Activating Belonging:

Towards a Critical Ensemble Pedagogy

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GAENOR BROWN

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Abstract

Contemporary research shows school belonging as a key determinant of learner health and wellbeing. Teachers, and teaching practices, are pivotal in developing safe, supportive communities in which students can learn and thrive, where they can belong. In this thesis the high school drama education ensemble in Aotearoa New Zealand is presented as a site for the exploration and activation of belonging. Framed through a self-study of teacher education practice, using (S-STEP) methodology, the research reimagines ensemble pedagogy for dramatic inquiry process through a lens of critical belonging. The research opens with a contextual review of contemporary scholarship and evolving theories about school belonging and ensemble pedagogy, mapping how both fields are relationally, spatially and temporally situated. The contextual review highlights the importance of drama education and school belonging practices and pedagogies in the generation of transdisciplinary knowledge.

Six principles of practice for drama educators have been developed to support the activation of belonging, relating to Identity, Process, Provocation, Space and Place, Performativity and Reflexivity. These principles are informed by semi-structured interviews with participants experienced in ensemble-based teaching and learning, and by autoethnographic reflective responses prompted by interview dialogues. In this research autoethnography is identified as a form of wayfinding, a traditional Pacific concept, drawing on the mātauranga Māori concepts and values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, to weave affective, political and socio-ecological belonging into a critical perspective of ensemble practice.

The six principles of practice have been trialled in dramatic inquiry workshops, with pre- service drama educators, in a design incorporating process drama, image theatre and forum theatre. Drama conventions as boundary objects, bridging the fields of drama education and belonging, provide structure to the workshops, further informing development of the principles of practice. Through an ongoing dialogic cycle of workshop enactment, participant feedback and drama educator reflection, the principles are reassessed, redefined and refined.

This research argues for a critical ensemble pedagogy that makes space for the ensemble as both site and practice. The study advocates for a pedagogy which honours indigenous ways of knowing in drama education, catalyses creative expression and activates critical belonging.

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For everything/everyone-before-me: ngā mihi nui.
For two lands I call home:
Wales
Aotearoa New Zealand.

Oceans, mountains and rivers
etched in memoryscapes
Redrawn into lessons of relocation,
learning
forests of different green
birds of different song
Weaving old inscriptions into new belongings.

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Finally, my family have waited patiently for me to finish this research,
to be a partner, a mum and a nana again.
It's time to return their precious love
Aroha mai, aroha atu

I am coming home.

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List of Illustrations and Diagrams

Glossary

Adapted from Moorfield (2011)

āko	learn, teach, advise; a concept describing reciprocal learning relationships in which everyone in the learning community is empowered to learn from and with each other.
ākonga	students, learners
aroha	love
aroha mai aroha atu	love given love returned
awhi	embrace, support
hikoi	march, walk
ihi	power ignited in a person in creative work
kaiako	teacher, instructor
kainga	home
kaupapa	topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, agenda, scheme
mahi	practice
manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, respect
mātauranga	education, knowledge, skill
maunga	mountain
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pohutukawa	New Zealand Christmas tree found in coastal areas, bearing large red flowers which appear in December
pūrākau	myths, legends, stories
rangatahi	younger generation, youth

Tangata tiriti	Non- Māori, partners of the Treaty of Waitangi
Tangata whenua	local people, hosts, indigenous people of the land, people born of the whenua
taonga	treasure, something prized
tikanga	correct procedure, custom, habit, law, practice, convention
Te ao Māori	Māori world view
tuakana teina	a concept from te ao Māori used to describe the relationship between an older (tuakana) person and a younger (teina) person. Within teaching and learning contexts, this includes peer to peer, younger to older, older to younger, or able/expert to less able/expert
turangawaewae	domicile, place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa; a place to stand
wana	thrill experience by audience in creative work
wehi	powerful or inspiring creative work
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent
whakataukī	proverb, saying
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection -a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging. It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations which also serve to strengthen each member of the kinship group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial, friendship or reciprocal relationship (Moorfield, 2011, p.257).

Prelude: A Personal Reflection

This research emerges from my life journey, and I begin by sharing something of my background and my long-standing passion for theatre as a means of connecting and of exploring fundamental questions about identity and belonging. This Prelude frames the forthcoming discussion, providing a context for research which draws on both my professional and personal selves.

I was born near Llangollen, Wales. Rivers and mountains, memory-soaked Welsh landscapes have always pulled and pushed, tugged at my heart. Wales, with its mists, valleys and sheep, has always felt like home, where I belong. These feelings of connection to the land and its histories were never as strong as when teaching drama in secondary schools for over two decades in the concrete, urban spaces of the greater London area, where I often felt displaced.

