

**Critically interrogating classroom constructions of 'community' and
'difference':
a case study.**

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Abstract

Within educational literature, the concept of 'community' has been problematised over the last decade, particularly as regards how constructs of 'community' that aim to provide '*a sense of belonging ... of collective concern for each individual*' (Nodding 1996: 258) can also operate to exclude, devalue or homogenise diverse groups of students.

The tensions that exist between desirable features of a learning community that provides a sense of belonging and at the same time recognises and celebrates difference and diversity are suggested by Fines, et al (1997: 252) who argue that '*(t)he process of sustaining a community must include a critical interrogation of difference as the rich substance of community life...*'

This paper reports on an aspect of an empirical research project that examined relations of power between teachers and students as these operate through explicit processes used to create classroom communities. Through a case study of one composite grade primary classroom with children of diverse cultural heritage, we critically analyse constructs of 'community' in light of current literature on difference and diversity. Specifically we address the question: what pedagogical processes create a learning community where *acceptance* of difference is reworked to better address unequal relations of power?

Introduction

As teacher educationalists, our interest in and concerns about how concepts of 'community' and 'difference' are constructed within educational settings have been heightened over the three years that we have worked collaboratively on a small ARC-funded research project, entitled 'Classroom cultures: a study of negotiation, collusion, resistance and power in student-teacher relations.' During the three years of this project, we have explored the ways that teachers and students from three different primary schools in Melbourne, Victoria have

utilised specific practices that enable particular relations of power to come into play, for example, through the establishment of classroom rules, through pedagogical processes and in the ways students enter into and/or resist such practices on the basis of gendered and cultural experiences. Our research methods included individual interviews with the teachers, regular classroom and school-based observations in each school, focus group discussions with children, as well as children's written and drawn responses to our specific questions.

Elsewhere (Allard and Cooper, 2000; Allard and Cooper, 2001) we have compared and contrasted the differing pedagogical approaches endorsed and used by the three teachers and examined their students' responses to these processes in order to delineate the ways in which power relations operate within these specific settings. We have also explored in-depth the links between one teacher's stated views about how teacher-student relations should be enacted and examined how such beliefs come into being—and are challenged—through actual classroom practices, particularly in reference to gendered relations (Cooper & Allard, 2000).

In this paper, we take up the issues that have emerged in terms of 'community' and 'difference', and in particular, cultural difference. Specifically, we draw on empirical data gathered at one of the primary schools that was a site for the already mentioned study in order to illustrate and analyse how concepts of social justice, 'community', 'difference', and pedagogical practices, including relations of power, are called into play in an educational setting. After briefly describing pedagogical practices that operated in this school, we review the literature from two distinct fields of research: that which explores issues of 'social justice'; and as well, literature that investigates how ideals of 'community' and 'communities of learning' are taken up in schooling practices. Through our review and discussion of current literature, we highlight the tensions that exist between concepts of 'community' based on commonalities and 'sameness', and social justice discourses that aim to attend to difference. Finally, we return to our case study to analyse the data in light of the question: (how) do the pedagogical processes that are used in this school create a learning community where *acceptance* of difference is reworked to better address unequal relations of power?

We see this question as significant to teacher education programs: firstly, because too often 'cultural differences' (used to refer to students of non Anglo-Australian heritage), are often constructed as a 'deficit'. Students, *because of their culture differences* rather than because of how those differences are dealt with in education, are somehow deemed to be lacking in the necessary cultural capital to 'succeed'. Enabling teacher education students to re-think/examine the assumptions that underpin these constructions and to find ways to build 'communities of learners' and simultaneously address the diversity among learners as regards gender/cultural/socio-economic status, remains an ongoing challenge. Additionally, how to establish positive classroom environments and student relationships that build group rapport is of great concern to many beginning teachers. By examining these issues at the micro level, we aim to provide an explicit example of school based practice that will further debate and discussion.

