles are discussed in more detail in a later chapter but here it is necessary to comment on reasons why they supported the necessary typology and how they were structured to provide the scaffolding for learning referred to by Bruner (1973). For all learners, the most productive learning situation is one in which learners stand within sight of what they already know and push forward into new territory. Vygotsky (1978) argues that this zone of optimal learning is what learners are able to learn with the support of other learners, and not what they are already able to do by themselves. Literature Study Circles, Peterson and Eeds (1990) argue, provide support for learners in making connections between the known and unknown.

Short and Pierce (1990) support the notion of reading as an open transactive process which takes place when readers make multiple connections across texts, ideas and experiences as

they interact in the structure of Literature Study Circles. The structure provides students with the support they need to avoid confusion, but also the freedom to avoid passivity and sameness. Another key construct, according to Short and Pierce (1990) is the social nature of learning and the power of dialogue in changing the thinking of learners. Students are valued, regardless of their reading proficiency or life experiences, because they have something to offer. The individuals, through their interactions with each other and the books they read, consider new perspectives and, Hartman (1990) argues, intertextual connections.

Therefore, in relation to the Literature Study Circles that were examined, this thesis adopted Pollard's (1985) concept that every individual being is different in personality and biographical background: social class background, gender, age, race and upbringing. The author drew on Pollard's (1985) argument in its uses of concepts of multiculturalism and diversity as part of the concept of changing communities of learners through Literature Study Circles' discussions. So this practice also allowed for a social response through interaction with others in the Literature Study Circles meaning was negotiated and created, greatly affecting response. The students examined and extended meaning in their lives.

Conclusion

The research project was a continuing exploration of a range of theoretical issues about the nature of learning, and in developing in primary school students a critical understanding of language and literacy. In this chapter, the author explored a number of theoretical frameworks in an endeavour to find one that was appropriate to use for the research question. The author explored the research tradition, following the threads of Western research from positivism through to the interpretivist vein that supported his project; exploring the possibilities and limitations of these in relation to his research project. Symbolic interactionism was chosen as the most appropriate form of research for this project. Finally, the author discussed claims made for

what literature offer students/young adults; that is, the role(s) of adults in teaching, presenting, and facilitating students' work within literature.

In Chapter 3 the author explores the possibilities of a strategic framework for his research. Case studies, data gathering, triangulation and validity are explained as well as how informed decisions are made. A community of learners is introduced as a concept of learning concerning the whole person, and learning becomes a process of participation in communities of practice. Within this community of learners in Literature Study Circles, students interact with one another in terms of Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading continuum. The author, as an ethnographer, becomes a participant observer and makes field notes on the students' interactions in their discussions of multicultural literature.

Chapter 3

A Strategic Framework for this Research

In this chapter the author discusses a strategic framework for the study: what can be learned from the study? There is an emphasis on how the study is designed as to provide an optimal understanding of it. The major conceptual issues of the case study are explored in order to enable a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the case's uniqueness, issues and story (p. 27)

The case study

The author proposes using the case study to define a broad type of research strategy, as it is a well established technique in educational research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Frameworks of participation observation, interpretation and symbolic interactionism (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998) are explored in some depth in the previous chapter will be used. As a qualitative approach, the case study is used to facilitate looking closely at a human group that shares a culture in a micro situation (Borg & Gall, 1983): in this instance the six students in the Literature Study Circles. The analytic emphasis is concerned with "*what* is being accomplished, under *what* conditions and out of *what* resources" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488). There is also a concern with documenting *how* social realities in these groups are constructed.

Such approaches enable the abandonment of positivist methods that are not about researching the natural world. Positivism in science, as argued by Cardwell (1999), de Laine (1997) and Allen (2003), deals only with the observable and predicable. It determines generalized laws in an objective manner and predetermined theory might fit the findings. Rather than adopt such an approach, the author uses Yin's (2003) strategy of preferring how and why questions in the case

study, when the researcher has not much control over happening, and when the centre of interest is on contemporary observable facts or events within the real-life context of the six students in the Literature Study Circles.

Using case study design

In this study a group in a classroom comprises what Stake (1988) considers a bounded system, and one that functions specifically as a case study. The environment has a boundary, in this instance the classroom. It is not so easy for the researcher to say when the child ends and the classroom begins. Behaviour patterns and a boundary, Stake (1988) maintains, are useful concepts for specifying the case. Through a case study, the author explores ways in which the school, and the particular students at the school, have embraced the concept of multiculturalism and diversity. In addition, the case study shows ways in which the children changed as a community of learners through literature group discussions and other events in the school and the classroom.

The need for qualitative research was signposted in an earlier chapter and case study design was identified as the most suitable approach design for this study. Merriam (1998) uses the term *qualitative case study approach* as constituting a model research design for understanding and interpreting observations, especially educational phenomena. For Merriam (1998), the researcher designs a case study applicable to the research problem, and the type of questions being asked. The limitations of the case study are outweighed by its efficacy. The author has designed his own case study research in accordance with this approach, and has come to similar conclusions as those of Merriam (1998).

Case study in qualitative research, Punch (1998) states, aims to comprehend the case in depth in a natural environment in a holistic manner. This adds weight to Stake's (1988) opinion that a classroom maybe considered as a natural environment. Punch (1998) cites Goode and Hatt (1952) who state that the purpose of the case study is to organize social data to sustain the homogenic characteristics of the social object under study, thus sustaining the holistic approach not usual in a positivist approach. This opinion is further supported further by Merriam (1998), who says that qualitative case studies are characteristic, descriptive and heuristic. Hall and Hall (1996) also remind the researcher that he/she is working with real people whose lives are exclusive and holistic.

Stake (1998) stresses that the term, case study, draws attention to what exactly can be learned from one case, and that case study is a learning procedure about the case, as well the creation of learning. The guiding principle of case studies, as expounded by Murray and Lawrence (2000), is to identify, disclose and interpret the main characteristics of the case. This author's research project focuses on six students in their engagement with a particular type of children's literature, in this case, literature with a focus on multicultural issues, and in a particular form of literacy skills development, in this case Literature Study Circles. Thus, this case study is bounded by specific characteristics, as Murray and Lawrence (2000) and Stake (1998) suggest.

Stake (1994; 1995) maintains that the case study allows a researcher to focus on circumstances, as stated by the research question and the research concerns, and that this assists the researcher in coming to some sort of resolution of the problems presented to the researcher. Because this case study concerns a small group of six students aged between eleven and twelve years of age, the author has been able to concentrate on the collection of data to produce understanding of how the learning processes in the particular classroom result in transformational outcomes of the sorts identified by Rosenblatt (1976; 1978).

Transformation Approach to Curriculum

Banks' (1994) 'transformation approach' to curriculum development needs to be considered, especially in classroom planning. 'Essentially,   transformation is the process of revealing unity among human beings and the world, as well as revealing important differences. Transformation implies acknowledging and benefiting from the interaction among sameness and diversity in individuals' (Banks & McGee Banks, 1993, p. 156).   When combined with reader-response techniques, it can lead to consideration of issues like discrimination, racism, and prejudice' (Banks & McGee Banks 1993, p. 34). In processes and procedures aimed at creating fair and equitable classrooms, multicultural literature may be used as a catalyst as a way of confronting socio-cultural contexts in children's dialogue.

Indeed, 'Education,' Garcia and Pugh (1992) point out, 'is a continual process of negotiation between the principles of preservation and of transformation' (p. 218). The challenge for teachers is to transform classrooms into communities of learners where the curriculum is 'integrated and thematic instruction is student centred and value based' (Mathison & Young (1995, p. 9).   Short and Pierce (1990) affirm the power of interactive dialogue as part of education processes; they assert that children's learning comes from valuing diversity in the natural setting of the school and home, because the children can relate to it.   Short (1990) reports the experience of Lori, a grade 6 student in a Literature Study Circle:

> 'I think working with a group of people helps you get along with people, and you can get a lot of ideas out of listening to the other people. When talking to other people in a group, you feel you CAN say things, and you can talk. When you're with yourself, you can't get new ideas from other people. Being in groups changed my learning, because I can learn from the other people' (p. 33).

Hoopes & Ventura (1987) describes cross-cultural learning as 'a tool for adapting to change, to a world in which pluralism and the need to function effectively in different cultural environments will become increasingly important for an increasingly number of people' (p. 11). The author has drawn on the foregoing literature to develop transformation strategies as part of the research design.

Yin (2003) also provides a definition of case study which further supports the author's decision to use the case study. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a present phenomenon within real-life environments, though it can be argued that the boundaries between phenomenon and environment are not clearly defined. As the focus of this case study is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context of six students in a Literature Study Circles, the preferred strategy used by the author has been to ask questions of how, why or what concerning the research question itself. He is able to take an observer's view of this special case. Thus, the study, as argued by Olson in Merriam (1998), can be a heuristic experience as it, among other things, establishes the reasons for a problem, the circumstances, what happened, and why. Its practicality is in evaluating, summarizing and forming a conclusion in relation to what is under investigation.

Gathering the data in a case study

This case study, as indicated in Chapter 1, has a conceptual structure, organized around a particular research question or issue. Stake (1988) argues that in investigating issues, the project becomes so much more than finding information. The issues become organizers for the study. 'Did these students learn about multiculturalism?' would be an information question, but 'In what ways did the students change in their attitudes to racism as the Literature Study Circles progressed?' is about a complex, situated, problematic relationship. This issue arises from the particular case but also may develop into a more general one: Does participation in talk about literature lead to critical learning? Stake (1988) argues that the general issue serves to deepen the understanding of the case. In choosing the issue concerned with the changes in a community of learners through literature group discussions, the author is able to use the data collected to interpret patterns about the learning.

So, how are the data to be gathered? For Hamel (1993), the case study is a strategy that employs different methods for gathering data such as participant observation, interviews and field studies whose purpose is to facilitate the assembling and analysis of data from a sociological perspective. Hamel (1993) prefers to call case study an approach, and not a method, although the expression presupposes a method. The author accepts Hamel's sociological approach that case study aspires to portray the characteristics of social life, which are observed as a set of interactions, as collective behaviour patterns, or as structures. It is necessary to gather data to seek these patterns.

The author adopted Mitchell's (2000) case study procedure in referring to the basic descriptive material observed in field notes prior to any deliberate analysis of the data. Also accepted, was Mitchell's (2000) concept that case study can refer to an observer's data, in that the documentation of some particular phenomenon or set of happenings has been collected with the expressed purpose of drawing theoretical conclusions from it. For example, the author refers to his participant observation of six students in Literature Study Circles.

Data collection, according to Yin (2003), is not just a design feature but a comprehensive research strategy. Murray and Lawrence (2000) further explain that the main feature of case study is observation, and that this employs techniques such as participant observation and data-gathering techniques such as interviews, content analysis of documents, and other techniques used in ethnographic field study. Murray and Lawrence (2000) state that data collection is not a single technique, but data collection employs selected techniques, which are most appropriate for the purposes of investigation.

The author has adopted the suggestion by Wolcott (1988) that ethnographic practices are most appropriate in a case study as they provide material for interpretation and take into consideration

cultural perspectives. The students in this research project were engaged in working cooperatively as a group and identified and discussed questions and issues arising from the literature they had read and how it related to real life situations.

Thus, the case study approach adopted by the author for this thesis enabled the generation of data in the form of thick descriptions as described by Geertz (1973) and Stake (1994; 1995) of a specific situation for analysis consistent with the research's ontological and epistemological position, as described in Chapter Two. Geertz (1973) maintains that it is very like a study of the constructivist notion of the reading process where meanings are arrived at gradually through a process of forming local and global understandings. This includes what they, the ethnographer and the reader, understand, what they do not, and the questions they still have. They explore, rethink, and explain and defend their understandings through thoughtful participation. Another advantage of the case study approach is that it has enabled the researcher to focus on a set of circumstances, as bounded by the research question and the research concerns, as suggested by Stake (1995) and Yin (2003).

With the focus of this research on a group of six students, the author was able to concentrate on the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right, as it allowed the participants to express their own concerns, issues, questions, problems and so on from their own unique perspectives. These provided the thick descriptions referred to by Geertz (1973), that is descriptions of things that are common, things that are particular, and things that are solely in a given perception of the actors, as Stake (1994; 1995) suggested. This is a description of their reality.

Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (1980) maintain that case study presents evaluation of data in a more accessible manner than other kinds of research reports. Because the author's research was conducted on the basis of a single day per week over a period of a year, he was able to

generate the sort of thick descriptions suggested in the literature on case study research (see especially Geertz, 1973) for later evaluation (see for example Mitchell, 2000).

The use of case studies has been questioned by Borg and Borg (1983), but their reservations have not been not applicable to this study. The length of this study has enabled the author to obtain an insight of some depth into the students' engagement with issues relating to the research question. The study has resulted in what Marvasti (2004) argues is a fundamental sociological research paper answering a question concerned with society using empirical data or, in other words as Stake (1995) suggests, writing a case study report, in which it has been important to understand behaviour, issues and context.

Considering data

A methodological position emanating from the theoretical framework associated with interpretivism, has been used in this study. This has led to symbolic interactionism (described in Chapter 2), as representing a most appropriate way of answering the research questions raised in Chapter One. This has enabled the collection of data which offered a manner of identifying and understanding viewpoints of the participants.

The data in this thesis derives in the main from transcripts of audio-taped discussions within Literature Study Circles as well as interviews with the students and other information sourced from their Journals. The analysis of this data has involved reducing and organizing the data, synthesizing, searching for significant patterns and finding what is important as part of an attempt by the author to make sense of the data so as to create explanations of the students' discussions and behaviour in Literature Study Circles.

Borg and Gall (1983) argue that rich description produces a comprehensive examination of a single subject or occurrence, in this instance a group of six students aged from eleven to twelve. The use of educational ethnography and of participant observation and extensive data collection enables the researcher to produce a in-depth understanding of the group being studied; because one case study may not necessarily be typical of other case studies, it may not be possible to draw any general conclusion from one single case study, although the data generated can assist in the advancement of theory and empirical studies.

Triangulation, credibility, trustworthiness

It is necessary in using a case study approach, to be concerned about the clarity and validity of the report: that there are no inaccuracies or invalidated assertions. Stake (1998) suggests that to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation, some procedures should be used particularly to avoid redundancy of data gathering and challenges to explanations. These procedures in a qualitative case study are usually called triangulation.

Triangulation which is fundamental to ethnographic research, as in this thesis, is a process that employs more than one method of data collection in order to increase the acceptability of the research data. Triangulation is the testing of one source of information against others to eliminate alternative explanations and to compare the information sources to test the quality of the information. The data comes from multiple perspectives: first, the students' data from discussions of multicultural literature in Literature Study Circles; secondly, the information from the author as a participant observer and later as an observer participant; thirdly, data from the students' journal writings. Information from these sources ultimately provides the validation checks that lead to a more complete understanding of the parts the students play in the social environment in Literature Study Circles. The ethnographic situation is put into perspective.

Triangulation as a method is most appropriate for interviewing and participant observation, and for viewing different data sources. It is especially relevant in comparative case studies constructed in the research design and in searching for counter-patterns. In addition, in this study, there was an extended period of a participant observer for over a year or more in observing a wide array of subjects, conducting interviews and grounded surveys. In the process of triangulation, Lather (1986) adds that concrete situations influence theory-construction and proceed in a way that stimulates the participants' awareness of their own resources.

Importantly, Silverman (2000) points out that, unless procedures were used to confirm that the methods were reliable and the conclusion valid, it is useless to proceed with the research. Silverman (2000) defines validity as another word for truth. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) make the point that data cannot be valid or invalid, as it is the inferences drawn from them which are valid or invalid. Silverman (2000) agrees with Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), and questions the genuineness of the validity of a finding, arguing that whether the data are quantifiable or qualitative, the validation for their inference must be confronted. Joshua (1998) discusses values, which cannot be subject to quantification, verification or falsification because their presence is subjective.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) advise that it is important to have validity checks on data in qualitative research. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) state that the interpretative, ethnographic model of social research is most appropriate to school-based research; and that the researcher ought to be familiar with the actual material being investigated, as this lessens the lack of consistency, potential errors, and comments that may be untrue; whilst validity and authenticity are criteria used in more than one method of data collection in triangulation. Salkind (1997) uses synonyms such as truthfulness, accuracy, and authenticity to describe validity because the logic of evidence must be attended to.

Creswell (1994) argues that qualitative researchers now disregard traditional criteria such as validity and reliability in qualitative studies, and have developed their own language to avoid positivist paradigms. Scholars such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) establish quality criteria such as trustworthiness and authenticity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe validity as credibility, transferability and conformability that are established by the constant comparative method of analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that a study should be believable to readers and accurate according to those who participate in it.

Having found that positivist kinds of validity are not useful, Mishler (1990) argues for thinking about validity as a social construction that 'may change with time' (p. 420). However, there must be a judgment criterion or a boundary line for deciding whether someone's work is acceptable. The boundary line separates research that is acceptable from research that is not and from the as yet, unresearched. Mishler (1990) defines this judgment or line in terms of trustworthiness. This comes about when the researcher relies on the inferences or concepts of other studies as a basis for theorizing and empirical research. Lather (1986) also argues that the trustworthiness of data needs to be systematic using techniques that will check its credibility and, as Mishler (1990) and Kamarousky (1981) advocate, minimizing of the disturbing effect of personal bias, as discussed previously.

According to Lather (1986) it does not follow that a correct method warrants authentic results. Polkinghorne (1983) supports this argument, that is, a method does not give authenticity but corrects assumptions. In creating trustworthy data, Guba (1981) proposes the use of triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks. Lather (1986) further argues that new paradigm researchers need to start by being more organized in establishing the credibility (responsibility) of their data. The author recommends triangulation for establishing credibility, further positing that

there is neither neutral education nor neutral research but that the development of data credibility checks protects research and theory construction.

Concerns about bias

Cronbach (1980) similarly argues that validation is about searching for flaws in an interpretation rather than supporting it. This validation guards against research bias. Creswell (1994) points out that the concept of triangulation is concerned with the assumption that any bias immanent in particular data sources, investigators, and methods is neutralized if employed with other data sources, investigators, and methods. Lather (1986) proposes guidelines to avoid researcher bias twisting the logic of evidence. Triangulation is one of the recommended features.

The author acknowledges that bias is an inescapable part of observation and reflection. Personal understandings about teaching, assessment and reporting influenced the author's decisions and actions. An awareness of these assumptions was continually questioned for decision making. The author questioned why and what he was doing, especially in observing spur-of-the-moment decisions; because it was in these that he was able to observe an implicit framework of beliefs, knowledge and habits. Part of this monitoring of bias was the use of triangulation as a mechanism by which such constant checks on author generation and interpretation of data could be used.

Holistic, interpretive description

This study is designed to share the following characteristics of holistic, interpretive description: first, it is microscopic and detailed (Geertz, 1973). Description must stay close to the original data, providing as much access as possible to the actual ongoing pattern. Second, it is

answerable to the demands of contextual validity or dependability (Diesing, 1972), attainable through rigorous and painstaking use of the various kinds of evidence through cross-referencing and reinterpretation. Third, it is transferable in that 'it sets out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316), and so allows transferability judgments to be made by potential users.

Knight (2002) argues that there are three components that the researcher ought to consider in order to make sense about the level of analysis that is appropriate to the research questions. First, the researcher explores the differences between subgroups in a sample. Second, as data analysis might not be objective, it is important that the researcher distinguishes between what is the focus of the analysis, the unit of analysis such as individual children, teachers or departments, education or services departments, and the blocks of data that are actually analysed. In such ways the units of analysis become units of coding about how to interpret different data sources. The researcher has to be wary that coding of qualitative data may not be objective. If the researcher assumes that analysis can be objective, this can effectively lock the researcher into a tunnel vision mentality and the researcher fails to understand that there are other ways of reading data. Third, data analysis is continuous, starting with the research design and the data that evolves as the researcher continues repeated thinking about meaning that gradually identifies with the data. This relates to units of coding, possible coding categories, definitions, and patterns in terms of understanding the research questions and research design (Knight, 2002). The author has taken Knight's (2002) work as important informing principles in his own data analysis in his own research, especially as to issues of credibility.

According to Opie (2004), if the researcher has only given careful consideration to methodology, research methods and procedures, and devised data collection tools and due consideration to any ethical considerations, the researcher ought not to commence the research. Opie (2004) warns that the researcher is not ready to commence the research until analysis of the data

collection has been decided, and this depends on what type of data are appropriate for any analysis the researcher may want to perform, which in turn prescribes the questions the researcher asks.

The particular case study

Having described the case study in general, it is sensible now to pay attention to the particular case that was investigated in this study. It will be described under headings that relate to those already discussed in general terms in this chapter but with specific details about the particular case.

Communities of learners

Lave and Wenger (1999) argue that the concept of learning concerns the whole person and that learning is a process of participation in communities of practice. This entails a person engaging to learn and the meaning of learning being structured. In this way the learner is on the way to becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. Lave and Wenger (1999) call their practice legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), where learning is conceived not in an individual's mind but in a participatory framework. They state that the power of general knowledge lies in its capacity to renegotiate the meaning of the past and the future in assembling meaning of present happenings. This situation is negotiated in legitimate peripheral participation. Legitimacy of participation entails ways of belonging as a member of a community and peripheral participation is about being situated in the social world, with the whole of the community that would develop in a given field where learning would provide access to practice, not just access to information or knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1999) explain that legitimate peripheral participation is a matter of taking a new look at learning, arguing that schooling is based on the decontextualizing of

knowledge. This study takes up the suggestion of taking a new look at learning, as the students ultimately establish the direction and form of their own community of learners in the form of Literature Study Circles members, with protocols and practice established, and a measure of control over the shaping of their own learning.

In establishing their own community of learners in the ways that this study describes, the students behaved in ways consistent with Lave and Wenger's (1999) posited structure of an activity system where the participants shared understandings about what they wanted to do, and what they were doing, and took up responsibility for developing their own learning and for their community of practice.

What is also a major consideration in the author's research is the argument of Holt and Bell (2000), who maintain that as communities of learners evolve, trust and caring for one another become the defining characteristics of the group, thereby enabling children to take risks and become uninhibited as they propose concepts for discussion or comment. Eventually the concepts may be accepted or rejected by other members of the group. For Holt and Bell (2000) the group becomes a failure if it lacks a sense of community. Conversation, Holt and Bell (2000) add is crucial to shared interpretation. At the same time it widens concepts, links each member and provides access to multiple points of view. The above are informing principles in this research. By studying such concepts in relation to symbolic interactionism it has been possible to explore ways in the students became involved in whole worlds of literature to explore in Literature Study Circles.

According to Hill and Hill (1990), a community of learners is formed when children collaborate with one another. A group may be formed with two or more children. The students' discussions show that there was much social interaction between them that Doise and Mugny (1984) state

leads to advanced cognitive development. As Nias (1987) argues, perception or understanding is learnt and schemata are constructed and changed through sensory experience and this gives the child an organized manner of classifying knowledge and responding to it.

Short and Pierce (1990) found that in a community of learners children can be given the opportunity to interpret their reading through language, and other communication structures such as music, drama, movement and art, creating advanced understandings of their reading. Short and Pierce (1990) maintain that the type of social environment, where learners form relationships and conversations with other children, plays an important part in the potential and constraints of learners in how they perceive their own learning. This study accepts that it is important to give students the opportunity a members of a community of learners to understand what is important in their lives. They need to be accepted, valued by their peers, have their accomplishments recognized as well as their particular and significant identities.

Further to this, Short and Pierce (1990) maintain that collaborative relationships and discussions among learners remove obstructions that prevent children from learning with and from others. Hill and Hill (1990) state that individualized and competitive learning are common features in school experience. However research has shown that co-operative learning gives children greater intellectual and social developmental advantages. A co-operative position exists, according to Hill and Hill (1990), when two or more people work in concert to achieve the same outcome. In heterogeneous groups, Hill and Hill (1990) add, children with particular co-operative skills become models for children who can benefit by perceiving these skills in action. This was also of some importance as providing a focus for students' activities in Literature Study Circles.

While accepting Short and Pierce's (1990) beliefs about collaborative learning on board, this thesis has drawn in a major way on Lave and Wenger's (1999) concept of learning in legitimate

peripheral participation. It has taken up the argument that in a given field of learning, mastery takes place not with the master acting alone (in this case,) but with the master again, (the author of this thesis) within a community of learners (in this case, the students in the Literature Study Circles) of which the master (author) forms a part, (in this case, as being an observer participant), where learning would be seen as access to practice, not just access to information or knowledge. In the author's Literature Study Circles of six students, there were four LBOTE students, who had had different overseas experiences that they shared with each other, as well as two Anglo-Australian students in the group. It is through such discussions, behaviours and attitudes that the author's group of six students took on the characteristics of a community of learners.