In 1994 I travelled to Aotearoa New Zealand with my Kiwi teacher partner who had not been home for five years. August snow and skiers on Mt Taranaki, and dressing for wintry conditions took some getting used to. Attempting to pronounce *pohutukawa,* New Zealand's iconic native tree, was a big linguistic challenge. Differences and similarities jostled, on the one hand climbers could expect to be similarly exhausted by the austere, windswept Welsh Preseli ranges and Mt Taranaki's bleak, volcanic slopes. On the other hand, the perfectly circular boundary of thick, impenetrable native forestry on the lower slopes of Mt Taranaki was nothing like the vast openness of the heathered and gorse-pricked Preseli mountains.

When I spent a day at a local high school's English Department, I noted a couple of texts in the staff room that we used in the United Kingdom: *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *Trash* by Andy Mulligan, Orwell's *1984*. A copy of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* was on the table and next to it lay *White Lies* by Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace's short story, 'Butterflies'. The familiar and the unfamiliar, for me, shared space. Ten years later I emigrated to Aotearoa and took up a drama and dance teaching position in a local New Plymouth high school, where I was both reassured and frustrated at the reliance on familiar play texts from the Western canon, pre-eminently Shakespeare whose works are performed annually in the Sheilah Winn Festival of Shakespeare in Schools. I hungered to discover play texts reflecting the unique culture of Aotearoa and longed to access, and learn about, New Zealand theatre: its

literatures, languages, processes, and pedagogies. This thesis emerges from an ongoing commitment to the ways in which theatre and drama education can tell the stories of this place and her people.

My strong interest in theatre as performance was nurtured as a young teacher of Drama and English in the United Kingdom in the1980s. I had lived through the drama wars where my colleagues and I gathered behind paradigmatic barricades vividly captured by John O'Toole:

> theatre versus drama; art-form versus instrument; process versus product; subject versus service; improvisation versus script; theatre-in-education versus children's theatre versus theatre for schools ... let alone the broader battles, drama skills versus dramatic understanding; drama for capability versus drama for life; practice versus theory; progressive versus reactionary; drama for assessment versus drama for experience; drama education versus speech and drama; and most savage of all, Marxist versus poststructuralist (O'Toole et al, 2009, p.117).

In those early years my heart, and my practice, was in the performance camp. I devoted a considerable amount of time in schools to "fighting" for drama to be recognised as a discrete curriculum subject and not as a minor part of the English language and literature programme, dismissed in one paragraph in the national curriculum. I believed drama education, with its focus on ensemble performance of text based and devised work, afforded a myriad of learning opportunities for secondary school aged students.

During my undergraduate years I performed in several plays, and became a devotee of theatre practitioners Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal and Eugenio Barba. Alongside my keen interest in their approaches to actor training, I was very engaged by their methods for developing performance collectives, and how processes and productions enabled ensemble performers, and audiences, to learn about social transformation through theatre. In my first teaching roles, however, I could see many young people were positioned as students of theatre texts and were missing opportunities to explore the rich socio-cultural learning gained through being part of an ensemble.

My own drama education started in Aotearoa after meeting drama educator Viv Aitken in 2006, who was working on the development of process drama in primary school contexts. Although process drama would become a significant site of inquiry in my doctoral research, my understanding of it at that time was limited. I had used its experiential frame predominantly for seeding devised work in the United Kingdom and to help students develop

character for text-based performance conventions through conventions, such as writing in role. Aitken was developing her own understanding of process drama within Dorothy Heathcote's (1926-2011) Mantle of the Expert, a dramatic framework for learning in which students are positioned as members of a fictional, ethical team or enterprise carrying out a commission for a fictional client. I had read about Mantle of the Expert in my first teaching position, but I had dismissed it because it was a primary sector approach, and it was being used for learning across the curriculum rather than specifically in drama education. I still considered my role as a drama teacher to be more theatre and performance oriented, facilitating the purposeful blurring of boundaries between actors and spectators so that everyone involved could become "active theatre makers" (O'Connor & O'Connor, 2009, p.471).

In 2009 I returned to study at the University of Waikato, enrolling in a Mantle of the Expert paper led by Viv Aitken. Profoundly important aspects of drama pedagogy were revealed in this paper, all with drama education at the centre. Early in the programme, I read an article written by drama educator Jonothan Neelands (2002) written in the aftermath of the 09/11 events in the US. In the article Neelands argues emphatically that role taking, or

> find[ing] oneself in the other and in so doing [recognising] the other in oneself [is] the crucial and irreducible bridge between all forms of drama and theatre work. It is at the core of the legacy of Dorothy Heathcote and it is also the principle aim of actor training at drama schools (p.6).