Case Study. Frankley Primary School Artists in Residence Program: 'We Share a Vision'.

Frankley Primary School¹ is an inner city school of 160 students. Located in one of the oldest inner city areas of Melbourne, the school has catered for the constantly changing population of new arrivals for over 100 years. Sixteen language backgrounds other than English are represented, with a predominance of students of Hmong, Macedonian, Turkish, Chinese, or Somalian heritage. A small number of students are from Anglo-Australian families. The school population is mainly drawn from a Ministry of Housing high-rise estate. Since many of the parents of the students at Frankley Primary are first generation migrants,

with limited fluency in English and limited formal education, paid work is not easily obtained. Some of the students at Frankley Primary School have neither parent in ongoing paid work, and many families rely on part-time or casual employment as their main source of income. A significant proportion of families at the school receive some kind of government assistance in order to survive. Nevertheless, the school itself does not appear to be struggling under insurmountable burdens. Rather, as frequent visitors to the school, we noticed the level of energy, enthusiasm and vitality that children and staff and parents all seem to exude. Parents are incorporated into the daily routines of the school and there is a sense of the vigour and strength of the 'old and new', with locals who have lived in the neighbourhood for much of their lives joining with the more recently arrived migrant families to create a school community that aims to do well by its' children.

As teacher educators, we had prior contact through practicum visits or by working with staff members on other projects, with this school before beginning this study. Because of this prior knowledge, we knew that particular pedagogical processes, for example, cooperative learning, were used by staff and endorsed within the wider school context as productive teaching and learning strategies. Additionally, we were aware that this school used practices such as a junior school council and negotiation of classroom rules—what we interpreted as a commitment to democratic participation in decision-making. These practices seemed to be useful starting points to explore how relations of power operated in classrooms and in the wider school community to govern 'acceptable' interactions among the diverse groups of students and between students and teachers.

We chose initially to explore classroom interactions at the grade 3-4 level (8, 9 and 10 year olds) because, as part of the data gathering, we wanted students to write responses as well as to speak to us about fairly complex issues. We saw such multi-aged groupings as evidence of the school's commitment to build students' understanding across differences, including that of age, ability, and culture.

Methods of data collection

The data on which this paper draws was collected through classroom observations in the composite grade 3-4 at Frankley Primary School over approximately a six month period, an analysis of the documents submitted by the school for funding support to their proposed Artist in Residence Program, and ongoing discussions with school staff, including in particular the principal. The classroom was visited by one of us on a regular basis, usually every week for a period of three months, in order to observe the ways in which the classes were structured and the types of interactions among the children and between the children and their teachers. The classroom observations then took place at fortnightly or three weekly intervals. At Frankley, we also were able to observe whole school events, including the end-of-year concert that is an aspect of this paper. This helped us to think through issues of how practices in the wider community context, challenged or enhanced the ways in which children and teachers interacted.

While many of the staff were Anglo-Australian, two teacher aides were of Hmong and Turkish heritage and were directly involved in the submission and 'worked closely with their respective communities' (Submission, 1998) on the specific project. This meant that the school as a whole had both the opportunity to learn from and about the different cultures and was able to provide the children with the emotional support of staff who knew their families well. The staffroom for example, was often the space in which teachers and the teacher aides along with parents met over morning tea and chatted informally about what was going on in the wider school community. These opportunities to share insights and to value different perspectives are another means of providing whole school support for the work that goes on within classrooms.

Additionally, it is important to note that the school had a 'Multicultural Policy', as well as an 'Equal Opportunity Policy', an 'Anti-Bullying Policy', and the Department of Education mandated 'Student Code of Conduct Policy'. While these policies do not of course say anything about actual practices in school, they nevertheless suggest an awareness of and perhaps a commitment to addressing issues of social justice. Of relevance to the project discussed here are three specific statements from the Multicultural Policy (See Appendix One): These state that the purpose is:

- To ensure that the ethnic backgrounds of all students are recognized, accepted and celebrated, and that all students understand that their background is integral to Australian national identity; [...]
- To develop a positive attitude towards diversity by broadening the intercultural knowledge and understandings of students; [...]
- Intercultural studies will take a whole school approach, permeating all school organization and curriculum.