Direct observation of the classroom in this study established that a grade at a primary school may be considered a community of learners, even if it is teacher-centred and competitively-based in regard to children's learning activities. This project, however, was based on alternative protocols and practice in relation to a community of learners, on cooperative and collaborative learning principles and procedures. It drew on such works as those of Lave and Wenger (1999), manifested in the operations of Literature Study Circles as described by Samway and Whang (1996), and Literature Circles as described by Daniels (1994).

Literature Study Circles

Given the nature of symbolic interactionism, which in this thesis describes the manner in which the students interacted with one another particularly in terms of Rosenblatt's (1991) efferential and aesthetic reading continuum, previously discussed, activities in Literature Study Circles observed by the author, took place in a framework composed of a community of learners.

There are various names for a group of literature readers. Short and Pierce (1990) call talking about books *Literate Communities*, Chambers (1994) *Reading Circles,* Samway and Whang (1996) *Literature Study Circles*, Daniels (1994) and Dawson and Fitzgerald (1999) use the term *Literature Circles*. The author chose to use the term *Literature Study Circles* throughout this thesis.

Dawson and Fitzgerald (1999) explain that Literature Study Circles identify the diversity in children's learning styles and accommodate planning for children's individual differences. They argue that Literature Study Circles work because they are based on critical literacy principles, independence and co-operative learning planning; and that children have some freedom to select texts and present them to an understanding group. Literature Study Circles can be formed in any type of grade, such as a composite grade or a normal grade. Dawson and Fitzgerald (1999) describe Literature Study Circles that are formed when any grade is divided into groups. Each group should not exceed six members, with each group having a common choice of text.

Group conversations promote new knowledge and children take part in accomplishing learning activities. The success of structure in Literature Study Circles, according to Dawson and Fitzgerald (1999), is its flexibility, offering children choice in the selection of the title they want to read, thereby giving them control over their own reading and enhancing their engagement and motivation. The author formed his Literature Study Circles not for didactic presentation of facts, principles and rules to be learnt, remembered and applied, but for providing the students with a framework within which to construct meaning as they discuss their books.

The principles of a democratic classroom embrace group dynamics, as part of collaborative learning (Daniels, 1994). Literature Study Circles do not follow a prescriptive format as teachers devise their own way to conduct their groups. For example, Daniels (1994) advises that in a

grade of twenty-five children there might be five to seven different groups, each reading different books, formed on the basis of children's interest in a particular books. In the groups, children pursue their own discussion topics, do not have to answer textbook study questions or yield to teacher's questions. Daniels (1994) argues that in the past children were not encouraged or allowed to express themselves and that school reading was a solitary, single act that blocked children's emotions and prevented them from responding to analysing and evaluating stories in a community atmosphere.

Although Daniels (1994) writes that Literature Study Circles are not organized to a prescribed formula his suggested practice is almost the opposite. Daniels' (1994) Literature Study Circles are very structured and children are given role sheets which provide a different thinking task for each member of the group. This is one issue that is explored in this research.

The Literature Study Circles of Samway and Whang (1996) meet upon an agreed date with the teacher for a twenty to thirty-minute discussion in which all members of the group share their original reaction to the book under discussion. Based on the discussion of the book, a writing assignment is planned with the intention of finding if children comprehended the book. This might take the form of investigating how the author revealed changes to a character or characters in the story, or how the author brings the reader into the story. Such an assignment must be completed with two or three days before returning to the group. At the completion of each discussion, the children are encouraged to briefly reflect on the how the session went, evaluate their own performance and offer other members of the group positive evaluations in the pursuit of fruitful meanings. It was decided to loosely adopt this practice.

Samway and Whang (1996) propose a slightly looser framework for Literature Study Circles than those of Daniels (1994), as roles are not allocated to children. However, the same procedure of

stressing reading and open ended discussion of children's literature is conducted in small self-choice groups that provide children with choices about what they read.

A study conducted by Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999) is particularly important in the development of Literature Study Circles in this instance. The writers examine teacher talk in the circles and find the teacher taking on several roles and influencing the talk in different ways. The identified roles included teachers as facilitators, participants, mediators, and active listeners. In this thesis it seemed important for the teacher not to be present, because an examination of student talk without teacher influence is of most interest. So, while Peterson and Eeds (2000) feel that the teacher should be present, the author, following Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999), hoped to see the children using strategies that had been scaffolded in introductory sessions.

It can be seen from the previous discussion that there are two extremes in how educators view the need for structure in Literature Study Circles. One extreme is to put the children into groups without supportive demonstrations. There seems to be no evidence that these groups do more than discuss their favourite part or character, a social conversation which can even become destructive in terms of relationships. At the other extreme, Daniels (1994), for example, uses direct instruction and modelling of what to do in Literature Study Circles and expects the teacher to be the group leader who asks questions to extend the children's thinking.

Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999), comment on the need to take a moderate approach to the construction of Literature Study Circles. They discuss the need to provide demonstrations of what the students might do in the Circles. Children also need opportunities in the Circles to reflect on the actual content and process of their group discussion. These findings are supported by the work of Bakhtin (1981) and Vygotsky (1978) who argued that meanings

created in social interactions are internalized in the form of thought. In fact, a sociocultural perspective suggests that children internalize social interaction patterns as sociocognitive strategies to be used in approaching text and reading events such as Literature Study Circles. Bloome (1986) suggests that sociolinguistic perspectives further demonstrate that teacher-child interactions provide or deny children access to talk even in a literacy event, such as a Literature Study Circles, that has the opposite intention. Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999), continuing this line of thought, and echoing Rosenblatt's teaching, state that children need opportunities to exchange ideas and be involved in dialogue because these dialogues provide the foundation of learning and democracy. This seems applicable also to multiculturalism.

Drawing upon concepts of democracy in developing the reading program, the author left open the choices and sequencing of the reading done by the children, as this enabled them to pursue particular interests of the moment, or to follow up on world events as they felt their impact on their lives, and so on. Thus, the reactions to the reading are not necessarily dependent on a planned sequence of books in the sense of the author trying to establish a theme, for example. Students may have reacted differently if the sequence had occurred differently. The data gathered and the analysis of them have not been contingent on thematic sequencing, therefore, but are more the result of children's selections of the texts and their timing of their engagement.

The research context

Earlier in this chapter, understandings about data gathering based on Case Study theory and practice were used to explain how informed decisions would be made and how data would be gathered. Later in this Chapter factors that influence audio-taping and how it may intrude on data production will be explained.

The location of the project school was in the south-eastern part of Melbourne with an enrolment of one hundred and ninety four students. It is situated in a commercial and industrial area with a government housing estate nearby. More than one-third of the students come from low income families. The remaining children come from one parent families, working class and a few from affluent homes. There were fifteen different ethnic backgrounds representing twenty percent of the school population. Some of the parents did not speak English at home. German as a language was taught to all children from Prep to Grade Six.

One particular Literature Study Circle group was chosen randomly as a group of key informants. This happened after the parents of the Grade 5/6 students at this school were approached by the principal via the school's weekly newsletter to volunteer their children as participants in the project to be undertaken at the school. The protocols demanded by the University's Ethics Committee, including the Plain Language Statement, were followed and subsequently approved. Approval for the research was sought and approved by the Department of Education and Training. The children nominated by the parents were approached and given the option to be part of the project. These children and their parents were then provided with a Plain English Statement setting out the project which the parents signed giving the school permission for the children to become part of the research group. The Plain Language statement was worded to accommodate parents' language backgrounds. Pseudonyms are used for the students at all times.

The core group of informants comprised three girls and three boys, aged between eleven and twelve years. They were representative of the large range of readers in this class. According to Wolcott (1988), the informants were '. . . the individuals in whom one invests a disproportionate amount of time . . . fieldworkers rely on a few individuals to a far greater extent than their accounts imply' (p.195). Four of the children, whose parents were born overseas, were born in Australia, and two Anglo-Australian children were born in Australia. Initial impressions are useful

as they provide a useful barometer of changes that occur during participation in Literature Study Circles. For example, Tony appeared shy. Transcripts show that he was not active in responding in the initial Direct Observations. He liked reading information books in silent reading time. Yanka, on the other hand, was a most exuberant student with a considerable understanding of people, places and events. She appeared mature, especially compared with the others in the group. She was not afraid to proffer and discuss ideas. Stella was a sensitive, thoughtful and concerned student who expressed herself clearly. Like Yanka, she was active in discussions from the beginning. Maheil initially displayed a lack of confidence and, like Tony, there is little evidence from the Direct Observations of his input. Essa, although not as forthcoming as Yanka and Stella, did contribute in her quiet way. She held her own in discussions. Ky also fitted between the extremes as displayed by Yanka and Maheil. He did not say very much, but when he did, he could defend his point of view.

Throughout the year this selected group of students participated in Literature Study Circles related to the class inquiry focus on multiculturalism and living in a democratic society. The students learned to focus their discussions. They were not given lists of questions to discuss, but were invited to share what was on their minds and from this sharing, to find particular issues to think more deeply about as a group. The question of the potential of discussions with or without the teacher present will be discussed later but it suffices to say that the students were comfortable talking about books with, or without, the teacher.

Data type to address the research

It is necessary to use interpretation in context (Cronbach, 1975), rather than abstract theorization, to gain an understanding of the way in which the learner, the language and the learning context all interact in the development of questioning strategies, and how each affects the other. This

demands an interactive approach and has been called a triangulated methodology, or multi-observational approach. For this reason, a number of data-collection strategies, including audio-tapes, texts, participant observation (Spradley, 1980), and interviews, were all used to provide data.

Development – that is, with changes taking place in the learners' reading responses over time – suggest the need for prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and therefore a qualitative study, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is an essential element for establishing trustworthiness. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicate that revisitation of the data is a progressive focusing that gradually brings to the surface intrinsic features of routine events. Longer and closer looks at the learners and their development is thus made possible because of the concentration on a key group which would have been too unwieldy for the whole group of Grade 5/6 students.

Data gathering

The methods of data collection used by the author included transcription of tapes of students' Literature Study Circle discussions, written reports in their journals, and some informal interviews. From this varied data the author was able to analyse, interpret and make generalizations and abstractions about cultural meanings and insights that emerged. Various data gathering items listed above were used to gather information so as to provide for triangulation of data to strengthen the credibility of the research process.

The main purpose of the audio-taping was to obtain a record of the students' understanding of the texts they were engaging, the questions that developed as a result, the answers they gave, the predictions they made, and the ways in which each member of the group responded as part

of an overall pattern of participation. Silverman (2004) argues that it is difficult for humans to recollect conversations and to focus on the real particulars of one part of social life. He points out that audio-tapes and transcripts present the researcher with a public record of peoples' conversations and that the audio-tapes can be replayed and transcripts annotated to maintain the sequence of discussions. Sacks (cited in Silverman, 2004) adds that researchers cannot rely on notes, recollections or discussions and the sequencing of discussions, so the author was at pains to follow the advice of other researchers in the field.

Thompson (1996) argues that audio-tapes are to some extent taken for granted in research and routinely used for face-to-face interviews. Thompson (1996) further argues that the audio-tape records the spoken word; the transcription records it as written text, and that the transcription is of significance, in that the audio-tape is not neutral and can be manipulated as well as restrict communication. The audio-tape recorder as a technology amplifies the voice but the visual, tactile and olfactory senses are diminished or completely absent (Thompson, 1996). Douglas (1985, cited in Thompson, 1996) states that the audio-tape recorder undermines the relationship the researcher is endeavouring to create with their respondent. In audio-taping interviews, Thompson (1996) argues that the researcher is able to concentrate on what is being recorded rather than attempt to record it accurately in written form. Other advantages, Thompson (1996) states, are that utterances can be replayed, slowed down, and tone and volume manipulated. In this way specific aspects of the recording demanding close attention can be isolated before interpretation.

Although audio-taping provides ease of access to recording respondents, and avoids tedious note taking, amassing large quantities of data is time consuming and difficult to access (Thompson, 1996). Nevertheless the transcripts become written records by the researcher. However, Douglas (1985, cited in Thompson, 1996) claims that the transcriptions are devoid of any tones, pauses and inflections and that all other aspects of communication that affect the

meaning are diminished. Lemke (1990, cited in Thompson, 1996) adds that in audio-taping, people do not talk in sentences or use commas as set out in transcripts.

Poland (1995) stresses the significance of ensuring that interview transcripts, which form the data for data analysis in many qualitative research studies, are verbatim accounts of what transpired. Poland (1995) regards a transcript error as the discrepancy between the written record (transcript) and the audio-tape recording of the interview. Poland (1995) agrees with Thompson (1996) that audio-taping does not register emotional context and nonverbal communication. Audio-taping, according to Poland (1995), does not include body-language, facial expressions, extended silences, the physical location, the differences between the spoken and the written word, as well as how the interviewee dresses. All these factors have a bearing on the interview.

Poland (1995) makes the case that transcripts are open to multiple alternative readings and interpretations, and that the transcript does not at all times reflect what is spoken on the tape. Poland (1995) advises that after each interview audio-tapes should be transcribed and reviewed before the next interview, and that the transcriber should not make attempts to manipulate some parts of the transcript to make them more realistic. This means that the transcriber should make no attempt to edit the audio-tapes, nor make word alterations to improve the transcript. Another difficulty the transcriber has is the interviews' run-on sentences, whereby the transcriber has to judge where sentences start and finish so as to include punctuation, that is, because verbal and written communication are very different (Poland, 1995). Because the author is interested in opinions and argument, the actual utterances he decided not to use conversational analysis protocols. Reruns, talking over others, stutters and other such conversational markers were not relevant.

Another aspect of audio-taping Poland (1995) raises, is the use of poor quality audio-tape recordings: such as weak batteries, excessive background noise, dirty tape heads, the placement of the microphone too far from the respondent, and the audibility of people speaking too softly. If there are too many people transcribing an audio-tape, Poland (1995) warns, the result may be too many multiple interpretations affecting transcript quality because of different versions of the interview transcript.

In this research, the author avoided the difficulties in audio-taping outlined by Thompson (1996) and Poland (1995), as he transcribed all the audio-taping of the students', taking all the above listed factors into account. The author did not have to deal with any of these problems in the audio-taping of the students' as they as they did not display inhibitions while using the audio-taping themselves. The majority of the audio-taping was conducted by the students in the absence of the author.

All the audio-tapes are verbatim and reflect how the respondents, the students, answered or asked questions in Literature Study Circles. At no time did the author attempt to improve the transcripts, as suggested by both Thompson (1996) and Poland (1995). This strengthened the trustworthy aspects of the transcripts as data for qualitative research in this thesis.

However, Block (1995) draws attention to audio-taping being dominated by the interviewees rather than the interviewer. This happens when the interviewees are performing for the researcher rather than providing information. Block (1995) states that the reason for this situation is that the researchers are relying on the interviewees to provide information about a phenomenon, thereby investing them with an authority to which they have not been accustomed. Block (1995) also refers to difficulties the interviewer may face in having to get an interpreter to relay the replies of the interviewee where there are language differences or difficulties. The

interpreter, Block (1995) states, might not give the interviewer the information or cultural information they are seeking as the interpreter and interviewee might be colluding with misinformation or displaying knowledge but not engaging in the usual conversation between interviewer and interviewee.

Block (1995) notes that interviews from audio-tapes give the interviewer an insight into what makes individuals think, but it is not possible get right inside what the individual is thinking. In this context, it has been useful for the author to understand why material generated from audio-tapes is not neutral, as the information might comprise restricted communication, as transcriptions of the audio-tapes are treated as records of interviews. The interviewer, as Block (1995) explains, is not able to ascertain the extent to which each interviewee has manipulated the information or allowed the interviewer into his thinking processes. The author therefore took the advice of Poland (1995) in not accepting transcripts as verbatim in the embodiment of truth or an indisputable record of the interview.

Direct observation to establish zone of proximal development

Direct observation was used at the outset of this research to gain a picture of what the students already knew. The author explored the extent to which the students in this study understood the word and the concept, multiculturalism. Data from direct observation was gathered here so as to establish what the students already knew. Teachers constantly evaluate as they teach and direct observation through discussion is the technique considered more useful for a qualitative study than a formal pen and pencil pre-test.

It was necessary, before setting out to answer the research question, to find the students' own levels of understanding of multiculturalism, both as a word with a number of meanings, and a

concept that could be used to explore issues in the texts they were about to encounter. The author wrote the word multiculturalism on the blackboard so that the students could see the word, and the author could write below it words from the students' comments. This was to allow students time to think about the comments they had made and eventually decide which comment would be most appropriate in defining multiculturalism. Drawing on thinking processes discussed in work on metacognition, (Brown, 1978; Vygotsky, 1962), it was intended that these issues would become part of their discussion processes to be discussed later in this study.

The following extracts from the Field Notes illustrate how the students attempted to answer the questions about defining multiculturalism and culture:

Author: What is multiculturalism?

Tony: Is it to do with many things?

Author: Please explain what you mean.

Maheil: Such as multiply as in maths.

Essa: No, I think it's something to do with people.

Ky: Yes, but what kind of people?

Yanka: People are the same everywhere, but they are different.

As this extract from the transcripts shows, each child was attempting to define the word, multiculturalism, and used the words of the previous speaker to enlarge on the meaning of multiculturalism. The author's writing of students' replies on the blackboard under the word, multiculturalism, enabled the students eventually to give a definition of multiculturalism as they understood it from the various answers. This led to the next discussion from multiculture to culture:

Author: What is culture?

Stella: It's to do with people, what they do in their own country.

Essa: Yes and what we do in Australia.

Ky: Culture is everywhere you go and you can't get away from it.

Author: How is culture different from multiculture?

Tony: It's the same isn't it?

Yanka: No, not the same, as some people do culture differently.

In both extracts, the students had some rather general ideas about multiculturalism and culture but they did know how to discuss and help each other to clarify ideas. It was evident that it would be beneficial to have the students continue to develop this dialogue as analytical thought. This strategy is consistent with Wertsch's (1991) claim that dialogic interaction is critical to internalizing social languages.

So, along with discovering what the students' concepts were, and what the students had already learnt about culture and multiculturalism, the author found a way forward for the study. As their focus, small group discussions could have the students as thinkers, exploring and helping each other move beyond initial understandings. They could use their personal responses to make new interpretations and broaden their world views as they transacted with specific texts. The creation of Literature Study Circles was the forming of the community of learners as outlined in the research question of this project.

Participant observation

The purpose of ethnography, Fetterman (1989) points out, is to produce a written description of a people's way of life, beliefs and daily activities. Greig and Taylor (1999) explain that observation supports a number of approaches to data research, and they claim that ethnographic approaches are best in observation. Greig and Taylor (1999) argue that in a non-participant role the observer only observes, such as participants being observed undertaking an activity through a two-way mirror. A participant observer needs to take a holistic approach and a prolonged period of time in reflective observation and insights that develop from interactions   Participatory research, Hall and Kassam (1988) considers, is a social action process in the domains of research, education and action, and it is founded on the epistemological premise that knowledge is constructed socially. Taft (1987) makes the distinction between a participant observer and observer participant, as the former conducts an obtrusive role and this may influence group behaviour, whereas the latter may or may not be obtrusive. The importance for the author is to observe how the participants in a given situation are interrelated in explaining the network of the group behaviours and interactions. The author in taking an interpretive stance became a participant observer at the start of the group activities, engaging himself in the culture under study. There is no doubt that he did influence the direction of the discussions at the beginning of the study in order to establish the students' zone of proximal development. He also chose the literature to be discussed and used the framework of Literature Study Circles so that the students would take control of their learning. The students understood that they could discuss the topics freely as the author had built up this trust. He then withdrew from the Literature Study Circles discussions and so became an observer participant.

As described, the author was investigating a group of six school students aged between eleven and twelve in a composite Grade 5/6 in a low socio-economic part of Melbourne with a high proportion of LBOTE students. The author's main concern was to record a detailed exploration of this one particular group with ethnographic methods, and using symbolic interactionism, to arrive

at a theoretical understanding of the group and its culture. In order to do this, the author visited the school for one year for one day a week in term time.

Smith (2002) is concerned that many ethnographic studies are done in a quick manner, perhaps one day a week in a semester, and rely on information collected from focus groups. Smith (2002) favours participant observations over long periods of time, so real human relationships may eventuate: better promotion of relations between teachers and students in establishing trust and rapport; better cultural understandings and ethical responsibilities; better understanding of the social, political, ideological and linguistic context in which the school is established. Wolcott (2002) also states the ethnographic importance evolves socially, not statistically, from particular observation in the culture under study, in living and interacting with the people's way of life or social experiences. This has been a significant informing principle for this project as the author had to establish his own role as a participant observer in this research.

Field notes

The observer participant takes extensive quantities of field notes, which become written records of the ethnographer's observations involving conversations, understandings and questions. In writing field notes, Geertz (1973) refers to the distinction between 'inscription' ('thick description') and 'specification' ('diagnosis') (p. 27), that is, connecting the purpose of specific social actions portrayed by the participants, and explaining how the knowledge generated relates to life of that society.

Detailed notes from Literature Study Circles interactions were taken. At the completion of a session, the author took brief notes about the session. This included feedback from the students on how they felt the lesson proceeded and suggestions for improving the session. The session

was audio-taped and transcribed immediately or as soon as possible after the session so that students' interaction was still fresh in the author's mind. The transcripts were given to the students in the next session for member checking to take into account considerations of credibility as far as the transcripts were concerned. The note taking at the end of the Literature Study Circles provided details of the group context and supplemented the audio-tapes, which provided the important data – the conversations.

An important part of each session of the Literature Study Circles was an introduction to the lesson where students discussed problems they had encountered in reading multicultural literature at school or at home; or to discuss parts of a multicultural book that could be difficult to interpret. The author also introduced at this session discussions around concepts such as vocabulary, events, issues or situations that eventuated in multicultural literature books. The author made field notes after the session that had not been audio-taped, and included features that he would introduce at the next Literature Study Circles session. At this point the author started writing his draft, using field notes and audio-tapes about what he observed as a participant observer. The writing had to be tested and reflected on as part of the process engaged in by the author as he looked for emerging patterns in the talk in Literature Study Circles.

Corsaro (1981) identifies four classifications of field notes: notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes and personal notes. Field notes are direct observations of students in the session. Field notes: In the first session of Literature Study Circles the students were very excited as they were keen to get started on their new adventure. Because the students began asking many questions in unison their questions became inaudible. The author felt that he did not want to stifle this enthusiasm but use it for encouragement purposes, so he waited until the students realized that if they all talked at once no one would be heard. So when the noise died down one of the group said it would be better if one person spoke at a time and everyone would get a turn.

So the students established their first rule without the author interfering. In doing so, they were perhaps also taking their first steps into developing as a community of learners, ones who would take a measure of responsibility for shaping their own learning.

Methodological notes were observations containing research methods being used. This involved retracing a conversation that did not record on the audio-tape or an interview question with a student not recorded on the audio-tape. Theoretical notes were educated guesses about what was happening and included references from literature that supported what was observed. Personal notes concerned how the researcher's personal life or how the students' reaction could affect the observations.

Data sorting

As the author was making extensive field notes, it became possible to view patterns emerging from the Literature Study Circles discussions of the multicultural books the students had read. In the first instance, the transcriptions were physically cut up and given subject headings such as emotions, agreeable, disagreements, racism, gender, and so forth. This was done so that the students' discussions could be scrutinized for patterns such as behaviour, attitudes, and responses, knowledge of issues and conditions and culture. The subject headings, which arose out of the students' statements and questions, would later be used for data analysis. However, the system under subject headings became so voluminous, that while definite patterns emerged, it was necessary to find a better system so as to confine patterns to a more concise form for data analysis.

The author found a useful tool in a classification system based on a limited number of subjects established by Bean and Rigoni (2001), which was modified to make it appropriate for students of

eleven and twelve years of age, for obtaining the students' responses in their dialogues and writings. This system made it much easier to find patterns, sometimes individual patterns, and sometimes group patterns. It was possible to identify various characteristics of the students' responses, their interaction with one another, and aspects of each student identifying different cultural attitudes to life, as discussed in the multicultural books being read. Bean and Rigoni's (2001) response system related to the research question of multiculturalism, and the behaviour and interaction of students operating in a community of learners.

As data sorting progressed, the author noted consistencies within the data, the application of theory to the methods used and the reflective commentary of the students themselves. This enabled educated guesses to be made about what was happening at that time. It included references from literature that supported observations, as well as enabling verification with other parties involved of particular aspects of data gathering. This sort of activity was integral to this project as social research, where human characteristics might intrude upon any human social activity as it is undertaken.

The following extract from the transcripts is an indicator of the quality of the students' talk, their attitudes and growing understanding of multiculturalism:

Essa: There was a lot of culture in this book because the way people look like in the picture – what they wear, their religion, and sayings – their culture would be different from Australia.