I started to think about drama education practice, in particular the principles which underpinned personal and social development of the ensemble. My interest was piqued, as I considered how social issues could be explored by students in both process drama ensembles and performance ensembles, given both process drama and text-based performance required role taking to explore (fictional) worlds "from other points of view and perspectives" (Neelands, 2002, p.7). By exploring through role, students develop awareness of both individual and collective difference. Through process drama experiences and performance, teachers can encourage the building of inclusive communities "representative of different collective identities, different cultural, linguistic and narrative resources" (Neelands, 2002, p.7).

Drama education allows for the examination of a kind of cultural literacy, but together, collectively:

> As we grow we never quite lose that sense of a collective as well as an individual identity. We grow as individuals, but we still have a sense of belonging to those who are most like us-those who share and use the same collective cultural and linguistic resources, those whose stories we know and belong to (Neelands, 2002, p.7).

Not just as a teacher, but on a personal level, I related to Neelands' comment on the feeling of belonging in the collective that is generated when we share the same cultural and linguistic resources. At the conclusion of the Mantle of the Expert paper, I continued with post graduate study completing research into Mantle of the Expert for a M.Ed. I had developed a sense of belonging and teacher identity, within the drama education community, to dramatic inquiry practice, the very form I had rejected in my earlier teaching experiences. Curious now about my practice as an ensemble facilitator and whether the strategies I used activated a sense of belonging in the ensemble or constrained it, I embarked on further research into ensemble pedagogy and belonging. Most of the research into ensemble pedagogy and practice (Kitchen, 2015; Pigkou-Repoussi, 2012) focused on performance, and I was keen to contribute to understandings of ensemble practice in experiential processes, in workshops that did not necessarily prepare participants for performance work, but still provided that connection to theatre arts as we explored role, the aesthetic and the creative potentials of the work (Ackroyd, 2002). This would mean interrogating my own practice, my work as a secondary and tertiary applied drama, and drama education practitioner, and it would also mean investigating this ensemble practice as situated specifically in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In shaping my topic and thinking about my research direction I have been influenced by thinking that emerged from the 2017 Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies annual conference, hosted by the Auckland Institute of Technology. The theme of the conference was "Performing Belonging in the 21st Century". Conference delegates were invited to "think out loud about the diverse ways that belonging can be seen to be performed, onstage and off in the 21st century" (Call for Papers) Hosting in Aotearoa New Zealand meant that the Māori concept of *turangawaewae*, "a place to stand, a homeland, a way of belonging" (Call for Papers) could focus attention on the cultural importance of belonging, and its activation in performance, and performative, contexts.

Ensemble pedagogy and belonging has not been examined in any depth, to date, in Aotearoa New Zealand. My research contributes to these fields and paves the way for future conversations and developments. I explore, through a Practice as Research model, the

concept of ensemble as a process (Britton, 2013) rather than as fixed structure. In the same way belonging can be understood as a process of being and becoming (Halse, 2018), as evolving and shifting, not as a fixed status.

Completing this thesis coincides with an arrival in my practice-as-research "home" here in Aotearoa New Zealand some years after my physical arrival. I am now a passport carrying citizen of Aotearoa, and in possession of a passport confirming dual citizenship with the United Kingdom. The journey to citizenship, to feeling a sense of belonging here in Aotearoa, has taken over twenty years, and I continue to learn about myself and my drama education practice. Drama and theatre education researchers use the metaphor of the map and journeying terms such as "border crossing," navigating challenging "terrain," "landscapes," and "transporting" audiences to conceptualise the research process (Hatton, 2007; Mackey, 2016; Nicholson, 2005; Prendergast, 2011; Schechner, 2003). Maps help us to understand where we are in the world and where we are going, and to plan clear routes, without excess baggage or a confusing surplus of information (Turchi, 2011).

Maps and passports can be understood as boundary objects which social scientists Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer define as any object that is part of multiple social worlds and facilitates communication between them; these have a different identity in each social world that they inhabit and as a result a boundary object must be simultaneously concrete and abstract, simultaneously fluid and well-defined (Star & Griesemer,1989, p. 409). Maps and landscapes are metaphors for ongoing journeys, our unfinished worlds. I am discovering my changing self and my changing practice, wayfinding as autoethnography (Iosefo et al.,2020), through this research landscape. I offer this Practice as Research thesis as a boundary object, a direction for myself and other companion wayfinders.