Shared Vision

As one means of addressing the above, in 1998, the school applied for and gained a \$6,000 grant to bring in two 'Artists in Residence to work with the children, staff and parent community over a three month period, culminating in a whole school performance at the local Town Hall for the community. In the application for funding the school described students as having *'culturally rich and diverse backgrounds that the school wishes to draw on to create a project that continues to actively promote acceptance, tolerance, co-operation and equality for all. Thus the project name, 'Shared Vision'.*

The Artists in Residence Program at Frankley Primary School had four stated objectives:

- to create a musical theatre, drawing on and reflecting many cultural aspects of our school community;
- to develop and apply basic skills of performance that emphasise percussion, voice and movement;
- to give the children the opportunity to participate in an 'event' where a positive learning environment is encouraged and where they feel good about expressing themselves;
- to create a sense of identity and unity within the whole school community.' (excerpt from Submission, 1998)

In order to achieve these objectives, two artists were employed to work with teachers, parents and children from all grades for a period of twenty days over three months. The project was integrated into the school's Key Learning Areas of The Arts and of Studies in Society and the Environment; specifically, the project was 'designed to help the children to explore practices, customs and trademarks of cultural groups through verse, games, song and dance.' (Submission, 1998). Units of work were developed at each grade level, including at Prep grade, 'The local community', at Grades 1-2, 'Other Countries'; at Grades 3-4, 'Multicultural Australia' and at Grades 5-6, 'Australian History/my place'. Thus, while external funding to support this endeavour was necessary, the program was viewed as an integral part of curriculum development at the school.

Staff were centrally involved throughout the project in both developing, rehearsing and delivering the cross age and cross cultural program. Teachers supported the program by working with the children to practice and revise material in the time between visits by the artists.

Parents were invited to participate at a pre-project 'launch'. The expertise of parents from different cultural groups provided ongoing input into the project, eg., parents participated in a 'marimba making day' prior to the beginning of the project. [excerpt from Submission, 1998]

Over the three months for which the two artists were funded, all students from Prep to Year 6 were involved in the program. Specifically, students in Years 3-6 (including the class that we were observing) participated in script writing, marimba playing, percussion, acting, use of visual arts and making props and performing as a recorder ensemble. Over the course of the three months, the original aims of the program were somewhat modified to ensure that all students felt able to participate and contribute. The program on the final night that we, along with most parents and many other local community members attended, was entitled 'We Share A Dream' and consisted of three acts [see Appendix Two]. Of particular interest to us was 'Act II—The Stories.' In this sequence, children from different classes and from different cultural backgrounds performed together to 'tell' the stories that had been workshopped and written by the children themselves over the preceding three months. These four stories all took as their central theme recent experiences of migration. They were: The Story of the Rock, The Story of the Shell, The Story of the Ring, The Story of the Tiger.

Each of these 'stories' were performed by the children from Prep through to Grade 6. Along with the children's performances, Act III consisted of dances performed by adults and children from the Macedonian, Cook Islander, Turkish, or Hmong family and community groups.

Before analysing the data in terms of the question '(how) do the pedagogical processes that are used in this school create a learning community where *acceptance* of difference is reworked to better address unequal relations of power?' we review some of the key literature that has helped us to think about the issues raised.

Social Justice

In thinking about this question, we examined the literature around issues of social justice, (eg., Young, 1990; 2000; Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz, 1998; Gale & Densmore, 2000). In particular, when considering questions of power relations, we found the work of Gewirtz (1998) to be helpful.