Ky: I felt sad the way this book ended – also happy because

Sadako feel asleep and died – she didn't notice anything.

Stella. Her mum didn't get the fall out – she breathed it in and got it – it's like a generation thing – it was not her fault – she was a baby so something of that bomb it will affect every generation of the family.

Yanka. I think if people had not been in wars and everything no-one like Sadako and everyone else who died would be alive today – it's the government's fault because the government starts wars and sends people to war and everything else like that – it's because a different culture and a different place – they didn't know anything about that place unless you are an historian in another place – it's not your fault – you didn't choose to go there unless you volunteered.

The extract shows the social structure of the Literature Study Circles, how the members engaged in dialogue in explaining and defending their statements. The extract also shows how the students at a very early stage in this project coped with coherence, and understanding of life and death. Yanka states that wars are caused by governments because their thinking is different because of their culture, and people are conscripted to fight. Stella sees the dropping of the atomic bomb affecting future generations. There is also the wide range of roles that literacy played in the multicultural stories in identity construction: stories that were told about other children from different cultures which they related to their own cultural experience, as when Essa says that culture is concerned about what people wear, their religion, and their sayings, which is different from Australian culture.

The data gathered from the students' book discussions and written work in their journals were sorted under the modified categories of content analysis developed by Bean and Rigoni (2001). These categories were important as they related to what and how students' development took place in a group of six students in Literature Study Circles in understanding multiculturalism in relation to the research question. The categories indicated the extent of students' knowledge of events and issues such as those discussed above.

Diesing (1972) takes the position that the first stage of the analysis is to listen as though the researcher has a third ear that becomes a process of considering recent themes that arise in different contexts. This becomes an undertaking to view the reality of how children use language to make meaning (Gumperz, 1982; Green, 1983) and hence responses. Geertz (1983) suggests that disciplinary boundaries cross and merge because the research agenda and the nature of the enquiry themselves change. There is interest in particular events because of their significance for those involved, and for others, and the impact of different events. In the changing circumstances the author was vigilant to accept changes relating to the research question, along the lines suggested by the scholarly works cited.

Hatch (2002) states that different approaches and patterns guide the researcher to various analysis strategies, and that he or she works on the supposition that important information is in the data. By methodically asking the correct questions of the data, that information can be disclosed. Geertz (1973) stresses the idea that local knowledge does not preclude an acknowledgement of wide sociocultural and textual processes. Adopting different stances towards analysing data both separately and in combination, would give a fuller insight than would one perspective. A stance is defined by Beach (1992) as focusing on a certain aspect of the literacy event. This means selectively to focus on, attend to or foreground certain features.

Mason (1996) points out that a designed study is likely to generate certain kinds of explanations and not others. This relates to the terms what the research questions address in terms of social explanations through the use of suitable methods and sampling or patterns. The author used an adaptation of the content analysis of Bean and Rigoni (2001) to establish patterns that relate to the research question. This also relates to a proposed method of data collection by Glaser and Strauss (1967) called the constant-comparison method. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that early data should be analysed in terms of categories and concepts, which would then be

interrogated in terms of the original question. New ideas would be likely to emerge based on these observations and other data, and so the definition of categories could begin. Tentative data analysis would occur simultaneously with the data collection. The author constantly changed and enlarged categories as new categories emerged from the data collection. This meant that former categories had to be replaced.

Mason (1996) takes the position that the extent of the interpretation of data, or the reading of it, creates the features that are needed to produce an explanation. Mason (1996) relates this to the data comprising evidence in a verbatim or circumstantial sense, or the data representing evidence of something else in an interpretive or consequential perception. The author's research focuses on applying such ideas as empirical observations, or events, or patterns such that accounts and actions show coherence together with explanations that contribute to the interpretation of meanings and understandings. The author uses the students' Literature Study Circles' discussions and journal writings to interpret multiculturalism, in relation to the categories of content analysis developed by Bean and Rigoni (2001). In taking an interpretative stance, the author is searching for organisable data relevant to interpretive categories or themes.

The data have been woven together throughout the study. Miles and Huberman (1984) maintain that collecting continuous data enables the field worker to work back and forth between contemplating the present and generating strategies for collecting new, and frequently better quality data, as the author has done in this thesis. The author adopted Miles and Huberman's suggestion in continuously sorting his thesis under the modified headings of Bean and Rigoni (2001). In this way he related the thesis question of how the classroom and these particular students embraced the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and ways in which the students were changed as a community of learners through reading multicultural books and group discussions.

In this way it was possible to analyse the students' comments of multiculturalism and related experiences according to the constructs based on Bean and Rigoni (2001) that emerged from of document analysis. The author did not attempt to pre-empt interview outcomes as the students used the audio-tapes themselves without the author interfering. For each student's response a point was given and recorded on the modified scale under subject heading of a classification system that had been modified by the author as presented by Bean and Rigoni (2001). The points awarded to each student for a question or answer under a specific heading were later added to an overall rating that showed how each student responded throughout the year. The students' questions and answers on the transcripts from the audio-tapes became part of the primary source data, as this related to the research question of understanding multiculturalism and interacting in a community of learners.

At first, the author sat on the floor with the students in a semi-circle for the audio-taping sessions. The students conducted the audio-taping as this gave them control of the session and they were responsible for making sure that the audio-taping was responding to their voices. This meant watching the red light on the audio-tape and replacing the battery if the red light on the audio-taping became faint or failed to show that recording were not being made. The audio-tape that was used picked up all the students' spoken words very distinctly.

The adoption of multicultural books that the Literature Study Circles students read provided a sociocultural stance. Hunt and Vipond (1992) state that a sociocultural stance provides a focus for the readers' perceptions of the social content – their purpose for responding, their sense of audience and their conception of their own role and uses of discourse in an event. The readers' conception of relationships between all the authors – actual, speaker and implied – and all the audiences – intended, actual and narrative – may be examined (Booth, 1988). The above would suggest that students are influenced by many aspects of the classroom, such as teacher role, peer interaction, and the nature of the tasks and the demands imposed on them. In this study, the

author is concerned about the students' concept of making multiple responses to their reading without the teacher's or the author's influence.

When the students took complete control of the Literature Study Circles in recording their multicultural book discussions, the author was able to observe and make brief notes of students' interactions in their answers and questions, as well as their body language, which gave further expression to their replies. The author introduces the following extracts to demonstrate how the students as thinkers explored and helped one another, and moved beyond initial understanding. They gave their personal responses as new interpretations broadened their world in interacting with specific texts in dialogue with each other.

Author: Is culture the four F's? (Food, folklore, fabrics and festivals).

Stella: I think that culture is not the four F's because there are so many other things – there is religion, the way people act, their attitudes, there are so many different things that countries have – their culture or ways of doing things – so countries are not just four F's but many more things – there are so many other things in culture.

Maheil: I think culture is more than the four F's – it's not just them but a whole lot more – one big subject in one big category – people have their beliefs, their way of living, their way of thinking, their way of farming – all different in different countries – so culture is not just food, folklore, fabrics and festivals.

Yanka: I don't think that culture is the four F's because the four F's are more than that – such as language the most important – people have to communicate with each other – there are different farming produce, the different ways people think and act, the way the whole community thinks and acts, the way they do things in their own culture that are different to ours.

The above example is an illustration of practical sampling using inductive data gathering. Guba and Lincoln (1986) maintain that the researcher must engage in continuous, inductive, daily analysis so that perception, components of theory, questions, hypotheses and gaps may be found and followed, starting with tomorrow's work.

Summary of data collection and analysis

The data gathering consisted of audio-tapes, students' writing in their journals and field notes. In audio-taping, the author was listening for multiple processes in key and affective impressions that related to content of the research question of multiculturalism. In the students' journals the author was looking for what the students were saying and the trends in what they were saying. An examination of both the verbal and written language used by the children indicates the spontaneity of their oral interactions, with the more reflective aspects of their responses to the literature evident in the writing in their journals. Such differences become apparent in the discussion below. The author's field notes compared what he had observed about behaviour, attitudes and other characteristics with what he had listened to on the audio-tapes. Data analysis next examines the results of audio-taping, students' journals and field notes which were compiled and common responses viewed and listed.

The author worked from verbatim transcripts, personal journals and field notes in writing up reports at the end of each week and reviewing them at the end of each term. This was done to eliminate references to pauses, laughter, hesitations and so on in order to focus on the language itself and ways in which the words the children used addressed the focus of this enquiry, that is, ways in which children take up or otherwise engage concepts of multiculturalism in relation to children's literature texts within a framework of Literature Study Circles. At the beginning of the year, talk in Literature Study Circles had often been dominated by the author. When the students

took control of book discussions, the author as an observer was able to note body language and other gestures the students made in asking or answering questions. How the students challenged one another with cognitive demands and analyses of interpret character, events and issues in order to text was noted. The students made text-reader links when they made connections between the text and real-life experiences on the one hand; and, on the other hand, when they discussed possible meanings, in an endeavour to clarify comments made about the text evaluation.

As previously discussed, Rosenblatt's (1991) efferent and aesthetic approach to reading was invoked in order to clarify the purposes for reading and the manner in which students responded to reading. This was done to demonstrate how the students' responses were interpreted as either tending towards the aesthetic or the efferent on a continuum.

Rosenblatt (1991) defines the term response to literature as a particular kind of experience brought about by the relationship between reader and the text. Rosenblatt (1991) attributes the term aesthetic to emotion in reading to what the words refer to, but mainly to experiencing feeling, thinking, and feeling when something is read. At the same time, the term, efferent reading refers to acquiring information that the readers want to retain after completing reading and refers to non-literary types of reading. Rosenblatt (1991) implies that the term response implies an object and is used in the sense of response to what? She maintains that reading is a transaction of a two way process between reader and text. It is the words that arouse components of memory that activate parts of the consciousness; the text can arouse multiple possibilities and their synthesis into an organized meaning (Rosenblatt, 1991). The aesthetic-efferent response is very subjective and both often merge into one another.

Limits of the study

The author realizes that the problem with any study of the reading of literature is that the observed response is not the same as the internal response. It is only possible to trace and analyse the evidence that the readers are able to show through speech, both oral and written. It can never be the whole realized experience as Crago (1985) explains that some children may always experience difficulty in articulating inner experiences, and interpersonal context cannot but affect the construction and content that the individual reports from his or her inner world.

Another limitation is the number of student participants. As the research involved only six individuals, this prevented the author from having in-depth information about other students in this classroom. In a small group, Edelsky, (1999), Eeds and Wells, (1989), and Peterson & Eeds, (1990) all found that children develop as part of a community, and that they develop and refine responses as they share the interpretation of text with one another and make regular acquaintance with author and illustrators. This gives children the opportunity to read the text and discuss it with others who have chosen the same title. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) found that this kind of discussion is the means for establishing a sense of community as well as developing in the community.

In the next chapter, the author reviews the literature as it pertains to his research in this thesis.

Chapter 4

A Review of the Literature to Inform this Research

Multiculturalism: Policy perspective—assimilation, integration and multiculturalism.

Literature on multiculturalism tends to focus on drawing distinctions between current and earlier policies on migration to Australia. Part of the research question of this thesis dealt with how particular students in a primary school embraced the concepts of multiculturalism and its implied celebration of diversity. This occurred within the wider cultural context. It is, therefore, necessary briefly to review the history of the development of multiculturalism policy in Australia as this was likely to have been reflected in the students' ideas of their multicultural understandings.

Tending to castigate assimilation as counter productive to social cohesion, Grassby (1973; 1974) in effect started a public debate that continued for some years in Australia. Grassby (1973), Minister for Immigration in the Whitlam Government from 1972 to 1975, advocated social interaction in the community as he believed this would be a truly just society where individuals enjoyed freedom and could contribute to the 'family of the nation' (p. 15). Grassby (1974) represented education as a key social institution, expected to play an active part in Australia's development as a multicultural society (see also Victorian Ministry of Education, 1986). In its implementation of multiculturalism, education was recast as multicultural education, to be used as a vehicle to achieve a multicultural society (Kalantzis, Cope, Noble & Poynting, 1990).

The debate occurred because immigration had been a key feature of the Australian social and economic environment since the late 1940s. Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting, (1990) suggest three stages of multiculturalism: in the 1940s as, firstly, assimilation policy, which lasted up to the 1960s; followed by integration, which lasted up until the late 1970s; and since then, multiculturalism.

The Commonwealth and State governments did not make any serious attempt to undertake multicultural programs until the 1970s (Grassby, 1973; 1974), and migrants who settled in Australia in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s were expected to assimilate or melt into mainstream society. Banks (1993: 1994) argues that the melting pot theory that he introduced into the debates surrounding multiculturalism means that migrants would forego their traditional cultural values and accepts mainstream cultural values.

The National Multicultural Advisory Council (1995) stated that since 1947 Australia had received five million migrants from over one hundred countries, many being refugees, of whom more than half were from non-English speaking backgrounds. White (2003) states that the present population of Australia is 19.5 million and that of these, 78 per cent are Australian or British born, with about 40 per cent having at least one person born elsewhere, giving Australia over 100 ethnic groups. The Australian Bureau of Statistics as at the 28th April 2005 gives the resident population as 20,306,636. This study, then, argues that the management of cultural diversity in the classroom, the introduction of a policy of social justice for treatment and opportunity and the provision for students to express their cultural heritage including language and religion are issues that need to be addressed.

The literature on multiculturalism draws attention to the idea that culturally diverse groups enrich a country and that better understanding of people and their differences leads to a cohesive society (Baruth & Manning, 1992; Sleeter, 1996; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Corson, 1998). This view reflects the third stage as posited by Kalanzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting (1990). This thesis has drawn significantly upon the belief that a melting pot ideology would be evident in schools rather than true multiculturalism of the third stage. The author expected to gather data that would show what aspect of multicultural policy would indeed be evident and whether through learning in Literature Study Circles, and multicultural-based literature in particular, there would indeed be a relationship with the political and social implications of multiculturalism as played out within

Australian society. The key questions in this regard are ways in which the school and these particular students integrated concepts of multiculturalism and diversity as considered in their own learning.

Thus this study was drawn into an examination of socio-political contexts of multiculturalism with the aim of generating understanding of important and basic characteristics of multiculturalism such as social justice, anti-racist issues. This required an understanding of the evolution of multiculturalism as a policy of the Commonwealth government. As mentioned earlier, the evolution began under the Whitlam Labour government of 1972 to1975, in response to increasing demands of ethnic minority groups for equal access to economic opportunities, social justice and for recognition of their cultural diversity (Edgar, 1980; Martin, 1981; Birrell & Birrell, 1981; Foster, 1981).

To maintain a social balance between the mainstream group and diverse ethnic minority groups, and avoid social tensions, the Federal and State governments had to support multicultural policies that recognized the maintenance of cultural identity and cultural diversity in a socially cohesive nation. Successive Commonwealth and state governments have had to reconcile policy tensions obtained from the apparent conceptual contradictions of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism, and to allay competing interests in social and economic reforms in adapting policies to meet changing ideologies and circumstances.

From the beginning, education, as an important social institution, has been expected to engage in an active role in developing Australia as a multicultural society (Edgar, 1980; Martin, 1978; 1981). The Commonwealth Government used education as part of its platform in carrying out multicultural policies, even with state governments having the constitutional control of education (Birrell & Birrell, 1981; Foster, 1981; Kalantzis, Cope, Noble & Poynting, 1990). As this study aimed to provide a descriptive account of the ways in which concepts of multiculturalism operated

in the learning of students in one particular classroom, the author drew on much of the literature that deals with increasing cultural diversity in schools.

Nonetheless, the literature leaves the terms multiculturalism and multicultural education as undefined terms, according to Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), because they are misused so frequently and cause so many conflicts that at the end of the twentieth century people using these terms have to describe what they mean. Multicultural education, Baruth and Manning (1992) argue, evolved as individuals found that the melting pot theory was unworkable, and recognized that cultural diversity was to be valued and respected. This involves multicultural education being a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students, and the rejection of racism and other forms of discrimination in schools (Baruth & Manning, 1992).

The literature provides no inclusive definition of the notion of multiculturalism, and its usage is inexact in a wide compass of requirements (Chipman, 1980; Murray-Smith, 1989). The word 'multiculturalism', argue Kalantzis and Cope (1984), was not used until the late 1970s, but they say that today, it is used as a pretence for citizenship, as a brand for some kinds of television, as a welfare class, and in education policy and school curricula.

There are questions that need to be investigated in order to develop a response to the main thesis question. How do students in a community of learners take on the characteristics of understanding multiculturalism? What do these students need to learn and why? How is it known that they understand multiculturalism? It is necessary to follow all the above questions in order to piece together a picture of the implementation of a multiculturalist policy in a classroom. A major consideration, for example, is the very fact of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, commonly called the White Australia Policy, aimed at excluding all non-whites entering Australia (Brown & Morrissey, 1989), with all the racism this implies. It placed a blanket ban on non-white migrants and Asians until it was removed in 1966, but this was not effective until the early 1970s (Martin,

1981). Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting (1990) cite Snedden, who in 1969, as the Liberal Government Minister for Immigration, stated that if Australian immigration inferred a multicultural society, then it was not the type of society Australia required, as Australia needed to be a single or monocultural-society with everyone living in the same manner. The author notes that despite Snedden's (1969) comment, the huge influx of migrants into Australia, and into the workforce and LBOTE students into schools, had already changed the nature of Australia's society.

Assimilation

The research question concerns how a school and particular students embrace the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. The author has already made reference to the research questions that this thesis examines, part of which is the question of how a policy of assimilation developed into one of integration and then into one of multiculturalism. Martin (1981) argues that the absorption of immigrants into the Australian community without recognizing their cultures, values, language and religion are the assimilation policies of the 1950s and 1960s. Martin (1981) takes the position that migrants from the 1940s to the 1960s were called New Australians, and then later, migrants, which immigrants resented, as it is a blanket term that does not recognize their cultural backgrounds or identities. Martin (1978) discusses cultural alternatives: first, there is the assimilation policy of immigrants being absorbed into the Australian community; second, immigrants form national groups of their own; third, immigrants do not associate with their own cultural group or with the cultural values of their adopted country. Martin (1978) cautions that government immigration policies are usually expressed in terms of control and direction over the lives of immigrants.

This study notes that although education is a state matter, the Commonwealth government has indirect control over education policy through money grants to the states. From the 1970s onwards the Commonwealth Government provided money for migration education. Martin (1978; 1981) takes the position that Australia is not a homogeneous society as migrant populations are

segmented into autonomous groups, or splintered into one or two major parts, or merely unorganized beyond the relationship position. The author's Literature Study Circles under consideration may be taken as an example of an integrated group as the students were not expected to act like the mainstream group, but to be able to discuss their cultures as well as the cultures of others as a matter of everyday classroom discourse.

According to Edgar (1980), immigrants are absorbed into assimilation when they accept the culture of the dominant group and reject their own cultures. Edgar (1980) goes on to say that integration happens when immigrants reject assimilation and become integrated with little social change to their culture, values, beliefs and language and are accepted into the dominant community. As part of the focus of this study was to investigate and portray the teaching of multiculturalism, the Literature Study Circles were constructed as ones in which students worked in a mini-society of cultural pluralism as the Circles comprised four LBOTE and two Australian students.

One of the questions asked in this thesis is: Do the students in this program having the opportunity to move in different domains of cultural diversity in order to be better able to understand the society in which they live? Giving the students in Literature Study Circles multicultural books to read, and not prescribing questions for them to answer, facilitating their asking their own questions and seeking their own answers, has given the students the opportunity to engage multiculturalism as it is played out in their classroom in their own ways. In such ways this study has drawn on the literature on multiculturalism policy development to structure the research program.

Multicultural education

The literature explored does not limit itself to multiculturalism as policy, however. It also encompasses discussion of views of multicultural education. The thesis question concerns ways

in which the school and these particular students embraced concepts of multiculturalism and diversity and in the process, ways in which they were changed as communities of learners through literature group discussions and other events in the classroom and the school. The research investigated the need to have a whole school approach that reflected the school ethos that valued multiculturalism. This included anti-racist programs to cope with cultural bias, prejudice, stereotyping, and related materials used in teaching and learning. The literature consulted has argued that schools are important in developing attitudes, values and critical thinking that students are influenced by their teachers in many different ways, and that teachers need constantly to challenge mono-cultural beliefs and practices. Not only this, but the literature also represents school curricula and programmes as including the recognition of LBOTE students' backgrounds as part of the Australian national identity.

The literature canvassed so far has discussed the concepts of multiculturalism, but scholars have not been able to determine a definitive view of multiculturalism (Kalanzis & Cope, 1984; Modgil, Verma, Mallick and Modgil 1986; Murray-Smith, 1989). Modgil, Verma, Mallick and Modgil (1986) argue that, in the 1980s, literature related to multicultural education remained undefined, and implementation of the notion in relation to education was left to the individual to decide the approach to be taken, such as an assimilationist, integrated or changing education for diversity (multiculturalism) approach, regardless of policy statements on the issue.

Corson (1998) makes the point that the different directions of changes in multiculturalism affect multicultural education, as every teaching situation is different, in forming a response to the requirements of students, particularly students from diverse backgrounds. This idea was taken up in this research, in that even on most basic levels of operation, within the Literature Study Circles, the focal process of determining multiculturalism and diversity as part of an education program was dependent on money being available to purchase multicultural books. An important factor that could have affected the results of this research was the school principal's attitude towards multiculturalism. The latter was committed to a program for his school which could create positive

approaches to multiculturalism and diversity through making his teachers aware of the implications of Australia's multicultural society for their classroom practice. The school principal, throughout this research, never refused any request the author made to facilitate the carrying out of this research.

Notwithstanding this principal's attitude, Rizvi (1985) notes the uncertainty and lack of conceptual lucidity in multicultural education in that it allows those involved in education to impose their own views upon others. Rizvi (1986) is concerned that a narrow interpretation of multicultural education fails to promote intercultural understanding, to diminish prejudice and racism, and to give equality of opportunity to minority groups. In taking up such discussions within the literature, the author examined a program aimed at developing a multicultural attitude in one school at least so as to eliminate discrimination and recognize LBOTE students' cultures and through reading multicultural books to show ways in which these are constituted language in Literature Study Circles. The literature reviewed, in its general approaches to multicultural issues, indicates a gap in the knowledge of specific programs and the possibilities that these suggest. This research, then, focused on a particular instance of specific possibilities, and drew on the existing literature to inform the structure of the project. The Literature Study Circles thus became the focal point of this investigation as the author was able to view the students' interaction through the process of symbolic interactionism as a participant observer.

McCreath, (1981) takes the position that teachers have the option of sensitizing the community about living in a multicultural community. McLaren (1995) states that the few individuals doing work in multicultural education in transforming traditional hierarchical connections and redefining the aims of education lack foresight. Kalantzis and Cope (1984) consider the concept of additive models of multicultural education, such as celebrating difference, as ineffective as they do not challenge existing models. Kalantzis and Cope (1984) state that schools' celebration of diversity through multiculturalism is generally expressed through cultural artefacts such as food, dress and

rituals. McLaren (1995) states that educators must understand issues of ethnicity as being about ways in which to cope with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Stoll and Fink (1996) point out that throughout the world schools and societies of which they are a part are confronted with profound changes. This means it becomes the responsibility of principals, teachers and administrators to undertake school innovation. Principals introducing innovation and school effectiveness, according to Fullan (1982), have a powerful influence on the likelihood of change and teachers need both psychological and resources for its implementation. Rief and Heimburger (1996) contend that the education of children is a shared responsibility of teachers, administrators and parents, which suggests teachers have the responsibility for planning and providing a favourable learning environment. The author has drawn on this sort of literature regarding the initiation and management of change in schools in designing this research project.

Groundwater-Smith, Ewing and Le Cornu (2003) use the example of the principal of a small, economically disadvantaged and multiethnic school in England. The high ethnic intakes of students come from such countries as Africa, India and Bangladesh. Although the principal and his staff are highly regarded by the local community, the school community is concerned by the Registered inspector heavily criticizing the school. The inspector fails to comprehend the immediate participants in the life of the school (principal, teachers and parents) and formulates opinions, views on constructs different to that of the school. The example given points up aspects of managing changes in schools in relation to what might be considered bureaucratic interference but this was not a feature that emerged in this project and its focus on change and teacher practice in a multicultural classrooms.

Connell (1971) maintains that the sorts of celebrations described by Kalantzis and Cope (1984) tend to idealize static images of culture that deny the reality of culture as an evolutionary process which reacts with other contexts, such as the culture of the mainstream society. Such

celebrations do not look at multicultural issues embedded in calls for social justice, according to Connell (1971). Drawing on such literature, as well as that of the literature on research and participant observation, the author in this research was able to observe this school's participation in such cultural activities, and to note how effective the activities were in the promotion of multiculturalism in the light of the contributions to the debate such as those of Connell (1971), Kalantzis and Cope (1984) and McLaren (1995).