Introduction

This thesis explores the interplay between ensemble building practices, as ensemble pedagogy, and the facilitation of belonging within drama education (DE) ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this practice-led research I have set out to discover how my practice, framed as ensemble pedagogy, can be shaped more effectively to enable ensemble participants to experience social and ecological belonging within the context of creative collaborative work. Ensembles flourish when, individually and collectively, students in ensembles feel a sense of belonging, feel valued, respected and able to contribute to the creative strategies undertaken in dramatic work (Herrmann et al., 2023). Positive relationships and connections between students and the facilitator in the ensemble are vital to the success of creative work. Six principles of practice which aim to support the integration of creative work and sense of belonging have been developed from the research data. These principles have been subsequently workshopped with young adult groups in secondary schools and community settings. By workshopping these principles in DE practice, an ensemble pedagogy germane to Aotearoa New Zealand is evolving. This research makes an important contribution to this emerging cross-disciplinary field, drawing together the two diverse fields of drama education and theories of belonging. The principles of practice emerging from my ensemble workshops offer an original pedagogical framework.

Ensemble pedagogy, teaching and learning through active, theatre-based democratic strategies (Kitchen, 2018) has long been associated with "democratic models of learning and creating" (Pigkou- Repousssi, 2012, p. 84) and as a "powerful metaphor for democratic living" (Encisco et al., 2011, p. 215). Ensemble practices employed by drama facilitators to develop cohesion and artistry within the DE collective benefit participants by emphasising theatre's "quintessentially collaborative art form" (Boyd, 2004, p.18). Ensemble pedagogy, as an educational practice model, encompasses both pro-social and pro-technical approaches to drama teaching and learning (Britton, 2013; Edmiston, 2012; Kitchen, 2021; Neelands & Nelson, 2013, Prendergast, 2016). Student ensembles need to be able to work collaboratively when devising drama for instance, and technical knowledge of plays, theatre form and period is required for text-based performance (Neelands, 2009). However, devised or text-based performance of dramatic material is not the only objective for ensemble pedagogy. The provision of dramatic learning experiences for the ensemble "whether the focus is devising a play for performance or an experiential process drama" (Walsh & Hatton, 2023, p.353) is the

key. Dramatic learning experiences through process drama and dramatic inquiry, for example, offer students the capacity "to invite one another into their social spaces, but [...] they have to want to enter. Dramatic inquiry is a tool for creating more fluid socially imagined and real spaces grounded in ensemble practices that continually invite participation by all" (Edmiston, 2012, p.118).

Drama educators Jonothan Neelands (2009) Myrto Pigkou- Repoussi (2012) and Jennifer Kitchen (2018) have shown how ensemble theatre-making contributes to citizenship education (CE) for young people. CE enables students to understand, and contribute to, the function of societies, groups and communities. Learning how to "participate and take action as critical, informed and responsible citizens" (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p.2) is increasingly linked now to concepts of social and ecological belonging (OECD, n.d.).

Social and ecological belonging encompasses relationships within and beyond educational communities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes that when students feel accepted, trusted and included in their relationships with peers and teachers in school communities, their social and academic development is positively enhanced (Avvisati, 2019). An ecological belonging viewpoint regards students' ethical relationships with the more-than-human world, the environment, as significant in terms of developing prosociality, with benefits for both community and the individual (Celidwen & Keltner, 2023). Contemporary research in drama education, and research into belonging in education is increasingly focusing, often through a post-human lens, on social and ecological dimensions of practice (Gallagher & Balt, 2024; Gravett, 2022; Hatton, 2022; Sidebottom, 2024).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, dimensions of ensemble pedagogy that align more closely with an "ethic of restoration" (Bell, 2024, p.2) regarding indigenous knowledges and the "normalisation of indigenous ways of being and knowing" (Hoskins & Jones, 2022, p.307) have been gaining traction in education over the last decade. The adoption of Te āo Māori (Māori world view) culturally responsive practice in DE has positively impacted the development of ensemble pedagogy, creativity, and the flourishing of individuals within the dramatic ensemble (Brown, 2020; Cody, 2013, 2016).

Normalising indigenous knowledge within current DE practice is an ongoing process for teachers. At the time of writing (2025), the coalition government has halted work on the refreshing of the New Zealand Curriculum. The refresh, which started in 2022 focused on the

development of a framework, Te Mātaiaho, designed to ensure a sense of belonging and equitable access to high quality learning experiences for all learners. Te Mātaiaho was designed to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi with its holistic, inclusive and culturally responsive approach. A culturally responsive approach in terms of DE practice promoted values from mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge, languages. practices and culture from a Māori worldview). Woven through my own teaching practice are guiding values and principles deriving from mātauranga Māori. Researcher Dr Charles Royal (2009) describes mātauranga Māori as a specific way of "doing things" (p.11) in tandem with a worldview that is

> based upon mana (respect) rather than power – influencing the nature of relationships between humans, and between humans and the natural world (manaakitanga) recognises and fosters the 'interconnectedness' of all things – influencing, among other things, the way in which resources are harvested and then apportioned (whanaungatanga) sees excellence or the pinnacle of human achievement as the expression of mana in the person – influencing the way in which an individual is taught and knowledge is passed from one to another (tohungatanga) (p.11).