Gewirtz, (1998: 470) following Young (1990), refers to two kinds of social justice: 'distributive justice' (sometimes called 'procedural justice' and taken to mean the equitable access to and distribution of goods, services, resources, as examples, within society), and that which she calls 'relational justice'. She explains this second by saying:

The *relational* dimension refers to the nature of the relationships which structure society. A focus on this...helps us to theorize about issues of power and how we treat each other, both in the sense of micro face-to-face interactions and in the sense of macro social and economic relations which are mediated by institutions such as the state and the market. [...] Relational justice might *include* procedural justice, but it is about more than this. It is about the *nature* and *ordering* of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of

society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level. [emphases in original] (p. 471).

We found the emphasis Gewirtz gives to relational justice as operating at the micro-level a very useful means to examine just how social relations are 'ordered' at Frankley Primary School.

In her review of the different discourses that inform the concept of 'social justice', Gewirtz discusses the tensions that emerge between what she calls 'solidarity and difference' (p. 475). We understand this in terms of the question: how can schools build a sense of community while maintaining and honouring the distinctiveness of different values and beliefs? Gewirtz states that

the answer lies in a *politics of recognition* (Fraser, 1997), an *openness to unassimilated otherness* (Young 1990) or what Leonard (1997) calls *anethics of otherness*.' (Gewirtz, p. 475).

Gewirtz makes the point that such approaches to social justice, ie ones that recognise relational justice, are all important in so far as they provide an ethical and practical basis for relationships *marked by celebration and respect of difference and mutuality*.' (Gewirtz, 1998: 477) (our emphases)

Arguing that social justice has been too long off the educational policy agenda, Gewirtz then goes on to identify a set of questions that need to be addressed by education policy research. One in particular seems of relevance here. This is:

How and to what extent do education policies support, interrupt or subvert...the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness (for education workers and students)? (p. 482)

'Community'

Recent research and current educational literature (ie., Smyth, 2000, Cox, 1995; Shields and Seltzer, 1997; Osterman, 2000) around the concept of 'community' also emphasise the importance of mutuality and relatedness as means for constructing a sense of belonging and of recognition. However, Cox (1995) and Smyth (2000) have argued that currently society is increasingly experiencing a dramatic loss of social connectedness. Noddings, (1996) argues that necessary features of community and a sense of connectedness, are: *'a sense of belonging, of collective concern for each individual, of individual responsibility for the collective good, and of appreciation for the rituals and celebrations of the group'* (1996 258). However she also critiques what she calls the 'dark side' of community, identifying this with traditional *'tendencies towards parochialism, conformity, exclusion, assimilation, distrust...of outsiders, and coercion'* (Nodding 1996: 258).

Like Noddings, Cox (1995) too warns of the dark side of community. By this she means,

the way groups use the processes of belonging to create outgroups and conflict. Nationalism, tribalism and racism are used to invoke an Other who is a threat (p. 34).

Cox argues persuasively for valuing *'newcomers who may be different'*, and makes the case that *'prejudice, bias and racism are all learned responses'* and can be unlearned.

However, a number of educational researchers (eg., Tsolidis, 1990; 2000; Cope and Kalantzis, 1990; Rizvi, 1993) have demonstrated in their empirical research how schooling practices frequently fail to address questions of 'difference'. Indeed Rizvi (1993) argues that particular classroom and school practices work to contribute to what he (and others) refer to as 'the new racism'. This concept is

...informed by a theory of human nature that presumes that human beings have a deep-seated desire to prefer the company of 'their own kind' and that it's 'only common sense' for people to be hostile to other groups and thus protect their territory from 'aliens'. (Rizvi 1993: 130)

This seems to us to present again a somewhat different perspective on 'the dark side of community' (Noddings, 1996: 258). That is, rather than insisting that everyone must assimilate and/or conform to the dominant form of community, which can be a result of power relations built on coercion, 'new racism' suggests an indifference toward and indeed a willingness to exclude those who are deemed to be 'too different'. This then becomes 'normalised' in schooling processes, where 'difference' is supposedly 'tolerated' but never directly addressed in positive ways, and where 'otherness' is used as an excuse to marginalize or ostracise those who do not 'fit'.