Connell (1971) argues that the study of education is inexorably related to social change. Connell (1971) lists these changes as social, political, economic and technological, and states that they have taken place in society and thereby affected educational processes. Debus and Sinclair (1971) add that these complex processes not only influence the nature of educational problems that have to be confronted, but resources are needed to cope with educational change. These are educational problems that were recognized in the 1960s and early 1970s in predicting the changes in Australian education, prior to the changes implemented by Grassby (1973; 1974). Connell (1971) refers to the interpenetration of psychological concepts and principles in curriculum planning needed to deal with such problems, yet he makes no reference to migrant problems in schools of this period. The author has found it useful to consult more recent literature to consider pointing to advances made since the early 1970s.

May (1994) takes up the issue in his argument that there is a gap between what multicultural education has promised and what has been delivered. May (1994) states that the current practice, or benevolent multiculturalism as he describes it, places minorities in the mainstream culture's frame of reference. May (1994) highlights the advances made in the recognition of differential performance of disadvantaged groups within education and relates this to class, gender and ethnicity variables. In similar vein, Sleeter (1996) writes that the words, class, gender and ethnicity often relate to multiple types of social oppression. May (1994) sees effective multiculturalism as one that requires organic changes within schools. He states that successful programs depend upon two features: analysis of the expanded social context and the active

involvement of teachers, and administration within the educational process. The author, in taking up the ideas of the lack of advancement in the multicultural education field, has approached his research with the intention of dealing with some of those gaps that the literature has identified.

This thesis takes up the arguments that the key themes of multicultural education are social cohesion, cultural identity and equality needed to form the basis of an ethnically diverse society. However, a review of the literature does suggest that there are misgivings as to the nature of multiculturalism in schools and its implementation as is evident from works such as those of Bullivant, (1980), Kalantzis and Cope (1984), Rizvi (1986), Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) and Corson (1998). Concerns within the literature relate to bilingual education, (however, second language acquisition is not part of the author's thesis). Nonetheless they are to be considered as part of framing the research design and its outcomes, as such issues impact on LBOTE students in becoming bilingual and bicultural as part of their Australian educational experience.

Banks (1994) argues that multicultural education, especially during its formative stages, deals with controversial and politicized matters such as racism and inequality. He challenges established norms, values and beliefs of the mainstream society, pointing out that there is likely to be a strong reaction to change because assimilationists argue that pluralism promotes ethnic conflicts and leads to the dismemberment of the mainstream society. This is perhaps a not surprising argument given the narrow view that assimilationist perspectives provide on the nature of culture and communities.

Multicultural education, Sleeter (1996) maintains, is on the other hand a form of protest against reigning assimilationist methods of schooling, especially in relation to white dominance. Multicultural education, Nieto (1992) argues, must not be considered in a void but as an educational philosophy, which includes giving students the opportunity to improve their educational achievements by providing equality in education, and the opportunity to be critical and resourceful members of a democratic society. Corson (1998) emphasizes the notion that

education implies social justice, critical cultural capital that is ostensibly valued in schools but is not fully shared with students whose cultural background differs from school-recognized standards. Corson (1998) states that when students come to school their culture is not left outside the school gate, because their first culture remains with them throughout their entire life even though they become bicultural as they integrate within the mainstream culture.

Another view on this issue is that of Nieto (1992), who states that multicultural education is a superficial approach to educational failure, rather than a profound engagement with educational issues. This is an important consideration thrown up by this review of the literature because it provides a useful challenge to the relevance of the thesis question in the context of ways in which schools and students may be empowered to embrace concepts of multiculturalism and diversity. The matters and issues discussed in the above research were included in the author's inquiry process that took place over a period of years.

Approaches to multicultural curriculum

The literature relating to teaching approaches in a multicultural curriculum and ways in which these use literature is not inconsiderable and the author has canvassed this in his research. Yenika-Agbaw (1997), for example, argues that students' literature is in a state of uncertainty. The writer recommends three perspectives on a text: pleasure, postcoloniality and critical multicultural. He adopts Rosenblatt's (1978) theory that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text. Yenika-Agbaw (1997) accepts Rosenblatt's (1978) reading of efferent or aesthetic stances complementing each other; the first to acquire information and the second for personal meaning or pleasure. However, Yenika-Agbaw (1997) takes the position that aesthetic reading for pleasure does not assist readers to identify happenings in books, question ideologies in stories, nor inform readers how this affects their daily lives.
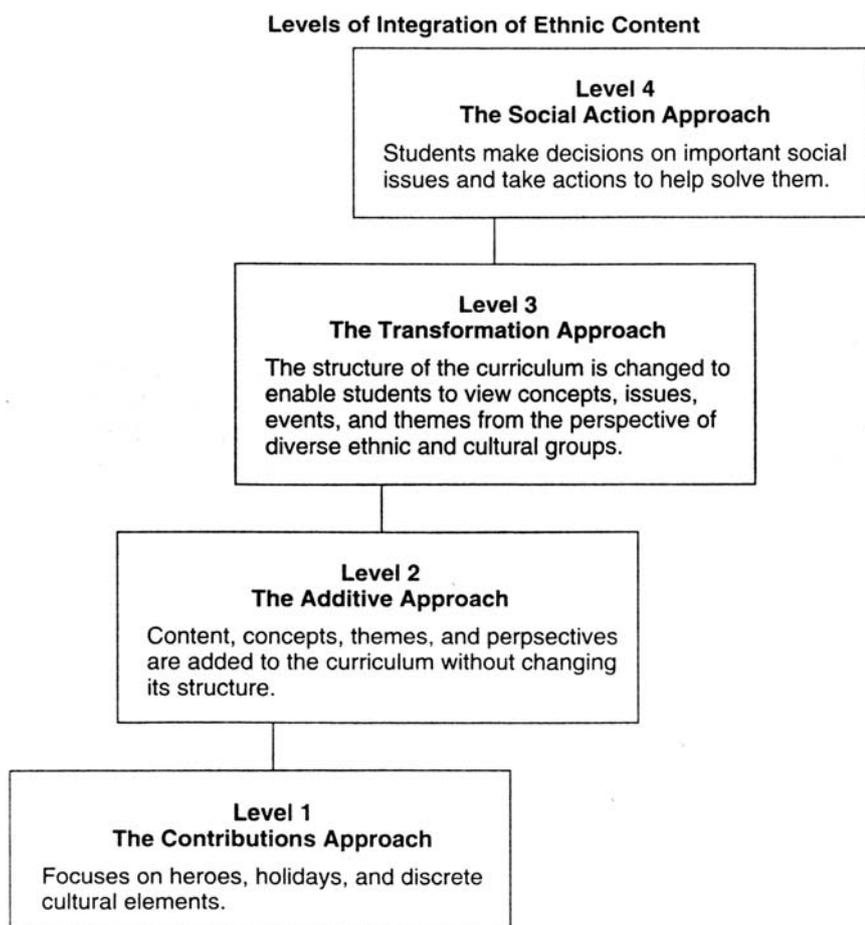
The work of this thesis was informed by the extensive body of Rosenblatt's work (see for example 1978), and the author examined literature was similarly informed. Yenika-Agbaw (1997) stresses that Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading transactions must be reinforced with readings that propagate social change, arguing that this gives readers the opportunity to ask questions about issues and concepts they encounter within their texts. This thesis similarly adopts such ideas as critical multiculturalism as expounded by Yenika-Agbaw (1997) in that critical multiculturalism concerns authors of defined ideologies which can shape meanings of readers; readers need to be aware of such ideologies of dominance embedded in text.

Allen (1997) is concerned about social justice and equity in a primary classroom and cites Delpit (1988, cited in Allen 1997) as stating that it is within the power of educators and curriculum developers to determine the world view presented to children. Likewise, Spencer (1983, cited in Allen 1997), argues that schools, as social institutions, where they do not engage specific social and cultural values, result in the take up of traditional values, and hence more non-traditional beliefs and values remain misunderstood. Like Aboud (1989), Allen (1997) understands that children as young as four years of age are aware of physical characteristics associated with race and gender, and can differentiate between groups and define characteristic stereotypes attributed to these groups. Further, when children enter school they begin to adopt attitudes which are reflected in their development and views towards different ethnic groups.

The author's research relates to application of ideas such as suggested by Banks (1994), that is, that multiculturalism and multicultural education ought to be divided into four stages according to the children's psychological and cognitive development (see Chapter 5). The author follows Allen's (1997) argument that children are aware that in society some groups are valued more than others and that a status quo classroom contains teaching materials that influence children's values and attitudes. What is needed is an innovative curriculum, Allen (1997) argues, with a proactive role in affirming positive social and cultural identity of all students and allowing them to challenge and examine their environment and the world. It is an issue taken up in this research,

for the author has used reader response theory (discussed in detail below) to explore ways in which children understand multiculturalism in developing attitudes, gender, values and beliefs of ethnic groups, as part of a multicultural curriculum based on Literature Study Circles.

Banks (1994) offers four levels of integration of multicultural content into a primary school curriculum program.

Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content

Level 4
The Social Action Approach
Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them.

Level 3
The Transformation Approach
The structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

Level 2
The Additive Approach
Content, concepts, themes, and perpsectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure.

Level 1
The Contributions Approach
Focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements.

From Banks (1994) p. 104.

Banks (1994) argues that the four levels of multiculturalism need to be implemented into the curriculum at the children's age level of understanding. Diverse ethnic groups within a society are frequently influenced by happenings and perceive and react to them differently. Banks and McGee Banks (1993) argue that one of the aims of a multicultural curriculum is to present to

children new ways of observing or studying the history and culture of ethnic groups and their contributions to society. Ethnic groups within society are not necessarily monolithic or homogeneous and in designing a multicultural curriculum the psychological needs and characteristics of ethnic group members and their rising status and changing ethnic identities must be considered. These factors are often the basis of many themes in literature and this is another reason why they are considered in the author's project.

May (1994), at the multi-ethnic and indigenous Richmond Road School (an urban primary school) in Auckland, New Zealand, used ethnographic methods to determine the gap between what multiculturalism promised and what it delivered in a three year long study. May was concerned with the current practice of benevolent multiculturalism being inserted into the dominant culture. The majority of students at Richmond Road School represented a cultural minority in the overall population in New Zealand society. The previous principal (from 1972-1988) of the primary school had introduced structural diversity at the forefront of educational theory and the recognition of power relations in multiculturalism. Richmond Road School started to place distinct emphasis on cultural pluralism, cultural maintenance and access to power. The power knowledge of the primary school related to sharing knowledge. The school principal expected his staff to learn theory as the basis for their practice of multiculturalism. This study did not use literature as part of the shared knowledge. There seems to be a need to find out if doing so would have promoted change to an even greater extent as this study will endeavour to investigate.

May (1994) acknowledges the difficulties of combining theory and practice, but strongly favours the practice of theory. Without understanding the theoretical knowledge, changes cannot be made to be effective in multicultural education, particularly in providing accounts of minority groups in schooling that recognize existing power relations. Nieto (1992) argues that a judicial purpose approach to multicultural education is clearly acceptable pedagogy. May (1994) demonstrates that the structural reform of the total school environment, as happened at

Richmond Road School, provides a model in implementing an effective approach to multicultural education.

Spiegel (1998) maintains that reader response theory approaches to literature used for the past decade give children the opportunity to choose their own reading and not reading as dictated by the teacher. However, Spiegel (1998) is cautious about concluding that reader response does not necessarily mean that all children respond in the same manner, or their ability to respond to literature or their ability in reading. Spiegel (1998), like Yenika-Agbaw (1997), acknowledges the work of Rosenblatt (see for example 1978) in influencing reader response theory as part of the transaction between the reader and the text. This depends upon the way the reader responds to the text and constructs meaning. The author adapted Rosenblatt's reading response continuum (see Chapter 5) to record the students' responses to aesthetic reading, as in enjoyment or experience of the text, to efferential reading, to find information from the text. The author adopted this attitude as his position in this thesis is that, in responding to texts, the students in the Literature Study Circles of the project decided which approach to take. No instructions were ever given to the students about how they ought to respond to text.

As Spiegel (1998) emphasizes, meaning formerly resided in the text but in today's approach, meaning is constructed, interpreted and revised by the readers. Spiegel (1998) notes that students who respond in peer discussion, as in this thesis in Literature Study Circles, or respond in journals, are able to move to higher levels of thinking. Galda (1992, cited in Spiegel 1998), argues that discussion groups allow students to use emerging skills and strategies at a higher level of thinking in a secure environment. It is in journal writing, Adams (1987, cited in Spiegel 1998), says that the reader's written response becomes an additional author of the text.

This is a position also adopted by the author in this research in that the students in the Literature Study Circles, after their discussion of a multicultural book, wrote freely in their journals. In addition, the students, of their own volition, could discuss their journal writing in the Literature

Study Circles without fear of ridicule. The Literature Study Circles included this aspect and its implications as characterizing the selected community of learners. The literature, particularly in the works of Allen (1997), Spiegel (1998) and others suggest indirect support for the author's argument that without teacher hindrance, students enhance their ability to discuss and to respond to literature in complex and sophisticated ways, and by doing so develop an ability to monitor their own reading and their own learning.

Huck (1992) takes up this point, and advocates the use of literature in the curriculum, giving the example of a comprehensive literature program as one that permeates the curriculum. It is one where teachers read aloud to their children while giving children a choice of real books for their own reading. The objective of such a program, according to Huck (1992) is to produce children who know how to read but who also become readers in the sense of readers of literature. This is the sort of literature program that the author has adopted upon in establishing the protocols for Literature Study Circles, having given students the choice of books for discussion.

Gavelek and Raphael (1996) discuss ways in which theoretical perspectives on how and why different ways of talking about text can be very important for learning to read literature. This contribution has informed the research. Gavelek and Raphael (1996) argue it is of critical importance to give students the opportunity to engage in talk about text either in a whole class situation or in small groups, such as Literature Study Circles, or in writing in their journals. Traditional theories of learning meant knowledge corresponds to the world as it really is, but on the other hand a social constructivist perspective views knowledge as constructed collaboratively by individuals in discussion and in interpretation with other individuals (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996).

This perspective would encourage students to explore a wide variety of possible interpretations with other students in reading and responding to text. Gavelek and Raphael (1996) maintain that a Book Club may comprise a whole grade or a small group (as in this thesis, Literature Study

Circles) where students may respond to text in different ways; personal response, or personal response to issues or ideas, or evaluation of the authors' craft. The latter may be an effective teaching strategy. A more intimate grouping, Gavelek and Raphael (1996) argue, may be conducted, again as in Literature Study Circles, in which the teacher may or may not take part in the interactions of students' responses to literature. Students' individual learning, as portrayed by Gavelek and Raphael (1996) takes place in the classroom as a result of social interactions with various individuals. In their conclusion, Gavelek and Raphael (1996) present the dichotomy of teacher control versus student control and whole class or small group approaches.

In this thesis the author has already referred to his students in the Literature Study Circles preferring to control their own group activities. This provided him with another window to view how the students took control of their own learning and was responsible for their learning outcomes.

In their research, Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999) are concerned with children's talk in literature groups, such as Literature Study Circles. They analyse transcripts of children engaged in conversation about literature and how they construct and negotiate meaning through talk. What emerges from their study is the realization that the children were imitating the teacher's talk because teachers are high profile participants in many events and issues in the classroom and set the tone and direction for many literacy happenings.

Rowe (1998, cited in Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford 1999) explains that observing teachers' practices, habits and foibles is the least aspect of examination in the research literature. Another study (Barnes, 1992) argues that a basic practice of teachers is to talk before, during and after literacy happenings. As well, Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999) cite Vygotsky (1978) as saying that children internalize social interaction patterns as sociocognitive methods which they use when approaching text and reading happenings.

To find out the importance of talk in literacy events, Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999), set up two teams of literature groups, such as Literature Study Circles, to compare the talk occurring in both teams, one with teachers and the other without teachers. Each group contained four to five students, aged nine to eleven, who volunteered to read and discuss a picture book dealing with social issues of prejudice and racism. The volunteers were a diverse group and each period lasted thirty minutes and was audio taped. The outcome revealed the group with a teacher as facilitator to push children's thinking dominated talk and in many instances deviated from discussion from the book and discussed important life issues and not literacy talk. This prevented children pursuing their own agendas and issues as in Literature Study Circles. Also, in the teacher present group, the children focused on the teacher and in their eagerness to attract the teacher's attention often talked over one another.

When the teacher was absent the children began to listen more carefully to each other. One teacher reported that when she spent time with the literature group (Literature Study Circles) she was distracted by other events in her classroom and tended to hasten the group and dominate proceedings. In the group without a teacher, the students focused on their discussions in profitable ways and discussed issues related to the book and to their own lives and thought through these concepts. The students developed their own starting strategies to begin book discussions, developed sharing connections, experiences, and opinions, and asked questions which encouraged others to participate or others to extend their answers. None of the students took on the role of facilitator but practised turn-taking behaviour so no one dominated proceedings. Even a literature study group that struggled was able to maintain a flow on discussion, develop their own strategy and still be productive.

Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999), through their research into literature study groups became aware how their talk and social interaction influenced students' discussion. They observed that both ways assisted students' growth as thinkers and readers of literature. The author notes that the research of Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford (1999) operated on

a basis similar to his own. What is different, however, is the fact that the author had a quite specific research question to explore in the form of ways in which a school and the particular students studied at this school embrace the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and the ways the students changed as community of learners through group discussions and other events in the school and classroom. The author has taken note of the Short, Kaufman, Kaser, Kahn and Crawford's (1999) research, particularly as it appears that students left to their own devices and not hindered by the teacher's presence operate more successfully as readers and thinkers. As the study progressed, the author observed his students as an observer participant, gradually withdrawing his presence as the Literature Study Circles developed protocols for their operation and children took on increasing responsibility for their activities. In doing this, the author was also able to learn to think in new ways about talk, teaching and students.

There seemed a necessity to question whether Literature Study Circles would facilitate the enabling of students to view concepts, issues, event and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. This was important because there is little in the literature that investigates multicultural content of curriculum.

In the next chapter, the author explores the data that has been generated by the research and provides an analysis of this same data.

Chapter 5

Symbolic Interactionism and Multicultural Literature in Literature Study Circles

Dealing with the Data

The present study explores reader response patterns and discussions produced by six students reading multicultural books based on the concept of such books offering a context in which issues of power and identity can be explored in a critical fashion (Luke, 2000, cited in Bean & Rigoni, 2001). A Literature Study Circles is a vehicle for the six students aged between eleven and twelve to discuss and reflect on social justice issues and dilemmas that confront characters in books with some multicultural themes.

The author reviews first Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories, second Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferent continuum and third the students' written journals. Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories and Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferent continuum were used by the author to explore the students' responses in the Literature Study Circles. The written journals deal with multicultural literature the students had read as well as their discussions in Literature Study Circles. In the reading of multicultural literature, the students' world of books and their characters were concerned with personal struggles, ethnic and cultural issues. The students saw characters confronted with conflicting norms and expectations; the students saw characters deal with developing understandings of race, or identity, or culture, or assimilation, or integration, or separation, or all of these.

When the author analysed the data relating to issues and matters that arose in Literature Study Circles discussions, the data were labelled under subject headings. These subject headings

initially conformed to Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories. However, it was found that Bean and Rigoni's (2001) classifications were a starting point only for the analysis of the talk of the six students involved in this study. The patterns that emerged from the students' talk were different in some respects largely because Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories were developed to enable them to explore the book, *Buried Onions* (Soto, 1997), and the explorations of its literary dimensions by adult students. As the author was using multicultural books for primary school students, aged between eleven and twelve years of age, he found it necessary to adapt Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories appropriately for this age requirement.

Table 1.

Bean and Rigoni's content analysis categories

Category	Examples
1. Societal conditions	'Those bad neighbourhoods are like that….'
2. Academic mode	'It's good you were able to identify Eddie as the main character….'
3. Ethical considerations	'Eddie did not do a good thing when he did not tell Mr Stiles about the stolen truck'
4. Institutional racism	'They probably would have thought he stole the truck….'
5. Characters alive	'I didn't like the little boy on the tricycle because he appeared to be a snob….'
6. Individual resistance	'Because if it was me, I would try real hard to be different so that I could be somebody and have something….'
7. Literary evaluation	'I like the book….'
8. Character empathy	'I know how --- feels….'
9. Personal choices	'I want to make the right choice….'
10. Interpretive disagreement	'I don't agree….'
11. Artistic interpretation	'These drawings indicate I think each character looks alike….'
12. Mutual and peer support	'I really like your insights….' 'I usually talk to my friends when I have a problem.'

Table 2

The author's adapted content analysis categories based on Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories.

Category		Examples
Dramatic experience:	**Yanka**:	He was traumatized by leaving his own culture and coming to another – he was shocked when his parents died when he was very young coming to Australia.
Family separations:	**Stella**:	If I was Lindy in the book I would feel torn between the family that brought me up and the one who was with me as I was being born. It would be even harder if they asked you to come back with them even though you want to be your birth family, you still have the family who have seen more of you at home. (Extract from Journal).
Individual resistance:	**Essa**:	The thing was post-traumatic stress which is the doctor's fancy way of saying – you are so shocked by everything – that you are finding it hard to cope.
Literature evaluation:	**Essa**:	There was a lot of culture in this book because the way people look like in the picture – what they wear, their religion, and sayings – their culture would be different from Australia.
Personal & intertextual:	**Ky**:	In 1967 when Roald Dahl wrote this story they expected children to do their chores and stuff – like my mum says to me – in my age it was harder because we didn't have all this modern stuff.
Interpretive	**Maheil**:	The world is now multiculture and racism, prejudice

disagreement:		and stereotyping should not be allowed – multiculture makes us all happy.
Institutional racism:	**Essa**:	I reckon that it's silly not saying sorry because all the other countries will not think much of us because the way we treated the Aborigines.
Individual decisions:	**Ky**:	I would not have done what the people done in this book. But I think if you believe in something to keep on going until you get there. Like Will did. (Extract from Journal).
Gender:	**Tony**:	A friend of mine who has three children stays at home looking after the house and children and his wife goes out to work – that's all right as men can do these things.
Engendered culture:	**Stella**:	You are born to survive your instincts – culture you learn and it depends on your surroundings.

The author uses the adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories to evaluate the students' discussion responses in Literature Study Circles. The evaluation awarded one point for each student's response including either a question or an answer. The adaptation by the author of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories was used to classify the students' discussion responses in Literature Study Circles.

Rosenblatt's response categories

Another feature by which to explore reader response patterns in regard to multicultural books that the students read in Literature Study Circles was found in the work of Rosenblatt (1991). Rosenblatt (1991) argues that, whatever the text, there may be more than one purpose for

reading, and hence more than one response to that reading. Rosenblatt (1991) does not consider the text as literary or informational, efferent or aesthetic, but as being written for a particular attitude or stance, and thus calling up efferent or aesthetic responses to that text on the part of the reader. This argument suggests that the reader adopts a reading stance in response to the present purpose of the text and the reading of it, as well as that reader's past experiences. The reader draws on past experiences to construct new meanings produced in a transaction with the text, and this passes to the next reading stance.

Further, Rosenblatt (1991) refers to reading as a transaction and suggests an efferent-aesthetic reader response continuum where there is always a mixture of public and private elements present. The public aspect referred to is that of efferent reading (information and facts) and the private aspect is aesthetic (thinking and feeling), but each stance involves a mix of the two. Rosenblatt (1991) states that all responses to readings have this sort of mix.

The purpose of including the work of Rosenblatt (1991) in this section of the thesis was to explore a particular feature of students' responses to reading, as part of an efferent-aesthetic continuum. In using the term response, Rosenblatt (2001) argues that this implies an object and the question: response to what? As previously discussed, Rosenblatt (2001) represents reading is as a transaction, a two way process involving reader and text. This concept was adopted by the author as a basis for the Literature Study Circles, where students were involved with their discussion of multicultural books. The students as readers discussed their own past experiences, their understandings of world events and issues, and brought these aspects of their responses to their reading to the forefront.

Within this framework the author used Rosenblatt's (2001) efferent-aesthetic continuum to classify the total number of students' responses. The responses were grouped according to the author's classification of their intensity. The total number of students' responses on a plotted scale of efferent-aesthetic continuum represents the extent of students' involvement in their

development of transactional activities with regard to the multicultural texts read. This involved plotting the students' stance on a Rosenblatt-like continuum appropriate to the particular purposes for engaging with particular texts (see adaptation of Rosenblatt's continuum later in this Chapter). Using the efferent and aesthetic constructs of students' responses, then, the author was able to explore transactional situations that were the focus of this thesis in following students' responses to their explorations of multiculturalism in multicultural books.