New Zealand's founding document Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) drawn up by Britain and signed by Māori and non-Māori envisaged partnership, participation and protection for all by means of a "land and tikanga-based way of ordering society" (Jackson, 2020, p.149). Despite the intentions of Te Tiriti, promises of land and language protection, by the Crown, for Māori have not always eventuated. Treaty of Waitangi expert and constitutional Māori lawyer Moana Jackson (1945-2022) has noted that "colonisation fomented injustice; a systemic privileging of the Crown and a relationship in which it assumed it would be the sole and supreme authority" (in Kiddle et al., 2020, p.145). A key principle of the current secondary curriculum is acknowledgement of "cultural diversity and the valu[ing] of the histories and traditions of all its people" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9). The result of an extensive review during 2000-2002, the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) emphasises Aotearoa New Zealand's unique, "diverse and multicultural society" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.4) and the importance of giving "effect to the partnership that is at the core of of our nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Watangi/ Treaty of Waitangi" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.6).

I am a non-indigenous drama educator originally from the United Kingdom and my findings in this research are thus offered from the perspective of tangata tiriti, or tauiwi, a Māori term to describe non Māori commonly referring to visitors or settler descendants. From this position I acknowledge that my voice in this context should not be privileged above the "many urgent Māori voices and messages we need to attend to" (Bell, 2024, p.4). My aim for this research is that it provokes dialogue and exploration of a culturally complex situation: a non-indigenous drama education facilitator working within a continually evolving, culturally responsive drama curriculum. Ongoing dialogue regarding the embedding of cultural concepts such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga within drama education practices will support the development of a critical ensemble pedagogy and the activation of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this study I focus on my own practice, adopting a self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP) using qualitative, autoethnographic methods to generate research data (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018). S-STEP was developed as a means of acknowledging and valuing "teacher knowledge as it is understood and lived within the immediate context of practice and within the wider educational, organizational and structural contexts of their work" (Berry & Forgasz, 2018, p. 43).

In S-STEP research the personal is intertwined with the professional and the autoethnographic prelude that precedes this introductory chapter provides a necessary insight into and foundation for my practice. This is particularly vital given the subject of belonging. Writing in a Pacific context that is directly relevant to my own relocation from the United Kingdom to Aotearoa New Zealand, autoethnographic scholars Fetaui Iosefo, Stacy Holman Jones, and Anne Harris (2020) position autoethnography as a critical, creative methodology. Their use of the term "wayfinding" in application to autoethnography helps frame my current pedagogical understanding of drama education practice here in Aotearoa New Zealand. "Pasifika wayfinding is defined not just by the individual's pedagogical experience 'within an environment', but rather by the generations of knowledge shared and passed down" (Iosefo et al., 2020, p.17). Through an anthropological lens, they see Pasifika wayfinding as referring to the implementation of practical indigenous knowledges and ancient wisdom. Anthropologist Harriet Witt (1991) has commented that wayfinding is neither academic nor scientific in its argument but rather is "a real- time-struggle-to-the-death between native and Western ideas about human intelligence, the place and purpose of people in the universe, and the nature of reality" (in Iosefo et al., 2020, p.18). In Iosefo et al.'s (2020) autoethnographic exploration of

wayfinding there is a clear connection to notions of navigation, the building of strong community, the relationship with the environment and the interrogation of what it means to belong. The collaborative crafting of the *va'a/waka* (the canoe) from a tree selected by the family, described as a process "performed by evoking the ancestors [...] lashing generational knowledge to the vessel so that it is embodied and passed on" (Iosefo et al.,2020, p.21). Belonging to a community is seen as vital to the successful navigation of educational pathways: "In the Pacific, wayfinding cannot be viewed as belonging to any one person, and wayfinding is never done on one's own" (Iosefo et al., 2020, p.21). This differs markedly from my previous experience of the more western, approach to education with which I was familiar.

Wayfinding as both a personal and pedagogical concept supports the successful navigation of unfamiliar situations: my relocation to Aotearoa from the United Kingdom in 2004 demanded navigation of a different cultural context, an anticipated unfamiliar curriculum, and a necessarily fresh approach to embodied drama education teacher practices, such as ensemble devising, process drama and dramatic inquiry. Alluding to mime artist and physical theatre practitioner Jacques Lecoq's (1922-1999) movement analysis, Drama educator Christine Hatton notes the connections between wayfinding, movement and shifts in embodied practice:

> Every time we move, we make a beginning and an end. We find our way by accident or intention, from A to B, or perhaps via alternative paths. Movement is all around us and it is part of us, shaping time, relationships, experiences and stories. To move at all is an embodied, emotional and cognitive journey, as minds, hearts and bodies shift. These shifts may be small or mighty – the blink of an eye or changing our perspective or changing careers or moving to another country. As an ongoing experience of movement, human life is full of wayfinding (Hatton, in Iosefo et al., 2020, p.183).