Furman (1998) in her exploration of community recognises that school populations are increasingly diverse and points out that in much of the educational literature, 'community is assumed to be based on commonalities, the shared values, visions, and purposes...' (p. 298). She argues that such a concept is based on a modernist construct and endeavours to work through an analysis based on what she calls 'descriptive postmodernism'. However, Furman also claims that 'at the deconstructive extreme, postmodernism seems to negate the possibility of community altogether' (p. 309). According to Furman this can result in 'balkanization', that is a sense of belonging within the small group but with no developed sense of community 'in the larger school culture.' Additionally, Furman's concept of a 'postmodern community of otherness' where *acceptance of difference* is the norm does not appear to go far enough to challenge the taken for granted mainstream values. As Rizvi suggests, it is possible to 'accept' difference without decentering the privileged positions already held by the dominant group, due to being white, or male, or anglo celtic, for example.

In thinking through these paradoxes, we found the work of Fine, Weis, Powell (1997) particularly useful. Following Brehm & Kassin, (1996: 157), they review 'Equal Status Contact Theory' that identifies four necessary conditions to achieve 'equal status' between differing groups of students, thus decentering the more traditionally privileged positions. These conditions are:

- 1) the contact should occur in circumstances that place the ...groups in an equal status; 2) the contact should involve one-on-one interactions among individual members of the...groups; 3) members of the...groups should join together in an effort to achieve superordinate goals; and 4) the social norms, defined in part by relevant authorities, should favor intergroup contact.

Fine, Weis & Powell focus on 'designed cooperation', what we understand to mean the setting of explicit tasks where through the process of working together, a sense of community develops around a shared purpose, seems a useful way of addressing the danger of what Furman identifies as 'balkanization'. As well, their argument for the concept of communities seemed relevant to our own work within this project. About this they propose a community:

where differences are self-consciously drawn upon to enrich and texture the community; where negotiations of difference lie at the heart of the community; and where democratic participation is a defining aspect of decision making and daily life within the community... (1997: 252)

To build different forms of community, as Fine et al, 1997 have noted, an ongoing commitment to and use of 'designed' cooperative learning among groups and across differences as a pedagogical technique works to build co-reliance among members and as well, provides for a sense of belonging. The process of working through shared tasks where all members contribute in order for the different groups/community to achieve the goal, is a means that can help to give value and respect to all contributions and enable students to develop skills that will challenge predictable relations of power, based on gender or cultural differences, as examples.

Analysis and discussion of data

We return now to data from Frankley Primary School to analyse the activities previously described in terms of the issues that we have highlighted, specifically, the overall question raised by Gewirtz (1998), ie. how do the pedagogical processes at the micro level of Frankley Primary School enable *'the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness (for education workers and students)?'* (p. 482). As well, we draw on the four criteria regarding 'equal status contact theory' identified by Brehm & Kassin, (1996: 157) and cited in Fine, et al, 1997.

In light of Gewirtz's question: how do the pedagogical processes at the micro level of Frankley Primary School enable *'the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness (for education workers and students)?'* (p. 482), we would argue that as part of the whole school approach in developing and implementing the 'Shared Vision' program, children from diverse cultural groupings were enabled to explore, explain, script, dramatise and perform stories that drew on their own familial experiences of migration. The experiences of displacement, the trauma of war, the heartbreak of leaving the 'homeland' and family, the achievement of arriving in Australia are all common to the stories that were told by the children. This allowed children to recognise the commonality of feelings about the migration experience. Through the different stories told, there is also an acknowledgement of diverse cultural groupings (eg., Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, Laotian). In turn, this sense of recognition of the shared experiences of migration and respect for the differences in the children's cultural backgrounds seemed to us apparent in the ongoing classroom based work that the school did as part of the project.