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism was one of the major theoretical perspectives used in this thesis. Symbolic interactionism was used because it is related to the interaction of people in their daily life. The interactions of a group of six students in a small group provided such daily life interaction. Symbolic interactionism was therefore used to analyse the interactions of six students aged between eleven and twelve years of age, in small groups engaged in discussions of multicultural books in Literature Study Circles.

The interactions were recorded by the students on an audio-machine, later transcribed by the author to determine the extent of the interaction. In the interaction within Literature Study Circles, the six students interpreted or defined each other's actions or responses as part of reacting to each other's actions. The students' responses were not limited or restrained by the actions of one another but were determined by the meaning that they attached to each and all of their actions. In the process of continual interpretation, the students' interactions served as a definition of that meaning. The process then became a stimulus to an interpretive response which then stimulated another interpretive response in a spiral of meaning making activity.

Multicultural literature and multicultural identity

Multicultural literature as discussed in this thesis provides a context in which issues of dominance and identity and the value of human diversity can be investigated in a critical fashion. Trends in multicultural literature indicate a growing concern regarding difficulty with ethnic and cultural identity, and identity interpretation conflicting with the cultural norms of mainstream culture as they play out in forms of assimilation, or integration, or separation. This was discussed earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 4, for example). Johnson and Smith (1993) maintain it is in the discussions that occur in the context of multicultural literature that researchers are offered the possibilities of bringing to the surface unexpressed fears, xenophobia and other assumptions about culture, class, gender and power which may then be recognized and addressed. Diamond and Moore (1995) explain that multicultural literature presents multiple interpretations and considerations of social justice matters, a challenge which the diverse group of six students studied in this thesis took up, especially in relation to accepted concepts of mainstream Australian culture. Diamond and Moore (1995) argue that students' engagement with the literature that they read plays an essential role in society, as students' attitudes, values and beliefs are formed to a great extent by their reading; this same reading motivates their thinking as literature assists them to understand their own lives. The author's work was informed by such research, as literacy and academic achievement were linked in this project as part of multicultural education. This project constructed equity issues to assist students to explore their own cultures and contribute to their intercultural understanding, as suggested by research in the field (Chapter 3).

The selected students read and evaluated literature. Through this medium they comprehended the stories of others and learn to accept the diversity of their classroom and their environment. Baruth and Manning (1992) argue that in the mid-1960s books on culturally diverse topics and experiences were hurriedly conceived to meet new market consumers of a burgeoning multicultural society, but that they were written by Anglo-American authors and mirrored Anglo concepts, whereas in the late 1960s and early 1970s children's literature emerged as mirroring more of the actualities of a multiracial society. Luke and Freebody (1997) take the position that practices of reading have changed in regard to cultural, economic and social developments; that previous literature was formed on models of social order and ways in which the literate person ought to conform to prevailing social order. According to Riffaterre (1995) the text is the literature, and the author's absence from the text means no further alteration can be made; the text is ahistorical and its interest lies beyond all contexts. This thesis is premised on the idea that students in Literature Study Circles develop critical reading skills through comparing and contrasting multicultural books on topics such as race, racism, bias, prejudice, discrimination, equal opportunity, background, gender, class, ethnicity and culture. In engaging such literature, students are encouraged to identify with characters like themselves and to empathize with those who come from cultures different from their own.

Besley (1988) suggests that a pre-requisite for teachers in undertaking a multicultural literacy program is that they deconstruct the myth that Australia is a homogeneous society and that the purpose of such deconstruction is to enable them to examine the processes by which books are produced. This concept was informed of this project as cultural diversity and was explored in multicultural literature in ways that diverge from the prevalent stance of mainstream culture. It is the author's belief that books ought to present a comprehensive concept of many cultures and lifestyles connected to desires, needs and institutions where all humans interact. In this thesis, students dealing with diversity and contemporary issues that occur through multicultural fiction means that students are dealing with issues of social change. Real life issues and attitudes of stereotyping and prejudice are confronted through the face to face experience with fictional

characters. In this way students develop freedom from bigotry in vicarious experiences through multicultural books.

In the contemporary world of instant communication and almost instant transportation, students need a global view of literature, for and about all minority groups according to Banks and McGee Banks (1993). Banks and McGee Banks (1993) argue that this necessitates crossing cultural borders, becoming involved in cultural conflict and learning about conflict resolution - issues which the students in this project debated and negotiated in order to achieve and value understanding of cultural diversity. This thesis agrees with Wurzel (1988) that cultural conflict occurs when there is a misinterpretation of cultural patterns of information, or when different perceptions of reality are misunderstood. This can happen at students' levels of communication in reading, writing or conversation. The purpose of this project was to explore sociocultural approaches to literacy through multicultural books within a community of learners. As Cairney and Ruge (1998) state, literacy has many structures, proposals and contexts which are applied by people in different ways. Therefore acquiring a sociocultural approach to learning and literacy necessitates abandoning individual learning and introducing learning as a process of participation in a community of practice (Moll, 1993 cited in Cairney & Ruge 1998). In addition, symbolic interactionism assists in analysing ways in which the students are constantly engaged individually or collectively in social interaction: this involves thinking, interpreting and creating meaning for the actions or gestures of others and responding according to those interpretations.

Meek (1989) argues that learning to read a book is not the same as the recognition of words on a page; that learning to read involves the reader in becoming the story teller (asserting the narrator's view and voice) and being the recipient (receiver of the story, the interpreter). These two features Meek (1989) defines as a form of symbolic interactionism which students learn very early as readers. Moje (1996) defines observation as something that is noticed and inferred as an interpretation of an observation. Moje's (1996) definition of literacy includes reading, writing,

speaking and listening, and is embedded in the practice of a sociocultural perspective. Thus literacy is a social construction that happens in particular contexts for particular purposes.

These views on reading have been incorporated in this thesis as part of an interpretive study of the practices that contextualize literary processes within the everyday lives of people as to their emotions, beliefs, and their capacity for subjectivity. This thesis has drawn extensively on theories of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1962,1969; Woods, 1983, 1986, 1996; Moje, 1996; May, 1994, 1999), as a theoretical perspective in sociology that focuses on the manner that individuals, through their interpretations of social situations and behavioural discussions with others create meaning through social interaction (see also Chapter 2). Through cooperative learning, groups concentrate not on the individual, but on the group, as Foster (1992, cited in Cairney & Ruge, 1998), argues, this situation is more appropriate with the values and cultural standards of disadvantaged students, providing them with a common social context as the competitive element is replaced by the group sharing ideas and assisting one another.

The following section outlines students' responses to works of fiction and non-fiction in multicultural children's literature. The responses are rated in two forms: one rating is based on an adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferential continuum; the second is based on an adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories. All references are based on the author's adaptation of these categories previously discussed. First, Literature Study Circles are dealt with as these illustrate how the students collaborated in their learning experiences as part of a process of constructing and organizing their actions without the author's interference. Students' journal writings are another way in which students took responsibility for their own learning and participated in their own decision making processes. The students' writings were not assessed by the author for academic purposes such as grammar or style, as the intention of this research was to analyse students' responses to multicultural literature in relation to the children's emotions, concepts and thoughts.

Students' work

The following indicates the books that were engaged by the children and the order in which they engaged them in the course of the project. The children refer to these books in their discussions in the Literacy Study Circles and their journals:

Book 1. Caswell, B. (1994). *Lisdalia*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Book 2. Utemorrah, D. (1992). *Do not go around the edges: Poems.* Broome: Magabala Books.

Book 3. Browne, A. (1986). *Piggybook*. London: Julia MacRae Books.

Book 4. Hamilton, V. (1993). *Anthony Burns: The defeat and triumph of a fugitive slave.* New York: Alfred A. Knop Publishers.

Book 5. Haviland, V. (1974). *The fairy tale treasury.* Puffin Books: Ringwood, Victoria.

Book 6. City Possum. (1984). *A reader in the Learning English in Australia Series* (Report). Canberra: Department of Education and Youth Affairs for Migrant Education.

Book 7. White, E. B. (1963). *Charlotte's web*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Book 8. Orr, W. (1995). *Yasou Nikki*. Pymble: Angus & Robinson.

Book 9. Caswell, B. (1995). *Maddie*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Book 10. Dahl, R. (1967). *Charlie and the chocolate factory*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Book 11. Coerr, E. (1981). Sadako and the thousand paper cranes. Rydalmere: Hodder.

Book 12. Oswald, D. (2000). *The redback leftovers*. Ringwood: Puffin Books.

Book 13. Brooksbank, A. (1985). *On loan*. Ringwood: Puffin Books.

Book 14. Coerr, E. (1995). *Mieko and the fifth treasure*. Sydney: Margaret Hamilton Books.

Book 15. Heffernan, J. (2000). *More than gold*. Hunters Hill: Margaret Hamilton Books.

Given the sorts of theoretical perspectives that the author brought to his research, the analysis of the students' work is consistent with applications of multicultural thinking within the context of children's literature. Kaser and Short (1998) argue that students' dialogues arise out of connections to literature in the classroom context, where students are encouraged to conduct their lives and cultural identities. They argue that literature discussions enable students to view perspectives of their own culture and the culture of others from a world view.

The interchanges (Playground mates, Indigenous Australians, gender, multiculturalism, Moslem religion, culture and the four F's and culture as innate or learned) are taken from discussions

about multicultural literature that the students read. (Synopses of the texts are not given, but their content and concerns may be seen in the children's discussions as transcribed). Drawing on the work of Daniels (1994), the author audiotaped what the students said when required to talk aloud.

Random samples of the students' work through the year are included in this thesis taken from audio-taping in Literature Study Circles discussions. A number of different aspects and contexts have been included to illustrate ways in which the students read, discussed and wrote, integrating their understanding of experience and ideas. This exercise is consistent with aspects of symbolic interactionism. The students talked openly and confidently about their readings of particular books; written journals show ways in which students made connections with the texts, and ways in which they arrived at their own understandings.

The interchanges show the striving of the students to understand multicultural terms and concepts as they give comprehensive descriptions of features under study. The examples given of Literature Study Circles by the students through their discussions and written journals indicate a measure of the maturity, depth, commitment, variety and understanding they are developing around multiculturalism and associated issues. We see the students accepting the responsibility of planning their own learning outcomes, operating as a cohesive group within a community of learners.

Book 1: Playground mates

Author   What is the problem if you say to someone, 'I don't want to play with you because you are from Africa, from Japan, from Germany, or from Malaysia'?

Maheil   You would be a racist

Essa   Racists are bad.

Ky.   That's not good because you are teasing them.

Yanka   Like Pauline Hanson.

Tony.   It's assaulting our country.

Stella.   And they might have different skin to us but you can still play with

them even if they talk differently.

Ky.   Don't tease them and don't be nasty – if they have not played the

game before – help them be good.

The interchange shows how students understand racism in a multicultural situation, relating to some of the multicultural stories such as *Lisdalia* (Caswell, 1994). This passage evinces engagement with racism, reference to a specific political figure, a sense of Australian-ness and their place in 'our country', and a major feature of the school world as far as the students themselves are concerned: the playground. For instance, in reply to the author's question Maheil states, 'You would be a racist', to which Essa replies, 'Racists are bad,' and Ky adds, 'That's not good because you are teasing them'. Bilton et al (1996) argue that symbolic interactionism is the essence of human interaction, saying that it is very personal and subjective, which is illustrated by Yanka referring to political concepts as embodied in a political figure, 'Like Pauline Hanson'. Symbolic interactionism is an independent process of meaning making of the sort indicated as Tony comments, 'It's assaulting our country', and Stella gives a personal explanation of racism, 'And they might have different skin to us but you can still play with them even if they talk differently'. The interchanges between the students are an example of the ways in which a focus on symbolic interactionism by the author presents a context in which the meaning making of each individual student may be teased out for careful consideration. This example shows how the author focused his analysis on the material generated in this research.

What is more, the interchange suggests that an engagement with semi-fictional genres of Children's Literature, in this case myths and legends, may induce similar responses in the students. In this case the students engaged with the semi-fictional genre of myths and legends, the type categorized by the author in his adaptation of Bean and Rigoni (2001) as the students' discussion ranged from categories of Literature Evaluation (Item 4) to Institutional Racism (Item

7). A range of feelings, from outrage to forms of injustice encountered, to informational responses to new knowledge, could also be identified using Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic – efferential concepts.

Book 2: Indigenous Australians

Students' discussions on this topic were not limited to abstract conceptualizations of Aboriginality in Australia. The interchange below is another representation of symbolic interactionism.

Ky   What is reconciliation?

Yanka   Where the normal Australians and Aborigines get on with each other.

Tony   For the whole reconciliation I think forgiveness and being able to communicate together as one.

Maheil. Reconciliation is when you have done something wrong and you're not very, very happy you want to reconciliate and want to be friends again.

Essa   Reconciliation is like President Clinton trying to bring Israel and Palestine together – finding an agreement.

Stella   The problem with the Aboriginal question is that people from England came to Australia and took over the Aboriginal land and many were killed – now Australia like is not being fair – that's what the Aboriginals think – now they want to be equal.

Tony   I think we have to apologize – haven't we got to say sorry – the Prime Minister won't.

Maheil. That word Yes, I think the Prime Minister said sorry but he didn't say instead he used another word.

Ky   Regret.

Stella   But isn't that the same as sorry?

Yanka   I think it was the fat guy who said sorry?

T**ony**   You mean Kim Beasley.

Stella   He said it but the Prime Minister didn't.

Maheil.   He said like he would accept the Aboriginals were treated badly in the past but he won't say sorry as it happened a long time ago.

Essa   Say regret rather than sorry as it happened a long time ago – it wasn't in his time – he didn't actually cause the problem.

Yanka   I think he is actually saying no because he didn't start that – he has to finish it even though if he is in that line of government – he can't say sorry for something he didn't do – what someone else has done.

Tony   He is saying sorry for the whole country for what people have done before.

Essa   I reckon that it's silly not saying sorry because all the other countries will not think much of us because the way we treated the Aboriginals.

Yanka   They were the first people her and the real Australians.

Tony   I reckon he is being racist by not saying sorry even if he wasn't involved – there are some old people still involved – he would probably be saying sorry for them and not the people who are dead and saying nothing and leaving people with guilty consciences.

This interchange was based on an important event in Indigenous Australian history that of reconciliation, born of engaging with a number of short stories based on Indigenous Australian life. The students discussed the problem in a factual way in developing the theme, and opened up a number of the focus points in a continuous manner, showing an interest as to overall solutions in historical and political terms relating this problem to world, people and events. The discussion opens with a reason given for non-Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australians not getting on with each other. There is a suggestion that the problem would be solved if there were forgiveness and communication with each other as Tony suggests. Maheil defines reconciliation as, 'When you have done something wrong and you're not very, very happy you want to be friends again'. Essa extends the definition of reconciliation by using a political analogy to position reconciliation in world political terms taking in President Clinton of the United States of

America and the reconciliation negotiations between two warring sides in the Israeli and Palestine conflict. Stella argues the colonial historical episode of English people landing in Australia and giving no understanding of the Indigenous Australians is noted as the cause of the problem and, 'Now they want equality'.

The students, having read fictional works, enter the current political arena and consider that an apology ought to be given. This starts a discussion on 'regret' replacing 'sorry', which the Australian Prime Minister had refused to give. The discussion then centres on which politician said sorry, perhaps 'the fat guy' who Tony identifies as Kim Beasley. This shows that the students are aware of and, in their own manner, know something about politics, especially with the remark declaring that a person cannot say sorry for something they did not commit. Yet the discussion has been prompted by a reading of fictional works such as *Do not go around the edges* (Utemorrah, 1992). Symbolic interactionism relates here to the interaction order of daily life and experiences, rather than the structures concerned with large scale and mainly fixed social forces and laws. Essa takes up the argument, 'Say regret rather than sorry as it happened a long time ago – it wasn't in his time – he didn't actually cause the problem'. Yanka supports this statement, while Essa is concerned with Australia's international image. The students show further insight when the treatment of Indigenous Australians is regarded as racist and is reflected as such to the rest of world. Tony concludes the discussion with a moral concern for the Prime Minister.

The debate by the students brings up moral issues of racism and guilt as well as that of death. The views the students expressed are the sorts of human interactions that symbolic interaction theory identifies as implying a sense of social order, shown as the students negotiated their concepts and understanding of the political situation and history of Australia. The use of the word 'normal' by Yanka in the opening of this discussion suggests that she was referring to the behaviour or performance for a group of people, that is, that non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians can live successfully together. Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories

relate to Individual Resistance (Item 3), Institutional Racism (Item 7) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). There are no borders of aesthetic-efferential reading responses here, as the two weave in and out of each other to form a continuum that Rosenblatt (1991) finds so important in reader response theory.

Book 3: Gender

This short discussion of gender relates to the households in which the students live and observe as their parents undertake everyday tasks in the home. The discussion was generated by the students' reading of *Piggybook* (Browne, 1986).

Author	Should the wife stay home and do the housework and look after the children?
Yanka	See, if a boy did the stuff we did I bet they would be bored out of their brains and we would be having a lot of fun.
Tony	A friend of mine who has three children stays at home looking after the house and children and his wife goes to work – that's all right as men can do these things.
Ky	That's what they want to do – there is no rule saying you have to do that.
Stella	Some men don't like doing housework and don't like looking after kids and stuff.
Essa	The men just let the mother do all that.
Yanka	Unless men have babies

The author's initial question provokes a response of boys not wanting to do housework nor minding children. As Yanka observes [boys] '…would be bored out of their brains and we would be having a lot of fun'. The discussion illustrates a modern household of equity issues, where the

household chores are expected to be equally divided by both parents. Tony brings the discussion up to modern times as to his friend taking on house-husband duties, but the girls in the group are most concerned that boys realize the work undertaken by the wife in the household. They get support of the boys, especially with the example of the male staying home and the wife going out to work. Ky explains, 'That's what they want to do – there is no rule saying you have to do that'. Stella and Essa argue for equal division of household labor between the sexes, and Essa supports this argument, 'The men just let the mother do all the work'. The most telling argument in this discussion is that of Yanka, 'Unless men have babies'.

The interchange indicates that the students are not creating new knowledge for themselves in this case; they are in essence repeating genderized normative statements that would have been most familiar to their family and other social contexts. Taking the interaction from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the students' discussion involves a sense of themselves as they show the ways which they have learned to see themselves in a genderised world. The students' responses are not made directly in response to the literature under discussion but rather in a more general sense of their views of the world. Gender is an issue that the students discuss quite openly, the interchange suggesting that an engagement with fictional genres of Children's Literature, in this case modern fairy tales that have rewritten the genderised roles of traditional ones, may induce genderised responses in the students. In this case the students engage the fictional genre of modern and classic fairy tales, of the type categorized by the author in his adaptation of Bean and Rigoni (2001) as covering a number of categories as the students' discussions range from categories of Individual Resistance (Item 3), Literature Evaulation (Item 4), Gender (Item 9) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses indicates a similar range of feelings, from a sense of justice and injustice born of genderised roles in the world but which, also incorporates informational responses to new knowledge.

Book 4: Gender

The next interchange considers students' understanding of multiculturalism itself as they have taken up opportunities to explore various aspects of issues of cultural diversity.

Stella   Why is multiculture important to the whole world?

Maheil   We are living in a different age in the 21st century.

Essa   Because people believe in different things - they might have a different

religion.

Tony   If we didn't have multiculture the world would be a one race world –

one colour – it's like being a replica of every single thing.

Yanka   They used to kill black people because they wanted all one race – all

white Australians.

Ky   In America they got a brown person and tied him to a back of a truck

and started to drive – you know like making big graves on the side.

Tony   White people hating blacks.

Maheil   That happened last year.

Essa   That is turning history.

Stella   That is racism.

This discussion examines the importance of multiculturism, particularly in terms of a world view, and its place in the 21st century. The narrative, *Anthony Burns: The defeat and triumph of a fugitive slave* (Hamilton, 1993) started the interchange on multiculturalism. According to the students, multiculturalism is necessary as it prevents racist policies, such as a 'one race world' and becoming 'a replica of every single thing'. This interchange indicates that the students are aware of the parameters of the issue under discussion in that they define their knowledge in political and historical terms. The students relate multiculturalism to the politics of the 21st century and want a multicultural world without racism and hatred. Drawing on symbolic interactionism as an analytical tool, the author sees this interchange as students establishing their attitudes and

behaviour towards different people on the basis of shared cultural meanings, derived from and contributing to a cultural position on multiculturalism. The students work through their definitions, refine their implications and end up with a definitive and shared understanding. These shared meanings rate on Bean and Rigoni's (2001) categories as Individual Resistance (Item 4), Institutional Racism (Item 7) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). As far as Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses is concerned, a similar range of emotions, from disgust at the treatment of black and brown people, to reforming discrimination laws to avoid such injustices: the crossing of aesthetic-efferential borders is evident.

Book 5: The Moslem religion.

The students showed their curiosity about the Moslem religion and explored their own questions to enlighten their understanding about this religion.

Ky   If you see women or school-girls with their hair covered – why is this?

Tony   Because they are Moslem and it's part of their religion.

Yanka   I think it's because until they are married they are not allowed to be

         seen by men – so they cover up to hide their face and hair.

Maheil   They do not want to attract men.

Stella   Sometimes they cover all their face to stop men looking at them.

Ky   If they are believing that we should treat them like everyone else

         because what if they come up to us and say – 'Why don't you have

         one of these?' - they don't do that to us - we shouldn't do it to them.

Essa.–.   If we complained about them it would be like racism because we don't

         do what they do – well what's wrong with that – they do what they want

to do it's a free country – a democracy.

The students were curious about the Moslem religion as being part of multicultural literature. The discussion opens with a question on the necessity for Moslem women and girls to cover their heads or sometimes their faces as well. Further discussion indicates that the students are aware it is part of Moslem religious beliefs. The students imply that religion is part of a multicultural policy, as there are many types of religious beliefs and to make an assault on religion would be racist. The students conclude that a multicultural society represents a tolerant society. However, the students establish a consensus that it is part of the right to personal conviction in a religious domain. As with the other examples of students' discussion given in this thesis, this is part of an interchange where meanings are negotiated, explored, and possible solutions offered.

The scene is set for further exploration of multiculturalism through the vehicle of Literature Study Circles by students' reading of multicultural literature such as archetypal fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. In this case female roles are implicit in stories of how girls are treated during their growing up. This happens in traditional stories, such as folk and fairy tales; and the gender bias needs to be deconstructed in terms of the social order and reconstructed in terms of the social order in a multicultural society.

The students in the above discussions are crossing cultural bridges when they read multicultural literature. Crossing multicultural bridges in such ways has the potential to involve conflict, and according to Gollnick and Chinn (1994), students need to know how to use conflict resolution strategies on their way to understanding the value of cultural diversity. Each student in the discussion gives their own answers, which further develops the topic under discussion, exploring issues until the students come to some sort of consensus, such as, 'That's racism'. In developing their lines of thought on issues of cultural diversity there is no evidence of conflict among the students. On Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories, the author identifies Individual Resistance (Item 3), Institutional Racism (Item 7), Gender (Item 9) and Engendered

Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses is concerned with a mix of a tolerant society respecting other people's religious beliefs and not causing racism within a democratic country such as Australia.

Book 6: Food, folklore, fabric and festivals.

In the next section the author moves to interchanges based on the students' consideration of two issues: Is culture the four Fs? that is, food, folklore, fabric and festivals and 'Is culture innate or learnt'. The students' interactions indicate their engagement in a complex process through which concepts are converted into social facts (see for example Plummer, 2000), which is consistent with the claims of symbolic interactionism. The manner, in which individual students, through their interpretation of social positions and behaviour, negotiate meaning with others in social interaction, is a salient feature of their discussions. Blumer (1969) defines this situation as one person's actions being interpreted by another rather than just reacting to each other's actions. In all interchanges, each student gives their own interpretation of culture. This shows that the students hold concepts of reality as being produced through interaction and shared social meanings.

Author   Is culture the four Fs?

Stella   I think that culture is not the four Fs because there are so many other

things – there is religion, the way people act, their attitudes, there are

so many different things that countries have – their culture or ways of

doing things – so countries are not just four Fs but many more things

– there are so many other things in culture.

Maheil	I think culture is more than the four Fs – it's not just them but a whole lot more – one big subject in one big category – people have their beliefs, their way of living, their way of thinking, their way of farming – all different in different countries – so culture is not just food, folklore, fabrics and festivals.
Yanka	I don't think that culture is the four Fs because the four Fs are more than that – such as language the most important – people have to communicate with each other – there are different farming produce, the different ways people think and act, the way the whole community thinks and acts, the way they do things in their own culture that are different to ours.
Essa	I think most people believe that the four Fs belong only to ethnic people, but they belong to all people as all people have cultures, and people share the four F's because people mix all cultures up, and it's good that they do as they share their cultures with others and that makes everybody feel good.
Ky	I will add another "f" to the four Fs and that is fiction because I believe people have many more things that the four Fs and the four Fs do not just belong to the ethnic people but to me and everybody – and all lives are the Fs which are cultures that the ethnics and other people live by and the way they do things all day that may be different and at night – the cultures are also different in the way they do these things.
Tony	Culture is the four Fs and more because the whole world is culture in different ways that people and kids do things – culture is different because people are born in different countries and are brought up in different ways to us and that is culture – different schools teach in different ways and that is culture too – that's why the four Fs means

much more because there are much more culture things about people act and do.