My research has been impacted by shifts as Lecoq describes, moving to Aotearoa New Zealand from the United Kingdom, I am compelled to look at my practice from a different perspective.

Purpose and Aim of the Research

Through the lens of my Practice as Research project, I have investigated aspects of drama education practice, ensemble pedagogy, in Aotearoa New Zealand that intersect with theories

and concepts of belonging. As highlighted earlier, this research is framed as a self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP) and is focused on the facilitation of ensemble building processes in drama education. I am motivated by a need to examine *how* ensemble practices might engage with belonging and *what* principles of practice can be developed to support its effective activation in drama education within Aotearoa New Zealand. Weaving three strands of data together (as indicated in the figure on the next page) I have developed, and applied in workshops, six principles of practice for teachers and facilitators interested in the activation of belonging as it underpins their own ensemble pedagogy. In this thesis, I offer a rethinking of the concept of belonging (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021) as it applies to ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in turn consider its role in the development of ensemble pedagogy.

In weaving together the three threads of my enquiry — a contextual review of relevant scholarship, interviews with research participants, and autoethnographic reflections — my research is focused on answering several inter-related questions:

- What aspects of ensemble pedagogy in schools, tertiary programmes and community provide opportunities for exploring concepts of belonging?
- What theories of belonging can inform ensemble pedagogy in these contexts?
- How can ensemble pedagogy be framed as an activator of belonging?
- What changes are needed within my own drama education practice if I aim to interrogate ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand through the activation of belonging?

A sense of belonging is a basic human need. Belonging is entangled with our feelings of connectedness to one another, our self-worth and our wellbeing as individuals within social groups and communities. This sense of interconnectedness is highly prized in theatre ensemble actor training (Britton, 2013; Radosavljević, 2013) and in drama education ensemble-based learning communities (Edmiston & Towler-Evans, 2022; Neelands, 2009). Ensemble based learning in drama education has long been extolled as embodied, collaborative, inclusive practice, “a bridging metaphor between the social and the artistic; between the informal uses of classroom drama and professional theatre” (Neelands, 2010, para.48). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the setting for this research, drama education is seen as a nurturing medium, activating connection between creators, performers and audiences and

developing healthy relationships in communities, groups and individuals (Drama/NCEA, n.d.). Recent developments in secondary drama curriculum programmes identify the importance of belonging, *whanaungatanga*, in drama learning communities. *Whanaungatanga* promotes ways of working collaboratively that can be directly applied to the selection and use of creative strategies. It is about relationship, kinship, and a sense of belonging (Drama/NCEA, n.d. https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama). Teachers are encouraged to build into their practice an understanding of whanaungatanga to support their students. The relevant Drama NCEA standard instructs that students '*must* demonstrate whanaungatanga through the use of creative strategies that support the devising of drama' (Drama/NCEA, n.d. https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama).

I use two specific drama education practices in this research. My research makes an original contribution to knowledge in contexts where these practices are conducted. The practices are investigated in more detail later in the thesis, as part of the principles of practice and discussion of the workshop design and findings (Chapters Three and Four).

My drama education practice in Aotearoa New Zealand consists of facilitating dramatic inquiry workshops with a range of ensembles: local community groups; secondary school students; and teacher education students. Dramatic inquiry is a teaching approach in which participants enter imagined, fictional frames (Aiken, 2021) as a means of exploring and engaging with social, cultural, historical, and political tensions reflected in the real world. This approach includes process drama (Heathcote, 1926-2011; O'Neill, 1995) where the workshop experience is structured episodically, as facilitator and participants "move in and out of the imagined world" (Aitken, 2021, p.14) to grapple with problems facing fictional communities, and to consider alternative responses to those problems. Whilst process drama privileges experience over performance, opportunities arise from the episodic structure and conventions derived from theatre and performance (Ackroyd, 2004) to develop devised work for audiences outside the drama inquiry ensemble (Stoate, 2013). Findings from research show that pre-service teachers benefit from engaging in the embodied experiences of process drama, reporting deeper understanding of drama pedagogy and application in their own classrooms than might have been gleaned from theory heavy lectures or academic readings (Wells et al, 2023).