From our recollections of the whole school performance at the Town Hall, we wrote:

Witnessing the performance on the night, it seemed to us that there was a recognition and respect for the loss, the pain, the strength and the courage that was part of each these different stories of migration. The shared emotional journey experienced by families who had recently migrated from Laos, Vietnam, Somalia, Macedonia, Turkey, Samoa or China was evident. In the children's performances and in each parent group response, there seemed to us to be a recognition and appreciation of the commonality of feelings that crossed the diversity of different groups present. (Fieldnotes, December, 1998).

This, of course, is only our 'reading' of the final event. We did not interview students, parents or other community members to record their perspectives concerning the children's

presentations. However, the Evaluation Report of the school coordinator, the artists in residence and a selection of parental and student comments on the benefits of the program, concurred with our observations. One conclusion of the *Artists and Environment Designers in Schools Report* was that:

A major benefit has been the feeling of pride and achievement gained by the children especially by those who may not normally achieve in...classroom situations...The program pulled together nearly all of our parent community and this in itself is a major benefit. (p. 16)

'Equal status'

For a closer reading of the data, we also want to consider the four criteria necessary to establish what Brehem and Kassin (1996: 157) call Equal Status Contact. Under the four criteria we would argue that at least three of the four have been met to at least some degree by the work that took place at Frankley Primary School. For example, when considering the requirement that 1) *'the contact should occur in circumstances that place the ...groups in an equal status'*, we again cite the focus on the commonality of experiences of migration, that is, different stories were workshopped with students from diverse cultural groupings and four stories were performed. While it may be argued that those few Anglo-Australian students could not share equally in scripting this experience, through the performances, these students played some of the roles and thus in some ways gained 'equal status' through the experience. In order to develop these scripts, all students were asked to talk with their families. Thus, even those for whom the migration experience was not recent, could nevertheless through this process, gain a better understanding of their family history. Additionally, the school in the three months of work with the artists involved students of all ages in making musical instruments, producing music and participating in music ensembles that were new to all, ie., marimbas and other percussion instruments. Thus, no one group of children started off with prior knowledge or better experiences of how to make the music—all shared in the equal status of 'beginner'.

As regards the second criteria that *'the contact should involve one-on-one interactions among individual members of the [different] groups'*, we cannot comment on the extent per se to which this particular criteria was addressed in the lead-up to the final performance. However, from our classroom observations over the six month period that we worked in the school, we did frequently observe the extent to which children were paired and/or grouped cooperatively in an ongoing way in the processes of daily classroom work (see Cooper and Allard, 2000). Thus, the experiences of working with individuals from different gender and cultural groups was part of the 'normal' life of this classroom. This was not without certain problems, eg., at times particular groups of boys were less than cooperative with other members of the class, but this seemed to us to be based on gender and 'ability' relations rather than socio-economic status or differences in cultural heritage.

In terms of the third criteria, that *'members of the [different] groups should join together in an effort to achieve superordinate goals,'* there was evidence of classroom-based and whole-school rehearsals; cooperative activities within classes and between classes with different age groups and cultural groupings working together across age groups; diverse age groups of students working together to collaborate in order to produce the whole school performance and the different family and community groups working together to perform dances from their cultural heritage (see Appendix one). We saw the 'celebration' that was the outcome of the three months work in this school as setting the 'superordinate goal' for this community, and at the same time, reflecting the ongoing commitment to respect for intercultural differences cited as a guiding principle in the Multicultural Policy, ie., that

'Intercultural studies will take a whole school approach, permeating all school organization and curriculum.'