Each student defines their meaning in multicultural terms, using culture to explain the meanings people give to their own activities in their social life. The narrative of *City Possum* (Department of Education and Youth Affairs, 1984) leads the students to discuss *Is culture the Four Fs?* The author is aware that, despite students often obtaining information from video games, computer games and television, this approach presents a one-dimensional view of characters, is not a sophisticated approach to learning, and that this might also give students a false or bigoted understanding of cultures. Finazzo (1997) argues that children's literature offers a means of understanding others and consolidating gaps between cultures and groups, and that such information often serves as reference points for children's thinking. Yanka gives a compact understanding of culture and although she comes from a very different culture from the other children; she aptly applies the principle of cultures within a very wide domain. Essa corrects what she sees as a misconception relating to culture, but Ky adds another F, fiction, to the four Fs, because he feels this means literature and literature as culture belongs to everyone. Tony brings this discussion to a conclusion in a school situation, 'different schools teach in different ways and that is culture too – that is why the four Fs means much more because there are much more culture things about people act and do'. In this case the students are engaging in interchanges concerning the definition of culture that is of the type adapted from Bean and Rigoni (2001) content analysis categories as the students' discussions range from Personal and Intertextual (Item 5), Individual Decisions (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). In regard to Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, a range of meanings represent how people live and what they do in their own cultural world.

Stephens, Watson and Parker (2003) argue that the meaning of culture is in part derived from texts students grow up reading. This argument is an important part of this thesis in its exploration of students' reading of multicultural books and of interpreting their meaning through discussions.

Plummer (2000) points out that individuals are concerned with accumulating meaning, and that this is individuals expressing themselves, through their gestures and impulses, emotions, feelings, behaviours and acts in the wider social order. Greig and Taylor (1999) explain that students do not remain in a vacuum and their lives are multifarious and sophisticated. Greig and Taylor (1999) state that before students reach adulthood they need to have a repertoire of skills and behaviours that are fundamental for living in a modern society. Greig and Taylor (1999) suggest that students are a conundrum and that it is impossible to understand everything about them. The next extract shows an interchange of ideas about culture that gives some understanding of their thinking.

Book 6, 2nd extract: Is culture innate or learnt?

Author   **Is culture innate or learnt?**

Stella   Culture is something you are born with but you can learn about it.

Tony   You can learn about culture – for example if I went over to Indonesia they might have to go out and harvest their dinner – in their rice fields – wash, then cook it – we don't do things like that – it's their culture and we learn from that.

Essa   You can be born Scottish but if you can go and live there you can learn their culture, their English accent and how to blow the bagpipes.

Yanka   Culture is innate at first as you have it then you do something about it by learning different things in different ways and doing different things as people do.

Tony   Yanka is not wrong – if you are born with culture what is the point of learning it like going to school – you would know everything – that's why you're born with part of it – the other part you learn.

Maheil   What's the difference between the innate of animals and the culture of animals?

Tony   Animals in the wild such as monkeys I think they are born with what they are – their parents teach them other things.

Yanka   That's instinct – things you don't have to learn – you are born with them – they are things that tell you what to do and what not to do.

Ky   If you're a tiger you are born to kill so you can get food to eat otherwise you would die – you find food for yourself – that's innate of instinct.

Tony   You have instincts everywhere you go and to do things for yourself but you can control your instincts that are you - don't kill animals if you don't want to.

Essa   You can act and do things yourself – instincts guide you but you do not have to do them because you're human – you have your own instincts inside you and it goes and does what you tell it – but if you were a dog or cat you might not have to use your instincts to get food because you learn that your food is given to you by the owner – they don't have to use instinct to get food as the owner gives them food and a bed.

Stella   You are born to survive your instincts – culture you learn and it depends on your surroundings.

In this discussion, culture is explained in terms of going beyond the four 'Fs' into the concept of whether it is innate or whether nurture provides the learning. This is, of course, a conundrum that has puzzled many scholars over decades. The definition is enlarged by the students to encompass the world situation where students and people acquire the values and beliefs of the country they are born and live in. The students explore a number of related concepts but come to a conclusion that relates culture to learning, and innateness to survival instincts. The students are teasing out threads of conversation and then drawing those together to provide a description of the process involved in leading students to develop higher order levels of thinking operation. In the discussions, it is evident that value judgments are not made by the students as their empirical understanding of culture is acquired knowledge, interpretation of experience and social

behaviour. The students do not reproduce facts or jump to conclusions, but demonstrate their points of view with evidence. They appear to have quite unwittingly taken up an ethnographic position themselves, consistent with what Spradley (1980) terms 'a culture studying culture' (pp. 9-10).

As far as Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories are concerned, the children's discussions range from Literature Evaluation (Item 4), Personal and Intertextual (Item 5), Individual Decisions (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses indicates a mix as the students illustrate their interchanges in both the public aspect of sense and the private aspect of sense.

Book 7: Multicultural matters and issues

Charlotte's Web (White, 1963) is the topic of the next interchange and the extract gives an account of how students, using Literature Study Circles, coped with multicultural matters and issues.

Essa   How did the author relate this story to humans?

Yanka   Well, to not be selfish because Charlotte helped Wilbur to live another
    day – so not to be roast pig.

Ky   He watched humans and saw what they did and had material for his
    story.

Yanka   Did all the animals get on together?

Stella   Yes, they had to because it was their way of living and cause they
    were all living in the same part and cause they were animals and they
    all liked the same things – to eat and live.

Tony   They helped one another.

Yanka	They were able to communicate in the same language to each other.
Maheil	Is the author giving us a hidden meaning or something?
Essa	Yes, I think the author is giving us a hidden message – but all like us the animals should be friends – people should be friends – all the animals and people should be friends like multiculture.
Stella	Even a runt like Wilbur – because they need a chance to life because without it there is no way to expect the future – you can't predict the future.
Essa	How do you view the animals to humans?
Tony	It's like German people all communicate in the same language as the French people all communicate in the same language and so do animals.
Maheil	They grow, eat and die like humans.
Stella	You mean they move as humans do from one place to another but they are ethnic when they are the same group
Yanka	Did the animals behave in a multicultural way?
Ky	Yes, they did like the little gosling – it thought Wilbur was its mum – like babies in real life.
Stella	Like the runt wanted to eat everything – they behave like children in real life.
Ky	The have to rely on each other because it is the only way of living as we do – humans communicate to each other otherwise they would not be able to live better lives.
Stella	Animals need to communicate with each other even if they are different – they have to live even if they are a different ethnic group.
Maheil	As the story was written over fifty years ago did the animals understand the meaning of multicultural.

Essa	Fifty years ago people didn't know about multiculture because then they just didn't mix together as we do now.
Yanka	They didn't have the brains, the thoughts because they didn't have many opportunities to do these kinds of things that we have and can do now.
Ky	They didn't have a good education.
Stella	Were there any instances of multiculture shown by the author?
Tony	Well the author took the big world – he explained to us by making it into a small group of animals – they were acting as us showing multiculture.
Stella	Is this a story about mono-culture versus multiculture?
Essa	I don't think so because it was not one culture because it was a lot of different cultures - the animals have cultures – they are ethnic too.
Ky	It was one culture – a mono-culture against a lot of cultures like the different animals – humans against the animals.
Yanka	Yes, the humans are also many cultures.
Tony	I think it is possible to call the animals multiculture – because it's a story.
Maheil	I think it's a great multicultural story for the future.
Stella	Multiculture is important to the future because different sort of people need to communicate if, for example, doctors – if you go to the doctor you might be Arab or Lebanese or Chinese and the other person might be Greek –you're got to learn to communicate with them and need to like them.
Essa	Well, multiculture is important for the future otherwise there will be no work or money for food or clothing – the world has to work together.
Stella	Like my curry is important like it's good to pass it on to other

generations that without my family coming here this would not have occurred - people in Australia would never have tried or tasted it – so it's generations of multiculture and not racism in joining together to make one big world.

Maheil   The world is now multiculture and racism, prejudice and stereotyping should not be allowed – multiculture makes us all happy.

The students in the Literature Study Circles immediately discussed the narrative as relating to multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is used by the students to demonstrate the life cycle of animals personified as people living in an ethnic environment in an impersonal society. The multicultural society reveals a fragmented society with the focus on birth, everyday living, and death. The students' discussions of the theme are both explicit and implicit. Explicit in the friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur and implicit in those friendships occur in unexpected places such as between a runt pig and spider, indicating that people from different ethnic groups can be friends.

The students see a significant truth in a simple story becoming literature, as truth going beyond the narrative. They comment on human beings working and living together. Stella says the animals portray humans because, 'they all liked the same things – to eat and live'. Essa says that the author has a hidden message in this narrative in that friendship of people is the same for the animals and that this leads to a multicultural society. Tony uses an analogy to explain the real world of multiculturalism in terms the author's explanation of a microcosm of the animals' world representing humans. The students discuss multicultural words: Stella relates ethnicity as belonging to the same group of people and asks whether this narrative is mono-culture versus multicultural? Essa answers, 'it was a lot of different cultures – the animals have cultures – they are ethnic too'. The students are aware that White (1963) is attempting to present his world of the nineteen fifties, whereas the students of today live in a global world which has become a world of instant communication and transportation. Tony considers that a common language is essential in a multicultural world as the animals are able to communicate even though they never talk but

speculate on a given subject. In an educational stance there must be equal opportunity because as Stella suggests, 'even a runt like Wilbur – needs a chance in life because without it there is no way to expect the future'.

The students appear to understand that the characters in *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1963) are personified animals and that the narrative conforms to what Finazzo (1997) describes as animal fantasy. The students accept the narrative as representing a multicultural world of today because it discusses the value of a person, approval of others and the death of a friend. The students discuss the theme as being that of a multicultural society, human nature, or the human condition which weaves the narrative together. The harmonious flow of the students' discussion indicates that they understand the concepts that people should live in harmony whatever their culture or background. *Charlotte's web* (White 1963) is in reality seen by the students as a vehicle for fostering cultural awareness at a time when multiculturalism was just evolving, as Essa argues, 'Fifty years ago people didn't know about multiculture because then they just didn't mix together as we do now'. Ky addresses the problem, saying, 'They didn't have a good education'. The students view the narrative through the analogy of animals as human beings and the celebration of cultural values, traditions and beliefs inherent in this narrative. The students sort out, examine and identify disparate segments. They examine such concepts as multiculturalism, ethnicity, equal opportunity, relationships, family, love, sacrifice, assisting the needy, life and death struggle and the future. Maheil gives the narrative a modern perspective, 'The world is now multiculture and racism, prejudice and stereotyping should not be allowed – multiculture makes us all happy'.

The students seem to accept White's (1963) portrayal of the animals as human beings, with the animals having the characteristics of people in thinking, worrying, laughing, hurting, friendships, maturity and death. The students' interchanges are not didactic as there is no instruction given as to how they should discuss or debate any matters or issues. The students argue their concerns about the characters in *Charlotte's web* (White 1963) as literature that does not preach, moralize,

or tell them what they ought or ought not to do. Because there are no set patterns for discussion the students are free to make discoveries about human beings and society as indicated by the use of their imagination in relating the narrative to the present day situation.

The students appear accept on this narrative as just part and parcel of their own life experiences and transactions they have with other human beings. The students relate to events that make up their own present day characters or personalities, as they increase their understanding of themselves in a contemporary world of multiculturalism. In this case, the students engage the fictional-realistic components of multiculturalism of the type categorized by the author in his adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001): Literature Evaluation (Item 4), Personal and Intertextual (Item 5), Individual Decisions (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). On Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, a similar range of social justice issues relates to understandings about how to live successfully in a multicultural world crossing the cultural mix of items.

Book 8: Migration

The next narrative for discussion is *Yasou Nikki* (Orr, 1995).

Ky   If you were Nikki how would you feel leaving your country?

Tony   I would feel very sad like my mum had to leave her country and came
to Australia and had to make new friends – all that stuff.

Stella Why?

Tony   She came here when she was eleven years old.

Stella It would be very hard like people calling you names and saying you
can't talk properly.

Essa   If I were leaving my country I wouldn't have felt excited because I
would have all my relations and friends were back in my old country. I
would have to start new friends and everything – it would be a lot
harder to start off than your original life style.

Yanka   And a new language.

Maheil   If you went to Greece you would have to study before going there – their religion, culture, language – anything before you go there or to any other country.

Yanka   If you didn't you would not get work and make a living.

Maheil   I felt like that when I came from Germany.

Essa   What culture did Nikki leave behind?

Ky   The culture that Nikki left behind was just like playing with your friends, your family and relations – having fun – going to dinners, watching dancing.

Yanka   I agree with Ky – over there she left something of herself behind – mainly her culture and the rest of her family.

Stella   What culture feeling do you think you would always remember about your former homeland?

Essa   Well, my feelings – I would have left behind is really not to offend anyone – but freedom because I used to run on a big farm that we had and could go some-where by myself – I am not allowed to do that here because it's like a big city and it can be dangerous – and the food and everything is so different.

Tony   But your country – our country is more developed than yours – your country started off with everything but ours is more developed than yours.

Essa   When I was overseas I used to go to the shops just by myself but my mum doesn't let me do that now – it's too dangerous – across the road when ever I go to the shops – that was in Romania.

Ky   Trust me it will be very different to what it was.

This interchange is based on yet another important event in Australian history that of immigrants and this country's responsibilities as far as this issue is concerned. The students engage the issues through an examination of a fictional migrant child's life. The students discuss the problem in a factual way in developing the theme in a socio-economic fashion relating this problem to

world people and events. The discussion opens in a nostalgic manner of leaving one's country with the possibility of culture shock that immigrants endure in coming to terms with another country's society, politics and culture. There is the concern that in coming to a new culture that a new language is an essential requirement so as to earn a livelihood. A comparison is made between the economic development of Australia and a country in Eastern Europe from which some of the parents emigrated.

Using the author's adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories, the ratings are Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Individual Resistance (Item 3), and Engendered Culture (Item 10). As far as Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferent responses is concerned, there are many emotional feelings in leaving one's country, relatives, and friends and an outward feeling of fear in adapting to a new culture. The next narrative *Maddie* (Caswell, 1995) also concerns immigrating to another country.

Book 9: Refugees.

In the discussion of *Maddie* (Caswell, 1995) the problems are discussed in terms of a family escaping from a war in Vietnam, parents dying before they arrive in Australia, and both brother and sister becoming orphans upon arrival in Australia.

Tony I thought the book was bad – Minh ran away from home – that's bad.

Ky And I was happy the way the book ended – Minh finished school and

found a job and at last appreciated his uncle and auntie – that's the

end of the story.

Maheil. At the beginning of the book there was fighting and everything – Minh

didn't have any parents – imagine having the shock of fighting

everyone in the family – that wouldn't be really good for everyone.

Essa   Just because his mother died he never got over the shock – he thought everyone hated him.

Stella   He was very shocked as a baby and as a child because of his parent's death - he was traumatized.

Yanka   Traumatized was his protection against the way of showing hate for everything.

Essa   When I came to Australia from Germany I was traumatized because I had left all my friends and family back in Romania.

Maheil   The culture was different

Essa   My culture shock was how other kids reacted to me – like I was always scared I might do the wrong thing in the new culture.

Stella   Maddie wanted to do the right thing in the new culture.

Tony   Minh ran away so that he could think of himself and the nasty things he had done to others – he saw that he should not argue with people any more - with his uncle and auntie and all that – Maddie didn't do that as she was smart and always tried to help her brother.

Maheil   Maddie's family came from Malaysia.

Tony.   No - from Vietnam first.

Essa   In Vietnam there was a war and their parents were part of it.

Yanka   They had to immigrate to Australia because of the war but his father stayed in Vietnam because he was a doctor and was shot.

Maheil   They were refugees – their father was left behind and their mother caught a disease and died before coming to Australia.

Yanka   It was very sad when they didn't know anything about their parents because they were both very young.

Tony   Was there any racism in the story?

Ky   Yes – racism is if you have a different culture to me and I say you're got different skin or dress or food in a nasty way.

Essa   Teasing others is racism.

Maheil   Racism can be the way of living that people say nasty things about.

Yanka   There is racism in the story like when Maddie and her brother only had a few friends and people could not believe that Minh was her brother – she was so different.

Stella   That's not racism – Maddie was always treated good at school because like it said in the book she was Miss Popularity and that she had a lot of friends and that is not racism.

Maheil   Under each chapter you knew who was talking and when Maddie asked her brother to write down what he was dreaming about to try to help him.

Tony   Why did Minh leave home?

Stella   Because he felt that he was rejected by his family.

Ky   And also found that he was yelling and being nasty to everyone.

Essa   What was Minh's problem – he had a psychology problem.

Yanka   He was traumatized by leaving his own culture and coming here to another – he was shocked when his parents died when he was very young coming to Australia.

Stella   Why did Minh act that way?

Yanka   He didn't get on with his auntie and uncle as he was always fighting with them because he thought they hated him.

Ky   They didn't really reject him.

Essa   The thing was post-traumatic stress which is the doctor's fancy way of saying – "You are so shocked by everything – that you are finding it hard to cope.

Ky   He had a problem because of his experience with culture shock.

Yanka   And he was called Michael in English and he didn't like that – he would say call me Minh.

Essa   He was proud of his culture that's why.

Maheil   I would always keep the name my parents gave me.

Yanka Yes but different culture names are difficult to say so why not say an English name – it's easier for everyone.

Ky Minh had dreams about his father and he ran away so he could think about his life and what to do.

Maheil Maddie had a great teacher who listened to her problems.

Essa If you're got the perfect catch to make people like you and say your brother can't speak English very well – only a few words – then you hear teachers teasing or talking about you behind your back – that's not nice.

Ky I wouldn't like the teacher to say bad things about me – talking behind my back.

Tony I can relate to Minh as I come from Bulgaria without any English and I have only been here for six months – it's a culture difference that's different – I didn't want any help at first as I didn't talk to anyone.

Ky Culture shock.

Tony Everything in this classroom was different to Bulgaria – here we have tables and chairs not like desks in Bulgaria and we never sat on the floors as we do here.

Yanka If you want everyone to like you it can be difficult as you have to adapt to the new culture and environment.

Maheil We have learnt a lot from this story.

Essa   To help others from different cultures.

Stella   People from other cultures who come here need to be helped into our cultures.

Tony   If kids from other cultures come here and they don't say much it is culture shock. – So we should respect them.

Yanka   Be yourself just like Maddie.

The interchange shows students understand a more subtle form of racism that arises out of different cultures meeting on unequal terms, again, relating to some of the multicultural stories they have read. This passage evinces a number of features, such as students' engagement with racism, reference to a particular illness in culture shock or post-traumatic distress, caused by moving to a new cultural environment and attempting to maintain one's culture in a new society. This discussion features the difficulties many LBOTE students face in coming to terms in a different cultural environment such as Australia. T

He interchanges illustrate that the content analysis categories cover a number of the students' interchanges ranging from Family Separation (Item 2), Institutional Racism (Item 7) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses shifts from the deep feeling of not coping in a new society and fear of the unexpected, to showing this reaction outwardly.

Book 10: Racism

The next story students discussed is *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967).

Yanka   How would you feel if you were black and these things in the story

Essa   were said about you?

Essa   I would feel really annoyed just because I'm black – just look at her she's black and it doesn't matter what I look like it's what I am inside.

Tony   When he says the blacks are only knee high he is saying a nasty thing about people.

Stella.   He treated the blacks bad because he was in one of those wars.

Maheil   He also treats some the white kids bad because of the things he made happen to them.

Yanka   So he can't be that much prejudice.

Essa   The whites are spoilt brats except Charlie.

Tony   Mr. Wonka tried to find the right person to take over the factory and in the story he chose a white boy instead of one of the blacks.

Ky   That's racism.

Maheil   Or prejudice.

Yanka   No, bias because he knew what he wanted to do.

Essa   He wanted a small child to take over his factory but not black because he thought the blacks were not clever enough.

Tony   He was saying whites are cleverer than blacks.

In this interchange, the students establish that racism is practised against people of color, the blacks. They focus on why prejudice leads to racism. The definition of racism is debated to clarify the distinctions between bias, prejudice and racism. In an age when discrimination is frowned upon, the hidden agenda appears to be that a happening in the past such as war against blacks conceals a hatred that is exhibited years later by a leader, in this instance the director of a confectionery establishment. This hatred often leads to genocide of particular races. Discrimination is further highlighted in that people of color are attributed as having an inferior mental capacity.

Using Bean and Rigoni (2001) the exchanges reveal Institutional Racism (Item 7), Individual Decision (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item, 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concepts of aesthetic-efferential responses indicate deep disgust to outrage for the type of treatment people of color should not be receiving in the 21st century. Again the aesthetic-efferential borders are crossed.

Book 10 2nd extract

In the Literature Study Circles, students are very aware that the 21st century is the age of multiculturalism. The author introduced the opening of the next discussion.

Author	What are the differences in the values of the 1960s when Roald Dahl wrote this story and the values of the 1990s and the 21st century?
Ky	In 1967 when Roald Dahl wrote this story they expected children to do their chores and stuff – like mum always says to me – in my age it was harder because we didn't have all this modern stuff.
Yanka	In 1967 they had to know everything otherwise they would get a cane on their hands.
Maheil	Children are to be seen and not heard.
Stella	Children are youth and are going to grow up to be people in the 21st century.
Ky	When you grow up you need to learn.
Tony	You need to know everything when you grow up – people will tease you if you don't know.
Author	How should parents treat you today?
Essa	To give us lots of privileges.
Maheil	To experience what it's like to be parents so you know what to give when you have children and stuff.
Yanka	I think parents should let children do what they want like if it's

dangerous don't let them do it – if it's some-thing for fun it's part of

childhood experience because they are only a child once.

Ky   Parents they want some thing special in their lives – us – and they

love us and they should show the good way to choose to grow up.

The students in the Literature Study Circles do not discuss *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967) in the light of candy which the factory produces and the possibilities of living there and enjoying its delights. Instead, the students make very clear their individual judgments on this narrative as a social justice issue. Cameron (1984) argues that if a book is popular that does not necessarily mean it has literary worth.

In this segment the students are given the task to discuss genre in literature, to contrast it with their own life in the 21st century and with their own parents' life in the late 20th century. Their parents grew up in a time when multiculturalism was evolving, or in the case of some migrant parents, at a time when their country was evolving out of political chaos, for example, the Balkan countries. The students share a common set of cultural characteristics with many differences and variations as four of the students' parents came to Australia as refugees or immigrants.

The students reject the ideal world as presented in *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967) and are not harmed mentally by the narrative's setting and the treatment of black people. They are more amused by its presentation as a narrative removed from reality. However, the students take a positive stance in pointing out the deficits of the narrative in relation to the 21st century of multiculturalism. The students appear to be very familiar with the life that their parents lead, the punishment inflicted upon students in their parents' era and the need for a better education. In reality, the students are advocating what all parents should do so as to understand their children and avoid conflict and trauma at home and at school. The students show that they appreciate their parents, who are concerned for their children's welfare, and give their children lots of love. The students demonstrate that they have a comprehensive view of Dahl's (1967) narrative, as

their criticism reveals their thinking, as well as much feeling about how they relate to their parents and the different multicultural environment in which their parents grew up.

This narrative evoked very strong feelings among the students, especially about racism, equal opportunity, gender and a way of living. In symbolic interactionism, Plummer (2000) maintains there are changes, ebbs and flows, emergence and processes in the lives of people in situations and societies which are always fluctuating as evolving and adjusting. This requires a person to interact with others, to concentrate on using strategies to develop a sense of self, to mature, to accommodate to others, to mediate order, to acquire a frame work to build a culture, and to adjust to the social world. In the next segment, the students felt that their parents needed to update their concepts to the 21st century.

Book 10 3rd extract: Historicism

Tony   How can you re-train your parent to be in the 21st century?

Essa   Take away their old habits – the old fashion way of doing things.

Ky   Show them not their way but the 21st century way.

Yanka   Mum, dad, forget about Elvis – he's gone to the past.

Maheil   Get a life mum and dad – now you listen to me – do it my way for once.