A second aspect of my practice explored in this research relates to drama inquiry and involves working with The Rainbow of Desire image theatre, and enhanced forum theatre

(Burton & O'Toole, 2005). These participatory theatre interventions, adapted for use within drama education youth and community contexts, derive from Augusto Boal's concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed. An overarching purpose of Theatre of the Oppressed is to "encourage the collective to develop possible alternatives to oppressive forces in their own lives" (Duffy & Vettraino, 2010, p.xii) through the creation of "forums for the voiceless to discover their voice, and the powerless to act on their power" (Duffy & Vettraino, 2010, p.xii). Like process drama, Theatre of the Oppressed is an embodied practice in which participants learn holistically, using body and emotion to engage with the drama. Teacher educator Rachel Forgasz (2014) uses Theatre of the Oppressed approaches with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) groups, showing pre-service teachers a different way to reflect on practice, one which does not need to be limited to "dominant, cognitive-linguistic modes of reflection" (p.280) but can focus on "emotional and bodily held feeling" (p.280). Experiencing these challenging emotions in training needs to be understood and "reconciled" (Forgasz, 2014, p. 280) so that teachers can understand the "complex nature and role of emotion in their work" (Forgasz, 2014, p.280). One of the key tenets of Theatre of the Oppressed is The Rainbow of Desire which uses image theatre activities to provide an effective framework for self-study of teacher education practice (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017). I draw extensively on this approach in my research.

The enactment of ensemble togetherness in drama processes such as drama inquiry rehearsing for performances in devised work, or spect-acting in forum theatre, in which members of the audience can participate in the drama, cannot guarantee that trust, acceptance or belonging develop from the work (Lee, 2015). Yet a sense of belonging is often claimed as an outcome of participating in social, cultural activities, and as a result of membership of specific communities and groups. Feminist and affect theory scholar Lauren Berlant (2016) notes that "[j]ust because we are in the room together does not mean that we belong to the room or to each other" (p.395). How facilitators might perceive an ensemble is not necessarily the many ways an ensemble might perceive itself. Theatre director John Britton (2013) offers a useful analogy for ensemble teachers and facilitators: "[s]tars in a constellation have no real relationship with one another. They are distant in space and seem to achieve a relationship only in the eye of the observer" (p.23). The task of the drama teacher, the observer, then is employ practices that develop positive relationships within the ensemble. Drama educator Monica Prendergast (2016) notes that building strong connections in the process or performance ensemble activates what philosopher Charles Taylor (2004)

refers to as social imaginaries. Aesthetic work which explores, or shapes, a community or a group's understanding of itself and its place in the world is “the social work of imagination” (Prendergast, 2016, p.13) and as such allows for alternative ways of enacting being and belonging in the world.

Drama education’s catalytic shift to online digital platforms in 2020, as the pandemic forced closure of familiar classrooms, left an indelible mark on the way we connected with each other. At the time, drama educator Kathleen Gallagher (2020) noted that

> the live drama classroom has temporarily fallen away, leaving us in a virtual-only world. As a result, traditional understandings of ‘embodiment’, ‘participation’ and de‘ensemble’ no longer apply. This disembodied and socially-atomised reality requires drama educators to think of drama practices that could enable young people to find one another again (Gallagher et al., 2020, p.641).

In 2025, at the time of completing this thesis, we have returned to the live classroom, and to familiar drama practices, yet there remains a creeping sense of disconnectedness, isolation, and anxiety within our drama education learning communities post Covid-19 (Gallagher, 2020; Gregorzewski, 2021; Kitchen, 2021). This research explores drama practices that foster an understanding of how we might reconnect with one another and how we might maintain that sense of connectedness, of belonging in a post-normal world.

Drama education, a dimension of applied theatre and drama, has historically provided a platform for the exploration of social, cultural, and political issues and discourses, with practitioners sharing a belief that drama and theatre education should address something beyond its form (Ackroyd, 2000). In the 1970s educator Dorothy Heathcote declared in an interview with the BBC that good classroom drama for young people should always reflect the gritty realism of “real man- in- a mess” rather than depicting “rocks and trees and fairies and this that and the other, and wearing leotards” (BBC Omnibus Documentary, 1970). Peter O’Connor (2010) has echoed the importance of tackling big issues, noting that the world is “unfair and young people need to be conscious of this to understand how power works in the world” (p.1). Michael Anderson (2014) writes about the challenge of post normality to drama education’s capacity to respond to a world in chaos, complexity and confusion. Augusto Boal’s son Julian, who continues the work of Theatre of the Oppressed, argues that we are in the grip of global and economic crisis and that our role as drama educators should not be

about “where you do the work you do, but about *what* you do and how you choose to engage with the work” (in Duffy & Vettraino, 2010, p.xv).