In terms of the fourth criteria, *'the social norms, defined in part by relevant authorities, should favor intergroup contact'*, there is evidence of drawing on the schools Multicultural Policy in the submission for funding; the school-based emphasis on community-building in policies and pedagogical processes, eg., the negotiation with children of classroom based rules, and curriculum; the importance placed on 'intercultural' knowledges by teachers as expressed in the professional development activities of the teachers at the school (see for example the Multicultural Policy , Appendix One) and the emphasis in school practices on honouring participation of families from diverse cultural heritage through encouraging their involvement in the school and related community activities.

Clearly, from our observations and gathering of research data, we saw the Frankley Primary School pedagogical processes as exemplifying the type of community that not only builds a sense of belonging and mutuality among very diverse students but also establishes equal status among the diverse community groups and students.

We wondered whether the above processes used to value diversity worked within this school *because* so few of the children and their families came to the school as members of the dominant culture (eg., Anglo-Australian). Therefore, the more typical hierarchical power relations that are called into play through discourses of dominance and subordination of cultural values are less obvious here. In their relations with each other, children from these different ethnic groups are more able to meet as equals and co-participants. Equal status in contacts is more easily established in such situations because there is not a taken-for-granted hierarchy of power relations based on the wider cultural assumptions concerning whose culture is to be valued.

Additionally, because the school community as a whole, and specifically the teaching staff, valued 'intercultural understandings', the processes used at Frankley Primary attend to relations of power between adults and children and among diverse groups of children in newer, different ways than those relations of power more commonly held within some educational settings that expect students to simply 'fit' within hegemonic discourses and/or those that operate to 'other' students who appear as 'too different' (Rizvi, 1993). While we acknowledge the specific context and localised circumstances that make Frankley Primary School's processes unique, this attempt to draw on commonalities of experiences across difference might also offer a pedagogical method that could prove productive in communities where differences in identity categories are less overt but still need to be addressed.

Finally, we argue that this case study offers teacher education students an explicit example of how a school can and does work to build a sense of belonging, relatedness, and mutuality amongst students from diverse cultures—ie., a sense of community—whilst still addressing questions concerning difference and diversity. The school did this as part of the key learning areas of the curriculum. Thus, building such relationships was not viewed as an 'add-on' to the already 'overcrowded curriculum', nor as a means to address 'disadvantaged students'. Rather, this process was seen as an integral part of the mainstream learning objectives set to enhance the knowledge, skills and indeed 'social capital' of the students. Thus, it is possible to argue that socially just outcomes that endeavour to build 'social capital' amongst students from the non-dominant culture can be enhanced through just such (or such just?) pedagogical approaches (Cox, 1995). Indeed, Gewirtz's concept of 'relational justice' can be addressed through such pedagogical methods because they enable students to achieve 'equal status' through collaboration and 'intergroup' contacts. When these are foregrounded and concerned with building a wider, deeper sense of community, relations of power are reworked to become both more socially just and pedagogically productive.

Appendix One

The 'Multicultural Policy' of the school states that the purpose is:

- To ensure that the ethnic backgrounds of all students are recognized, accepted and celebrated, and that all students understand that their background is integral to Australian national identity.
- To ensure that the students' development and participation are not hindered by racism and prejudice.
- To assist all students to develop the understandings and skills that will enable them to achieve their full potential and to participate effectively and successfully in a multicultural society.
- To develop a positive attitude towards diversity by broadening the intercultural knowledge and understandings of students.'

Specific guidelines for putting the Multicultural Policy into action include:

- Intercultural studies will take a whole school approach, permeating all school organization and curriculum.
- Curriculum programs will focus on the commonalities of all cultures whilst celebrating their uniqueness.
- Learning experiences will recognize, value and build on the students' backgrounds and experiences.
- All staff will be encouraged to undertake intercultural awareness inservice programs so that they become competent and confident in promoting multicultural values and attitudes.
- Where appropriate, written material will contain both English and the target language, and interpreters will be used to ensure mutual understanding.
- Resources purchased will be selected on the basis of their flexibility to embrace all cultures.'

[Excerpt from XXXX Primary School; School Policy Statements]

Appendix Two

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Endnotes