The above discussion indirectly concerns how families should relate in a multicultural household. The students are sending a message to their parents to alter their traditional ways of thinking, behaviour and the upbringing of children. The students are offering their parents assistance to come to terms with a modern society of multiculturalism. In the multicultural environment of the school and its environment, the students' concept of society, and the accepted behaviour and ways of thinking are constantly being challenged by a school's multicultural curriculum (Victorian Education Department, 2000. English: Curriculum and standards framework 11). It is because of this approach to education that the students challenge their own parents to reform their life styles too. Because of this it would appear that the students see the challenge to change their parents' outmoded concepts of a traditional society. Although Spreadbury (1995) points out the

responsibility parents have in nurturing their children physically, emotionally and intellectually, the Literature Study Circles students seem to see a need to change their parents' habits of a life time and bring their parents into a 21st century world of multiculturalism.

Cameron (1984) argues that persons involved with books and reading in making judgments must be concerned with aesthetics, as the popularity of a book does not establish its truth or value, and this causes confusion as a book may be wish fulfilling. The students might have felt their parents' disapproval of their reading of *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967) because of Cameron's (1984) criticism that this book is one of the most unpalatable ever written for children. The students are appealing to their parents to listen to their point of view and to bring their parents into the twentieth first century: 'forget about Elvis – he's gone to the past'. From the students' point of view, this is another plea from the Literature Study Circles students to be noticed. The students are determining their own way things ought to be done in a multicultural society. In considering any story, for instance, *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967) Collingdale's (1988) advice ought to be heeded in that in literature, as in life, one has to start where the children are, and accept the children's ideology. So concerned were they at the presentation of *Charlie and the chocolate factory* (Dahl, 1967), and the damaging ideology it represented to the evolvement of multiculturalism, the students thought about inviting the Roald Dahl into their classroom. Later on someone reported that he was a dead author.

Book 10. 4th extract: Taking action and questioning the author

Yanka   If Roald Dahl walked into this library at this very moment what would

you say to him?

Ky   You say hello Roald I reckon your 1967 story is good but we need an

updated version.

Tony	Hi – I really liked your book and I think you should update it now and you would get more viewers and readers.
Essa	You say hello Roald I reckon your 1967 story is good but we need an updated version.
Stella	Hi Roald – I can't believe I am really meeting you – I love your book but if you were here today then you would need to know people are turning to the next millennium and they want something new – if you are thinking about writing another book you should research new things and write about them.

The genre of time travel offers a challenge to the students to present a duality of cultural experiences, Dahl's (1967) culture and the children's cultures of today. As characters in a time warp, and the appearance of Dahl (1967) in the students' modern era, the students are readily concerned that he brings his culture into a new environment of multicultural in the 21st century before he writes his next book. The students advise Dahl (1967) to research his resources carefully. The students request Dahl (1967) to understand his new society, with different customs, values, and outlook in a multicultural society.

Lukens (1995) is concerned that the literary worth of a book should not extend to just doubtful feelings. The students respond in a very adult manner and they take pleasure in the way Dahl presents the literature, arising from his style, character and plot, which are the components of literacy elements. As the students regarded the narrative from a multicultural perspective, they placed importance on the commonalities, similarities and differences among Dahl's (1967) characters. This enabled them to consider cultural encounters, and openly discuss their emotions, opinions and cultural habits.

Through cross cultural experiences and cultural encounters, which sometimes caused clashes and cultural conflicts in their discussion, each member of the Literature Study Circles gave a point or points of view on this narrative. Even though Dahl (1967) came from another era, students showed their appreciation of his narrative because they invited him to come into their classroom.

In this case the students engaged in a variety of responses, their discussions ranging from Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Individual Resistance (Item 3), Interpretive Disagreement (Item 6), Institutional Racism (Item 7) and Engendered Cultures (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses are end points in a changing proportion of responses, and are not contradictory activities as the students reveal outrage in both the private aspect of sense, feelings and emotions, and the public aspect of sense, the injustices at the treatment of black people.

Book 11: The effects of war.

The next Literature Study Circles discussion is based on the students' reading of *Sadako and the thousand paper cranes* (Coerr, 1981). It concerns students' understanding of the outcomes of the Second World War and the consequences of dropping the atomic bomb on Japan.

Essa   There was a lot of culture in this book because the way people look like

           in the picture – what they wear, their religion, and sayings – their

           culture would be different from Australia.

Ky   I felt sad the way this book ended – also happy because Sadako feel

           asleep and died – she didn't notice anything

Stella   Her mum didn't get the fall out – she breathe it in and got it – it's like a

           generation thing – it was not her fault – she was a baby so something

           of that bomb it will affect every generation of the family.

Yanka   I think if people had not been in wars and everything no-one like

           Sadako and everyone else who died would be alive today – it's the

government's fault because the government starts wars and sends people to war and everything else like that – its because a different culture and a different place – they didn't know anything about that place unless you are an historian in another place – it's not your fault – you didn't choose to go there unless you volunteered.

Tony   Sadako died I think because she was such a good girl – it's unfortunate it happened to her – I felt sad when she died but then I think the start of the book was good because it told the reader what it was about.

Maheil   Sadako suffered from a disease called leukaemia from the fall out from the atomic bomb – terrible but it's real.

Ky   Was Sadako disgusted with her life?

Stella   She's a happy person – she's a cheerful person with a really big spirit – she did not reject life but she didn't take it to its fullest as she was only a child.

Essa   How would you feel if you knew you had a life threatening illness?

Yanka   You would feel pretty bad – if I knew I was going to die I would be really down.

Essa   Yes but you would have to take life as it comes – you can't stop it – you would just have to kill yourself.

Maheil   No you wouldn't you could let the illness take hold and just die when the illness gets you.

Yanka   You just don't let life kill you – you are a real person that can do things so get up and do things – get real.

Ky   Perhaps medicine could be discovered to save your life just after you killed your-self – what about that.

Stella   Yes, what a mess you would have made and the sadness you would bring to many people.

Tony	Sadako took her illness seriously.
Ky	It's real life.
Stella	No because it was her time – that is what destiny had planned – you never know – it could happen to anyone.
Yanka	I believe she died for a good reason because she was good – what would have happened if she had lived but she died and went to a better place and did not live her life in vain and she was happy.
Ky	But she died and it was not her fault – if the atomic bomb had not been dropped and all those other lives that the bomb killed – taken by a single machine – they would be alive today – wars are bad.
Stella	She might have died a worst death like being captured by the people they were fighting and could have been butchered instead of just dying in her sleep – she died in a nice way.
Ky	I agree she died a nice way but yet she shouldn't have died – it could have been her time and it could not have been her time – nature decided that.
Essa	The illness hit her ten years after the bomb fell down – and that means something – it means you never know how illness strikes you.
Maheil	What do we learn about life from this story?
Stella	It means we shouldn't take life for granted.
Ky	It's not always fair – be ready – life's a chance.
Tony	What was unfortunate about the period in which she grew up?
Yanka	Um – there was a war and World War 2 – that means her mother got pregnant in the war – it's her mother's fault she shouldn't have got pregnant.
Ky	No – it was bad luck.
Essa	The story of Sadako is important because nobody expected the bomb –

and Sadako's cranes represent all the dead children and the hope this

thing wouldn't happen again.

The students' interchange concerns the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. This narrative may be classified as historical fiction as it depended for its credibility upon a setting in a past period such as the aftermath of the dropping of the atomic bomb and the fallout causing leukaemia years later. The ravage, destruction and despair that the bomb caused for the Japanese people is remembered around the world each year. It is a reminder of the awesome power of atomic energy and the hope that the bomb is never used again. This narrative becomes non-fiction; it is a factual eye-witness description of what happened on that fateful day in 1945. It is an example of what Rosenblatt (1991) explained as the reader in the transaction being forced to both an aesthetic and efferent response and moving between the two.

The students discuss this happening as cause and effect: fallout is a generational thing that affects the next generation; wars are caused by governments and not the fault of people and this is identified because of people's different cultures. There is a very lively discussion on euthanasia, as would be expected of students of this age, in terms of: taking life as it comes; the consequence of taking one's life just when a new drug has been found to cure leukaemia or other illnesses; accept life as it is as destiny decides one's future. The students show much emotion, thoughts and feelings as they take a realistic stance to life because in real life difficulties are not solved quickly or easily. Pregnancy in a war period is regarded as 'just bad luck'. History presents facts, and this narrative turned facts into fiction and blended imagination with fact to show how a human face could cope with real life situations. Stephens, Watson and Parker (2003) argue that all text contains ideology and this may be concealed within the text. In this narrative the ideology is discernible in the condemnation of war, and man's inhumanity to man.

The adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories include Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Individual Resistance (Item 3) Individual Decisions (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses range from: aesthetic, the inner feelings and emotions of people as to the devastation, misery and famine and disruption caused by the dislocation of society; efferential, the outward condemnation of war, and atrocities of the atomic bomb as it affected ordinary people and innocent victims.

Evaluation of students' interchange responses: Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories and Rosenblatt's (1991) continuum:

The author conducted a survey of students' interchange responses to multicultural literature based on the adapted Bean and Rigoni content analysis categories (2001) and the adapted Rosenblatt's continuum (1991). The responses were taken from the students' discussions in Literature Study Circles as illustrated in this chapter. A point was given to each response as an answer or question. The results are analyzed below.

The adapted Rosenblatt's aesthetic-efferential continuum (1991) was shown as a scattergram to explore the number of responses and the *intensity* of the students' responses to multicultural literature. It was used also, to verify Rosenblatt's (1991) contention that more responses are efferential than aesthetic. If patterns form close to the continuum (diagonal line) this may indicate a strong resemblance between the aesthetic-efferential stances, but it does not prove a close correlation between the responses. This is because there is no independent variable on the horizontal line (axis) or variables on the vertical line (axis) of the scattergram as there are no co-ordinates on each side of the line of the continuum. This is because there are no co-efficients to measure the extent to which one set of plotting or groups on the scattergram is related to another, that is, the association between the aesthetic responses to the efferent responses. There is also no pairing of figures (variables) plotted due to the fact that Rosenblatt (1991) maintains that to every efferent stance response there may not be a aesthetic stance response, or vice versa. Because of this there is no line of best fit of co-ordinates. The stance that the

reader uses is resolved by the correspondence of each response into the mix of selective attention aesthetic-efferential: the aesthetic stance is the private stance of reading concerned with emotions, feelings, thinking and experience during the reading; the efferent is the public stance of reading concerned with facts and information; reading is a mix of the ability to read both aesthetically and efferently. The results are given below.

Table 3

Public aspect of sense – Efferent stance

Intensity of response
Band

Band	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Band
5		***	****	***** *	***** *	***** *	***** *	***** *****	***** ***** *			-5
4		****	*********	***** **	****	***** ***** ***** ***	***** ***** ***** *****	***** ***** ***** ****				-4
3	*****	**********	*********	**********	********** *****	******* ******* *****	******** *****					-3
2					***	**						-2
1					*							-1
-1							******** **					1
-2						****** ***	***	****	*****			2
-3				*	********** *	******* *** **	******	********	**	*****		3
-4			****	****	**		***	***				4
-5		***** ***** **	***** *****	***** **	**		****					5

Private Aspect of sense – Aesthetic stance   **Band**
Intensity of response

Scale: 5 Very strong.   1 Average.   -1 Below average.   -5 Very poor:

Unit = Block of responses: 10x10 = 100 unites.

Students' responses on a scattergram adapted from Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferential   continuum – Literature – S.O.S. p.446.

Note: Distance from continuum (diagonal line) indicates less intensity of response.

Results

The adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferent continuum as a scattergram records a total of three hundred and forty-five intensity plots (Table 3). This is because a response on the scattergram of the continuum may have a mix of both or is becoming one of aesthetic-efferent. Table 3 shows that the efferent or the public aspect of sense has two hundred and nineteen responses, approximately sixty-three percent, and the aesthetic or private aspect of sense one hundred and twenty-six responses, approximately thirty- six percent. The imbalance of plots, ninety-three in favor of the efferent stance, indicates that the students' intensity of responses favors facts and information in the multicultural literature. However, the continuum suggests that in many instances the students read in a transaction of a two way process of aesthetic-efferential response.

Overall most of the responses form patterns near the continuum **(**Table 3) indicating an increasing focus on the intensity of the responses with fewer patterns on the edges of the scattergram. Most of the ratings (plots) on the efferent stance of the intensity of responses fall within the measurement of three to five bands, and from one to five on the aesthetic band. These ratings (plots) on the aesthetic stance are spread more lightly as units across the scattergram and further from the continuum, but the ratings (plots) on the efferent stance are concentrated in units mainly on or near the continuum. This supports Rosenblatt's (1991) argument that the efferent or public aspect will be greater than the aesthetic or private aspect. The cause of this situation could be that the six students in Literature Study Circles have been instructed by their class teachers over a period of years to search for facts or information or to fill in fact sheets after reading a book. The aesthetic stance on this scattergram may have fewer plots because of the students' lack of spontaneity in responding outwardly to their feelings or emotional concerns, especially on social justice issues that they have read about in multicultural literature. Of course, there is the author's evaluation of each response and its intensity, and this could be tilted in favor of either the aesthetic or efferent stance.

The author's adaptations of Rosenblatt's (1991) aesthetic-efferential continuum, as well as that of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) categories, were powerful tools in the analysis of the students' reading responses. In the context of this study of multiculturalism, then, the students' discussions were both informative and transformative as they developed perspectives outside their own world and considered alternative possibilities and realities. As active participants, the students explored texts in ways that allowed them to vicariously live through experiences; they constructed a better understanding of themselves and their own world.

Bean and Rigoni's (2001) adapted content analysis categories:

The adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories evoked approximately two hundred and thirty-five students' responses (Table 4). The students (respondents) provided a wide range of personal experiences and situations, events and decision making. The girls exhibited one hundred and twenty-three responses and the boys one hundred and twelve. The girls were more expressive than the boys by eleven responses (Table 4). The results show that the instrument, the adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories, is useful for measuring the type of students' responses. There is a difference in scores of responses of ten points; Yanka scoring the highest, forty-three points, with the lowest, Maheil, scoring thirty three points (Table 4). Table 5 shows the ordinal placement of respondents in percentages. Table 6 shows the top three content analysis categories used by the students in each case; Interpretive disagreement (Item 6) and Individual decisions (Item 8) are the most used categories followed by Personal and intertextual (Item 5). This indicates the students taking an individual and independent stance on social justice issues and other matters. The wide diversity of categories used by the students appears to show the individual characteristics of the students. The variety of categories used indicates a high level of interchange of ideas, situations and debates of all students. It also exhibits a high level of interchanges from a number of different perspectives. The students took the opportunity to explore the complex ways in which multiculturalism had evolved

historically, economically, ideologically and institutionally, and how these forces affected and comprised society.

Bean and Rigoni (2001) adapted content analysis categories

Number of students' responses
Table 4

Case	Responses
Yanka	43
Essa	41
Ky	40
Tony	39
Stella	39
Maheil	33

Table 5

Ordinal placement of students' responses

Placement	Case	Percentage
1st	Yanka	19%
2nd	Essa	18%
3rd	Ky	17%
4th	Tony	16%
	Stella	16%
5th	Maheil	14%

Table 6

Bean and Rigoni's (2001) adapted content analysis categories

Top three content analysis categories in each case

Case	Category	Case	Category
Essa	1.Interpretive disagreement. 2.Individual decisions. 3.Engendered culture.	Stella	1.Interpretive disagreement. 2.Individual decisions. 3.Engendered culture.
Yanka	1.Personal & intertextual. 2.Interpretive disagreement. 3.Individual decisions.	Ky	1.Personal & intertextual. 2.Interpretive disagreement. 3.Individual decisions.
Tony	1.Interpretive disagreement. 2.Institutional racism. 3.Individual decisions.	Maheil	1.Personal & intertextual. 2.Interpretive disagreement. 3.Individual decisions.

The aim of undertaking any statistical analysis is to be able to draw valid conclusions. Nevertheless, in drawing conclusions from the scattergram adapted from Rosenblatt's aesthetic-

efferent continuum (1991), or the adapted Bean and Rigoni's content analysis categories (2001), caution is needed, that the results are merely guidelines for further discussion of the patterns of the students' responses. The interchanges of the six students in Literature Study Circles took place as they explored multicultural literature as this offered them the opportunity to discuss contexts in which issues of racism, gender, stereotyping, race and ethnicity, cultural identity issues were presented. In this way, characters in narratives may be challenged in terms of maintenance of the status quo and its hegemonic power structure: assimilation or separatism.

Journals: The analysis of data in the transcripts of students' journal entries

The journals offer introspective views of the students' personal thoughts, sensations, emotions, and interpretations that may have been gleaned from other students' responses to the same text in Literature Study Circles. The author has selected seven excerpts from these journals for particular attention as examples of the range and scope of the children's discussions. The author has not selected passages that tend to be similar to others' or that repeat others in these excerpts. They do, however, give an indication of the depth and sophistication of the children's writing as perhaps more reflexive than is evident in the sorts of spontaneity of discussions that occurred in the Literature Study Circles.

Johnson and Smith (1993) argue that writing creates a deeper understanding of feelings, concepts and attitudes evoked in the students by books they have read. It assists them to clarify aspects of shared meaning of narratives. In their journals, the students portray a lived through experience of reading books. They reflect their inner thoughts to situations, events, issues, moods, places and characters. Vygotsky (1978) uses the metaphor of internalization to highlight the transition of knowledge from culture to the mind.

In their journals, as in critical book reviews, the students illustrated that they had a very good command of stories. Diamond and Moore (1995) and Lukens (1995) argue that authors present

literary elements such as understanding characters coping in an invented or made up world, in a particular time and space, and adventures such as perils, hazards and dangers, as well as conquests, misfortunes, sorrow, injury or death. Mckee (2003) emphasizes the notions that textual analysis is used to gather information concerning sense-making practices, in how people make sense of their environment or world. It is these elements that provide students with scaffolding for structuring dialogues and writing through active participation (Bruner, 1973, 1986: Vygotsky, 1962:1978), as in Literature Study Circles (Daniels, 1994).

The students' journal critiques are illustrated in the work below. Journal writings have been included so as to give a profile of the children's individual work, their beliefs, their attitudes, their understanding of local and world views of social, political and economic issues and problems. Even in the written forms there is symbolic interactionism, as individuals and societies develop through people's interaction through symbols. The students as individuals developed a sense of themselves as they learned to use symbols and see themselves the way they believed others saw them. The students were interacting with texts others have written and texts that they themselves wrote.

Journal writing hones and organizes students' thinking. It also provided the author of this thesis with material to connect the students' thinking processes of making connections across literature, life and multiculturalism as they constructed their visions of themselves and their world. In their journals, the students developed their own strategies and cognitive processes as they analysed text and created images to describe the unlimited variety of any new text. The students developed new concepts using images to express meaning, as well as listening to their inner voices as in metacognition (Brown, 1978, 1980). As they wrote their journals, they became language makers learning how language worked, using their multicultural reading and discussions to forge their own concepts about what they wrote.

Book 12.   Ky's Journal entry: Gender balance

> **IMAGINE THE WORST SOCCER TEAM YOU EVER SAW, TRIPLE IT, AND YOU'VE GOT THE REDBACK LEFTOVERS**
>
> Will Fisher is a kid trying to get through his life in the easiest way possible, he loves to play soccer. Will once walked out of the first grade soccer team which his dad coaches. He was left with a group of losers! None of them knew how to play soccer. Except for Maria and Stefan. Stefan in my own words was up himself only thinking about himself and his reputation. Will thought he was a goner… With a lot of trouble and a lot of time and effort put into it they won the grand final. Maria had chicken pops but she came and played with all the make up possible on.
>
> In short for I would say this book was about a team of leftovers changing into a team of champions. I would not have done what the people done in this book. But I think if you believe in something to keep on going until you get there. Like Will did.

If one considers the Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories as adapted for this research in relation to this writing, one finds that it is a piece of writing that takes up issues of gender balance and individual decisions in relation to life as it is perceived to be lived by young people and the readers who engage these lives on a story book. It further indicates the reader's willingness to challenge stereotypical models, those of 'the losers' of this world, and apply his own sense of disagreement with such stereotypes. The writing of the children in general picks up on the sorts of issues identified by Bean and Rigoni (2001) and the author's adaptation of their work for the purposes of this research.

This research takes up Mathison and Young's (1995) argument about the reaction to assimilationist policies of Anglo-conformity engendered by multicultural education. *The leftover redbacks* (Oswald, 2000) has characters from different ethnic groups, and offers a social and moral ideology in that, despite setbacks, ultimately success is assured through equal opportunity

of the sexes. There is no sexual stereotyping. Clark's (1993) view is that girls become acceptable to boys if they are competent as boys; otherwise girls are discouraged by boys from playing games. However, in this multicultural story stereotyping gender is not a consideration as Ky writes, 'Maria had chicken pops but she came and played with the entire make up on'. Gilbert (1991) states that every book conveys gendered information, although some is more recognizable than others. Egocentric personalities are identified by Ky, 'Stefan in my words was up himself only thinking of himself and his reputation.' Hollingdale (1988) maintains that ideology of morality is expressed in stories where even the most successful characters may endure injustice and misery for a period, but strong characters overcome hardship by their own initiative because self pity has no place. Symbolic interactionism is prominent in this journal as it relates to the interaction of children in their daily life in sport. Ky's journal relates to issues of multiculturalism in children's sport and this gives credibility to the thesis of multiculturalism.

The adaptation of Bean and Rigoni (2001) relates to Literature Evaluation (Item 4), Personal and Intertextual (Item 5) and Gender (Item 9). On the adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, a similar range of social justice measures was incorporated into the everyday activities of children's sport indicating that in this instance the aesthetic feeling of comradeship and satisfaction. In the next journals, Stella and Yanka each present their versions of the story *On loan* (Brooksbank, 1985), the options in adoption of an Asian child. The two journals were included so to provide a wider interpretation of what may be a very controversial subject.

Book 13.Stella's journal entry: Inter-race adoption

This is a book that explains the work and frustrations that adopting a child can be. It just shows that you have to think more than twice and about the future before stepping into this kind of stuff.

Lindy is a Vietnamese child that has been adopted from her home country into Australia. Lindy has had a normal life with her family. That is not surprising. She had never known her real family

so they meant nothing to her but a simple thought. Then out of the blue she gets a letter from her father of birth. I think this would be devastating for her adopted family.

Then her father comes to Australia and she gets to see him and shows him the sites. If I was adopted and my real father came I would have curiosity in me but I wouldn't get too attached to him because even though he made you, you still have a family who has taken you in with out questions.

Even though at the end of the book she said she would go to Vietnam when she is older, it still doesn't cure her curiosity in her that brought her to see her father.

If I was Lindy in the book I would feel torn between the family that brought me up and the one who was with me as I was being born. It would be even harder if they asked you to come back with them even though you want to be your birth family, you still have the family who has seen more of you at home.

Book 13. 2nd extract. Yanka's Journal entry

Dear reader,

When I read this book, I felt very lucky to be in the family I am today, I am glad that I wasn't adopted like Lindy was. Lindy must have been in a very difficult situation when she had to choose between her two parents, her foster parents or her real father.

If I was in her position and I received a letter from her real dad just out of the blue, I would be very shocked. Firstly Lindy thought that he was dead and secondly it would just be a surprise. When Lindy's dad came all they did was say a couple of words to each other, I feel they should have talked more.

In the end, I think that Lindy made a wise decision on staying in Australia. I would also be scared going away into a country with a man who I only knew for five days. I think it would be enormously hard for someone to choose between two parents who they love so much.

Clark (1993) argues that children ought to be regarded as individuals as this is one of the essential features of student-centred education. It provides a framework for enfranchising children and avoids stereotyping gender. Johnson and Smith (1993) maintain that multicultural literature-based programs challenge teachers and librarians to select contemporary actual fiction. Greenfield (1985, cited in Johnson and Smith 1993), states that children's books should be authentic and portray and interpret their lives and backgrounds. Finazzo (1997) discusses themes that should pervade realistic fiction. These should be direct and explicit for the reader in terms of the author's explanation of the story and the message implied by the story.

On loan (Brooksbank, 1985) is related to a contemporary issue of adoption based on a realistic situation, occurs in the present time because of the social and economic disruption of many families in a country like Vietnam, where this narrative originates. Everyday practical life is orderly and framed by conventional conception schemas which outline the proposed arrangements the ordinary person pursues in situations, experiences which are usually predictable. A multicultural dilemma is created when a Vietnamese father turns up in Australia and wants his adopted child to return home to Vietnam. Lindy has to make a momentous decision which could change her cultural life. Multicultural changes are not dramatic but take considerable time to evolve as people have to break old habits and traditions. This is the crux of Lindy's dilemma as the traditional frames of reference are shattered. How can this situation conform to more or less predictable patterns and how can a transformation take place without causing disruptions to happy family life? The intertextuality of this narrative becomes more than a cultural clash as a beloved child, Lindy, has the hurtful decision to make: leaving the family who brought her up or leaving them and going with a man who 'came out of the blue', claiming to be her real father.

As Lukens (1995) states, if the character of the story is believed, then there is belief in the experience, and as the story unfolds the theme becomes meaningful. Stella and Yanka establish the authenticity of the narrative in that the story of adoption could have or has happened in Australia. These journals confirm that triangulation has taken place in relation to the thesis question of multiculturalism.

In this case, the students employ the fictional-realistic elements of multiculturalism of the type categorized by the author in his adaptation of Bean and Rigoni (2001) as having a number of categories ranging from Family Experience (Item 2), Individual Resistance (Item 3) and Individual Decisions (Item 8). In the adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses there is a mix of stances mainly arising from the aesthetic because of the inner emotions of having to decide which family is the preferred option.

Stephens, Watson and Parker (2003) take the position that most kinds of human endeavours are attempts to comprehend the world, and that the story maker attempts to superimpose a direction, a model, upon experience. Stephens, Watson and Parker (2003) identify this as expressive realism, which endeavours to establish the fantasy of real life. A secondary world is created out of the confusion of experience through an order of conventions and codes that authors are able to construct; real life conversations and situations are much more splintered than in realist stories as there are no other voices interpreting issues. The journal writings of the children seem to conform to this pattern as they express themselves in 'expressive realism'. Essa presents the next journal *Mieko and the fifth treasure* (Coerr, 1995).

Book 14. Essa's journal entry

I think this book has two very important morals:

1. No matter what the situation if you try you're best that's all that counts.

2. If you love something a lot and suddenly something stops you from loving it or to do or see it you should be trying to find away around as much as possible.

For example Mieko thought that the bomb had taken away a treasure and gift in her life but actually it had just challenged her to find it with her mind and soul not just her hand and her mind.

I thought this book showed how the bomb affected many people and how when it touches one person and it really spreads through many people, like a disease.

I thought that Miko never really thought of how she could get her gift back she just felt sorry for her friends and relatives were trying to show her the key to her gift but she really had to do is reach out to get it herself.

I think that even though the village that Mieko got sent to didn't get affected by the bomb they should have still understood that bomb was not just a physical thing you have to deal with it is also an emotional thing to.

I think that out of the children in class Yoshi was the only one who saw past the outside Mieko and saw the inside of Mieko.

The book not only touched me but put anger, sadness, worriedness (if that's a word!) inside of me also understanding to the people who are affected by war and weapons. I like the way the book didn't show the end in words but put the ending in useful information.This is one of very few books that gave me another look on humanity.

Essa takes an interactive stance in her journal and concentrates on the subjective aspects of an individual, Mieko, in the social life of the aftermath of a war torn country, Japan. Essa takes a theoretical perspective on the image of Mieko rather than on the image of society. Essa interprets her reactions in her ability to think about and to react to Mieko's symbolic interactions. Essa refers to the peculiar and distinctive character of the interaction of Mieko in an era of most unusual circumstances of despair, devastation and disease that eventuates because of a war between human beings. Essa's involvement becomes human interaction either by the use of

symbols, or by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of another's action, those of Mieko. Essa's use of mediation consists of introducing a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the way humans behave.

Johnson and Smith (1993) regard the ages of children from ten to fourteen as early adolescence, (the ages of the children in this research are aged between eleven and twelve years), when children are transforming their concrete thinking to abstract reasoning, becoming conscious of multiple viewpoints on an issue and establishing their own identify. Essa shows how this is happening in her in writing in a very mature way and develops a very mature attitude in showing how what she read is life itself, through being concerned about the moral aspect of Mieko's story and of the individual's self-esteem. Essa gives her own versions of *Mieko and the fifth treasure* (Coerr, 1995) in terms of multiculturalism and explores the possibilities of equal opportunity background, gender, class, race, ethnicity and culture. As with the other students' written journals, Essa's writing contributes to triangulation of the author's thesis question of multiculturalism.

The adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categorization ranges from Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Individual Resistance (Item 3), Literature Evaluation (Item 4) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). On the adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, there are no borders of aesthetic-efferential reading responses here, as the two weave in and out of each other on the continuum that Rosenblatt (1991) finds so important in reader response theory. The next journal is *Sadako and the thousand paper cranes* (Coerr, 1981).

Book 11 Stella's 2nd journal entry

Dear Journal,

Today I have read the whole book of 'Sadako and the thousand paper cranes.' This story is very sad, I cried in the end because Sadako died. I like the way that the book was set out because in

the beginning there was a prologue explaining what had happened and I think every book should be set out this way because some books start off like this eg. "Sam, come here. What is this? And you don't really know what is going on. I think that if Sadako had stayed alive, she would have made a very good runner. I think that this story is trying to say something and I think that thing is to have peace on this land that so many people share. If there weren't wars, all the people, like Sadako, wouldn't be dead. I think that Sadako has gone to a better place than earth, where there is only peace and no war. I think that it was wonderful how all of Sadako's friends tried to help her recover and gave her support. This story has a lot of culture in it, eg. The way that the people look like, what they wear, their religion, their names and lots more. This story is so sad but I believe that wherever Sadako is now, she is happy.

Please remember:

This is our cry,

This is our prayer,

Peace in the world."

Stella in this journal explores outcomes and on her own initiative, discovers alternatives to selfish motives. She empathizes very strongly with the character of Sadako. Stella shows a maturity in opting for peace and not war through the character of Sadako, who faces inevitable death. Stella senses the differences in human beings and she responds by recognizing the well developed character of Sadako as representing the truth of human nature as a friendly and warm person. Stella reveals her own character in this journal as a person of insight, concern for people's welfare and hope for the future, and concludes her writing with a most appropriate homily, *This is our cry, This is our prayer, Peace in the world*.

Clark (1969, cited in Finazzo 1997), maintains that children need to understand other nationalities and races so that as adults there could be an interchange of traditions, customs and cultures with other people, Stella does this in her journal. Finazzo (1997) argues that in a school setting Children's Literature ought to be multicultural so that diversity issues are discussed and an

awareness of social consciousness is fostered. Stephens, et al (2003) point out that text is indispensable so readers make inferences from facts and cultural knowledge. Hollingdale (1988) states that in literature, as in life, it is necessary to commence where the children are, and to include their own frequently indistinct ideology. Gilbert (1991) argues that one of the most essential ways to introduce acceptable cultural behaviour to the young is through language, especially printed language, which becomes part of a school role and is presented in a school environment.

In the adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001), content analysis categories a number of categories extend to Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Individual Resistance (Item 3), Literature Evaluation (Item 4), Gender (Item 9) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses traverses the categories and indicates a similar range of aesthetic feelings, ranging from a sense of injustice caused by war and death, to the possibility of a better place after death, heaven. This journal visualizes incorporating informational responses to new knowledge that arises out of war due to the devastation of civilization, misery of people and hope for the future. Stella's journal confirms the credibility of this thesis by triangulation in illustrating how multiculturalism remains intact despite war as people retain their cultures, religion, distinctive practices and beliefs of society.

Lukens (1995) makes a distinction between children and adults. Children are not small adults and they have different experiences in gradations but not in kind. The enjoyment of literature for children should be the same for adults but because of children's limited experiences their pleasures are more defined. Lukens (1995) adds that theme in literature is a concept that maintains the story in concert, and may provide the reader with a social comment about human nature. This thesis follows the argument proposed by Chambers (1994) that the elements in a story demand a fair amount of critical activity concerned with finding patterns in regard to language, plot, images, character, narrative codes and much more. Chambers (1994) draws attention to the type of story and one's own interpretation, and that through finding patterns in the

story meaning is made. This then gives a feeling of pleasure. These approaches are oriented towards the tradition of symbolic interactionism in relation to interchange between children studying subjective meanings and the individual attribution of sense. These conceptions relate to how individuals interact with their own experiences, actions and interactions and relate to the texts that are studied in various ways. Symbolic interactionism is the key theoretical framework guiding and underpinning this research, and this becomes the unit of analysis of the case study that the author is observing, studying. *Maddie* (Caswell, 1995) provides the next journal writing for discussion.

Book 9 . Yanka's journal entry

This book was a little bit sad when Minh ran away from home because he thought he wasn't wanted. {But he was, he just had too many fights with his auntie and uncle} The reason he lived with his auntie and uncle was because when he was little he had a hard life. He didn't live in Australia. He lived in a country were there were lots of wars. Him, his mum and Maddie {his sister} were called refugees because they had to pay money to come on a boat to Australia because of the wars in their country. Minh's dad couldn't come because he was a doctor, but his last words to Minh were "look after them for me." Soon after that his mother died so Minh had thought he had failed his father's words. From then on they had to live with their Auntie and Uncle. When they came to the country they couldn't speak the language so they had to get taught. They also had to change their names so they sounded like Australian names. At school Minh ALWAYS got in trouble and NEVER fitted in. Maddie always fitted in and never got into trouble. So that was the reason he ran away. When he was gone his old friends came up to him with a stolen car and asked him if he wanted a ride, but he said no because he knew the car had been stolen. He leaned on the car so then it had his fingerprints on it. The car drove off and moments later the car was in a crash and the villains ran off. The car went to the police station with his fingerprints on it. He was going to get into trouble for taking the car. For some reason he wasn't going to tell the police who really stole it but in the end he did and he was safe. This was a

very multicultural story because there were so many different countries involved. I give this book a rating of 10 OUT OF 10.

This journal writing reveals a very detailed version of the story of Maddie and her brother, orphans from Vietnam trying to adapt to Australian culture. Despite an ever changing world where instantaneous communication and access to information is readily available, Yanka shows she has developed life-long learning skills and good work practice in literacy skills. She relates the text she has read to multicultural aspects of life of two LBOTE children (Maddie and Minh) from Vietnam and shows how cultural values may cause cultural shock in living in a new culture. Yanka shows how children of different cultures may interact with other children of different cultures and abate the fear of cultural shock. In terms of multiculturalism, such practices promote personal growth and the well-being of other cultures in developing symbolic interactionist exchanges. This process extends to the development of life skills that allow children to become adaptable and flexible learners, to integrate with other people's cultures and to promote understanding in creating a multicultural society. In this respect the author's thesis question of multiculturalism is again credible.

In the adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories, this journal rates Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Family Separation (Item 2), Institutional Racism (Item, 7) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). On the adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, there is mainly an efferential stance as the journal gives information on how a cultural conflict may be avoided by adopting a behavioural stance. Of course, there is much emotional feeling of an empathic aesthetic stance in the turmoil Minh felt, and also that Yanka felt when writing this journal.

Book 15. Tony's journal entry

The next written journal is *More than gold* (Hefferman, 2000). This story is a really touching story of a boy who took his role model from his father and tried to be like him. After an army of people took his dad he had to leave his country for protection. Riko and his mother went to Australia to stay there. Riko made new friends but his mind couldn't move on about his dad and his country. Riko was like me when he came to Australia because people made fun of him and teased him about his speaking and then they realized that he had a talent the other people took advantage on him. I felt sometimes really bad about him because I have already been through this and I knew how it felt. It brings my memory back. I felt that I was Riko, like somebody wrote my life down on a piece of paper. To achieve a goal you have to work hard and never show your pain and to have a goal you have to have a role model.

Anything is possible if you try.

This written journal is socially significant as it portrays an issue that may shape children's characters and personalities. As Tony writes his journal, he is doing what other Literature Study Circles students do in writing their journals; they are portraying what they have read in multicultural literature. This raises the question that books can be potentially either harmful or helpful in developing children's attitudes and beliefs. Tony immediately identifies Riko with a culture different from his own, and observes Riko as a role model for him-self and for others to emulate. This enables Tony, as well as others, to escape the confining present, to discover themselves, to become someone else. Such a process allows children to develop life cognitive skills that enable them to become adaptable and flexible learners, and to accept and adopt changes in a multicultural society as they face the known and the unknown in life.

In this case Tony engages in fictional-realistic components of multiculturalism of the kind categorized by the author in his adaptation of Bean and Rigoni's (2001) content analysis categories as Dramatic Experience (Item 1), Family Separations (Item 2), Individual Resistance

(Item 3), Individual Decisions (Item 8) and Engendered Culture (Item 10). Taking the adaptation of Rosenblatt's (1991) concept of aesthetic-efferential responses, the aesthetic experience in thinking, feeling has given much pleasure and understanding to Tony. The efferent stance here refers to the acquisition of information and of becoming a role model for others. Tony's written journal supports triangulation in the author's approach in his examination of multiculturalism.

In this section, the children's written journals have given credibility to the author's thesis question of multiculturalism and of changing classrooms into a community of learners. The written journals evolved out of the students' reading and discussion of multicultural literature in Literature Study Circles. The plots on the aesthetic/efferent continuum showed the children using literature to take on multicultural identities. These conclusions will be addressed in the final chapter.

Chapter 6

Possibilities for literature circles and multicultural identities.

In this, the final chapter of the thesis, the author considers the implications of the use of literature circles where children use multicultural literature and so construct their multicultural identities in a primary school context. A major aspect of such possibilities relate to pedagogies that may be used in relation to implementing government policies of multiculturalism, as different from previous policies of assimilation and older pedagogies associated with that policy.

In doing so, the project provides suggested ways in which teachers' work may be re-intellectualized as new, more relevant pedagogies have been examined. It has explored the ways in which the children in this study have been named and positioned within their education system, and has identified a need for them to develop a multicultural vocabulary that would take them beyond the jargon and slang that had become associated with what it meant for them to be a migrant in this country at that time. In the process, the author has re-examined deficit models associated with pedagogies of assimilation, and theoretical frameworks developed by a number of scholars, to link aspects of teaching and learning, especially in regard to reading literature, with the particular pedagogical device of literature study circles. Rosenblatt's (1991) work in her conceptualizations of reader response theory lies at the heart of the work regarding the children in this study as they are seen learning and developing attitudes about racism, prejudice and ethnocentricism, based on the theoretical basis of symbolic interactionism. The research has been framed as a qualitative case study, relying on ethnographic methods to explore a number of research questions, as set out in Chapter1.

Limitations

Although data for the six cases have been provided, these finding are specific to the respective discussions devised by the students themselves as responses to the texts they engaged as a part of the project. As indicated earlier, the children desired to conduct the literature study circles in their own manner. Therefore no claim may be made that the response patterns and themes discussed in this study can be inferred, generalized, or replicated as far as other children may be concerned. For example, with a different group of children in literature study circles in a different school environment, and a different group structure, very different discussion response patterns and themes could emerge. This study may be regarded as unusual as children controlled their own study group and its outcomes practically throughout the entire research.

Alvermann, Dillon, and O'Brien (2001) suggest that a researcher may encounter a degree of subjectivity entering into a study that is negative. He may hear, for example, stereotyping based on race, gender, and physical disabilities. Other negative assumptions about human beings may be based on their cultural and geographical backgrounds. In this study quite the opposite cultural bias is shown. The children are discussing contemporary concepts, views and opinions about a global world of instant communication and almost instant transportation in a future world of multiculturalism. These are relatively sophisticated ideas to which children bring strong idealistic views. Therefore results cannot be compared with an adult outlook and standards in judging the credibility and value of the findings.

Multicultural Literature

The purpose of this research has been to investigate and portray the teaching of multiculturalism in one classroom in particular in a high density migrant suburban school in the south-eastern part of Melbourne. A number of questions related to this investigation have been posed. This thesis

has shown that multicultural literature used with a group of six children, aged between eleven and twelve in literature study circles has been successfully used to change the children's perceptions about multiculturalism, and, indeed, to take on these new values in their own practices.

The children's reading of multicultural literature has enabled the six children to gain an informed understanding of children and people from other countries and even of their own cultural backgrounds. Most of the children's literature has related to children from different cultural backgrounds living together in the same country. Many of the stories have been written by Australian authors and portrayed characters in positive, non-stereotypical ways. There are no deficit models of characters, especially of LBOTE children. The reading presents a positive portrayal of all the characters, thus ensuring the readers feeling it worthwhile to be part of the larger society.

Reading multicultural literature appeared to increase the children's cultural understanding of other cultures and their sensitivity of those different to themselves. The transcripts show that it enhanced their knowledge of their own environment and the world, and gave the children the opportunities to consider the concept that although people have many cultural differences, they also share many similarities. It has been the reading multicultural books such as *On loan* (Brooksbank, 1985), *Maddie* (Caswell, 1995) and *Sadako and the thousand cranes* (Coerr, 1981) that has formed the basis for discussion and the internalization of new knowledge.

The multicultural books that the children in this study have discussed provide an array of textual resources for the real dialogue in literature study circles (discussed later). The students are occupied in dialogue as they socially construct meaning in support of their independent views, opinions and beliefs. They articulate their inner voices and images as examples of metacognitive strategies (Brown, 1978) prominently in their presentations. This provides an opportunity for the author to visualize these occurrences in the transaction between readers and literary text in embracing the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity.

It can be seen in this study that text provides situations for efferent or aesthetic expression and as a cultural vehicle establishes belongingness, identity and ways of understanding. The wide range of stories read by the children give them insights across cultural bridges: from the traumas of war, racism, prejudice, adoption, gender, religion, sexism, culture shock, ostracism, single parent migrant-families, immigration, learning a new language, and taking a devil's advocate position, to role models and hope for the future.

Issues of Teaching Multiculturalism

It is not just the content of the literature that the children engaged with that is at issue here. It has become very apparent in the study that the pedagogy employed in the conduct of literature study circles also has played an important part.

The question of how to learn about multiculturalism has, at its heart, ways in which classroom teachers could interpret multicultural policy and implement multicultural programs. The author had been focused from the beginning of this study on aligning it with certain values. The very foundation of multiculturalism policy, after all, is its refusal of deficit models, usually manifested in the belief that other cultural groups have to be fixed or remediated in some way to reflect the values, dreams, aspirations, and even morals, of mainstream culture.

The questions that have come to prominence in this research are about ways in which the classroom and these particular students may engage concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, and ways in which they may be changed as a community of learners through literature study circles discussions. This research has indicated that this may well be the case, as four children in literature study circles are from different cultural backgrounds and work as a community of learners that play an active role in shaping their own learning. The cup of coffee incident, discussed in Chapter 1, is particularly illustrative. Not feeling the need of the researcher's

presence as they work, the children took control of their own discussions. The author has interpreted this aspect of the children's activities as based on perspectives of learning and development, consistent with theories of learning as outlined by scholars such as Vygotsky (1978). The author sees this instance as exemplifying Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zones of Proximal Development supporting the children's engagement with the process of literary understanding, exploring, rethinking, explaining and defending their own understandings.

It can be seen, then, that the Circles have scaffolded the children to take control of their own learning and to avoid a teacher-centred learning program. It is shown also, in agreement with Dawson and Fitzgerald (1999), that the success of the structure of literature study circles comes from their flexibility, such as offering children choice in the selection of the title they want to read. This gives them control over their own reading and enhances their engagement and motivation. The author did form his literature study circles not for didactic presentation of facts, principles and rules to be learnt, remembered and applied, but as strategies that scaffold the children as they co-construct knowledge and understandings. This is very evidently what has happened.

Implementing Multicultural policy in a school

Following Mathison and Young (1995), the author took the view that the combining of methods in multicultural education and those espoused in constructivism would offer a bridge between theory and practice. Constructivism is concerned with cognitive theories of learning while multicultural education, with its pluralist orientation, is conceived as a reaction to conservative policies of government's assimilationist concepts of Anglo-Celtic conformity. The author in this study has with some success is able to link the espoused values of Australian multiculturalism and multicultural education to pedagogy in the form of children reading multicultural literature in literature study circles.

Multicultural literature has assisted, within the Literature Circles, the children's understanding of how to promote equity in social justice issues. They have explored their own cultures and at the

same time contributed to intercultural understanding. The children in literature study circles confronted name calling, prejudice, stereotyping and gender issues by exploring a piece of literature and reflecting on these issues. The children in the literature study circles related their cultural or their parents' cultural experiences. This has led the children into deconstructing the idea of Australia as a homogeneous society.

Capturing the multicultural student voice(s)

There are two important features that have arisen out of this study. The first is the children's desire to take control of literature study circles and take responsibility for their own learning. The second is to change the world. This is exemplified by the children wanting Roald Dahl to return to their school in the twenty first century so they may discuss with him multiculturalism. In both incidences, multicultural bridges are being crossed enabling children to voice their own understanding of themselves and their environment. This has happened in literature study circles because children have been given the opportunity to form their own reading group in a community of learners.

The children in literature study circles are not afraid to cross cultural bridges even where this involves conflict as is evident in the children's discussion of Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.* An authentic situation in which problems of social issues as happens in multiculturalism was created. The children show they hold Dahl in high esteem and enjoy his writings. The invitation of Roald Dahl into their classroom in the twentieth first century illustrates that in life, as in literature, children in literature study circles sense the differences in children's authors that they have read. The children in literature study circles show that they are capable of recognizing and responding to well-developed characters that verify truth about human nature. At the same time the children are discovering that humanity exists in themselves and concern for others.

Understanding multiculturalism and diversity.

Part of the thesis question is about whether the children do have a real understanding of multiculturalism and diversity. This is examined through the reading of multicultural literature in literature study circles, where the focus is on the individual in the context of the social group. It is about the meaning children bring to social interaction, as well as the conception of the children as individuals actively constructing a cultural life. As a social group children become engaged in the process of literary understanding, scrutinizing, rethinking, interpreting and defending their own cognition. Self-regulating strategies enable the children to explore their thinking in different ways. As a group, children in literature study circles become a cultural entity and act as a catalyst for other children in their class.

The six children in literature study circles read a wide range of cultural texts and discussed a wide range of social justice and equity issues. The children become literate in many different contexts. It may be assumed that self-regulating of literature study circles by the children themselves holds promise for understanding the role of child - directed learning. Although children took control and direction of their own learning, this situation has not the intention of the author, but it does provide the opportunity for him to observe what occurs in the transactions between readers and literary text on the children's own volition. They showed they had internalized, according to Vygotsky (1978) their learning.

Dialogue in literature study circles

The children may be seen as individuals, changing, and developing as their characters emerged as the year progressed. The children developed the form and practice that not only preserves the meaning of literary text, but also become makers of their own interpretation of meaning, and transferred that meaning in their negotiation with each others and the text as self-regulating thinkers. Their learning skills may be defined as a process of transferring connections, and

finding patterns that connect so they may make meaning of their world. This was described in some detail in an earlier chapter.

In this study, the peer group dialogues create culturally conscious arguments that challenged divergent beliefs and sometimes contradictory interpretations of words and events. First, the children sought clarification of the words as they reached for meaning, and second, further practiced explanations of the argument to define the word meaning in relation to the event or issue. In both cases, it becomes multiple interpretations of key events in their concern for social justice issues. The questions of power and social resolution are scrutinized through divergent views in a manner that would be difficult to accomplish without reading multicultural literature, critical book discussions and personal journals.

In this study the children have questioned their own and others' interpretations about many social and equity issues in circumstances created by their peers in the group. In the use of Literature Study Circles and journal writing, the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

The significance of the study

This present study offers a direction that multicultural policy and multicultural education may take through multicultural literacy. The concepts for experiencing literature and culture presented in this study have been a focus point for exploration and reflection. Another consequence may be that it also offers an alternative to a rote-learning situation by transferring the learning centre to be driven by children themselves as has been usual in the classroom. This thesis has shown how students as independent readers, and being in control of their own learning, has indicated a way towards children voicing their own interpretations as to how they see the world, working together

in a community of learners to solve real, meaningful problems, and to what extent the multicultural world is really like.

The children's work that has been illustrated in Chapter 5 has been fundamental in addressing the main thrusts of this thesis. To recapitulate, this has been to explore ways in which a group of Grade 5/6 children, in a high density migrant suburban school in the south-eastern part of Melbourne, embrace the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity and in what ways are the children changed as a community of learners through literature group discussions in the classroom. Multiculturalism is constructed on the concept of multiple perspectives that is more than one way to view and understand an event, issue, or a generation. Multiculturalism in the classroom is inclusive as it recognizes all children's cultural groups and allows the exploration of cultural similarities and differences in human experience and recognizes the extensive range of human contributions to historical development.

Conclusion

The present study is of significance in that it offers possible directions multiculturalism and multicultural education may take through children's reading of multicultural literacy in literature study circles. The concepts for experiencing literature and culture presented in this study are intended to be a focus point for further exploration and reflection. Possibilities for alternative approaches to children's engagement with multicultural perceptions and perspectives by means of transferring learning centres to be driven by children themselves have been canvassed. This thesis is about students being independent readers, voicing their own interpretations as to ways in which they see the world, working together in a community of learners to solve real, meaningful problems. In doing so, the children have not only engaged perceptions of a multicultural world as it is, but also as it might be.

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