At the time of writing polarised political movements across the globe continue to present “a post normal world” (Anderson, 2014) in tension. Ideological disconnectedness is evident everywhere: in social, cultural, environmental and climate injustices. Despite a seemingly bleak outlook, many young people show a positive appetite for leading and effecting change, seen globally in the way they have mobilised collectively in response to global warming phenomena. At the same time, Monica Prendergast (2024) identifies a fresh approach in applied theatre practice, a “‘celebratory turn’ away from sharing stories of trauma towards sharing stories of recovery, resistance and resilience” (p.18). Playful envisioning of brighter futures (Prendergast, 2024) reflects a pedagogy of hope (Freire, 1998; hooks, 2003; Prendergast, 2016) in which hope can be seen as a “mobilising foundation for human beings to learn about their potential as more civil beings” (Giroux, 2004, p.38). More recently, applied theatre researcher Selina Busby (2021) presents a compelling argument that a pedagogy of utopia (Ricoeur,1986) rather than one of hope, provides a more useful lens through which to conceptualise participatory community drama practice as socially transformative, collective action, rooted in the present. The utopian performative is reflected in socially committed ensemble-based process drama (Prendergast, 2016) providing moments of “intersubjective understanding” (Dolan, 2001, p.479) within the group. Monica Prendergast notes that process drama provides the ensemble with opportunities to work

> together in aesthetic ways, to value the collective as much as the individual; to see the world (both natural and human) as made up of multiple and complex processes, to recognise commonalities and respect difference; to work towards common understandings that involve the development of empathic intelligence (Prendergast, 2016, p.14).

This valuing of the collective is central to my practice and research.

Writing about the benefits of community theatre in England for young people and their audiences, and working as ensembles, Jonothan Neelands (in O’Connor, 2010) sees the “social metaphor of the ensemble as a model for living together in the world” (p.155). Living together infers being responsive to the affordances and challenges that society faces as a collective, connected community. A sense of belonging to a community is necessary for connections to be meaningful, and collective action to be taken (Herrmann et al, 2021). In

this way, belonging also has a political dimension to be considered, and reasons for barriers to connection need to be identified. This research explores the pedagogical practices that support drama education ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand to function as a model for living together, for developing the kind of knowledge that "becomes solidarity, becomes a 'being with'" (Freire, 1998, p.72). The world according to Freire "is not finished [but] always in the process of becoming" (1998, p.72). This research explores the model of the ensemble as an unfinished world, in the process of becoming more connected in our understanding of one another, through the activation of belonging.

Shape of the Thesis

This chapter has discussed the purpose and aim of this research within the fields of ensemble pedagogy and the sociology of belonging. The research makes an original contribution to knowledge in drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand through the development of six principles of practice for facilitators seeking to activate belonging in the drama education ensemble.

In Chapter One I present a contextual review of the fields of ensemble pedagogy within drama education and the sociology of belonging in education. Chapter Two covers the methodology and methods of the three phases of the research and the theoretical framework in which it sits. Chapter Three contains the six principles of practice, their development from autoethnographic data generated in Phase 1 of the research and how they fit into the workshop design of Phase 3. Chapter Four discusses the findings from the principles in action, and the Conclusion focuses on the original contribution of knowledge to the field of drama education, the limitations of the study and what form future research in the field might take.

Having established my wayfinding through the complex and evolving field of drama education to the core focus of this thesis on belonging as a key aspect of ensemble pedagogy it is now time to turn to the rich scholarship that underpins my research.

Chapter 1: Contextual Review

My doctoral research operates within the intersecting fields of youth sociology and secondary school drama education. Specifically, I am investigating the sociological concept of belonging in the facilitation of ensemble pedagogy, as workshop practice. This contextual review profiles the ways in which the two fields underpin my research and aims to construct a strong foundation from which the creative practice methodology can be designed, delivered and investigated. Throughout I seek to synthesise and analyse moments of commonality and departure between these disciplines, beginning with international trends and influences and then turning to scholarship specific to Aotearoa New Zealand. This multidisciplinary approach to designing an ensemble workshop practice aims to cultivate a sense of belonging and activate exploration into sociocultural aspects of belonging.

In the landscape of sociology, the concept of belonging encompasses considerations of citizenship, in terms of belonging to a specific place and the intricate social dynamics shaping individuals' connections to groups, communities, and organisations. There is a general consensus in the literature on the sociology of belonging that humans have a basic need to belong, in groups and in communities. Kelly Ann Allen writes that

> A sense of belonging — the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences —is a fundamental human need that predicts numerous mental, physical, social, economic and behavioural outcomes (2021, p.1).

This need to belong has only intensified since the recent Covid-19 pandemic which has led to increased segregation and separation. This separation has been acknowledged in current discourses in both sociology and drama education fields (Gallagher, 2021; Gravett et al., 2022).

This doctoral research will map the theories of belonging in sociology contexts onto drama education, using drama education ensemble as a vehicle for exploration. In this research drama education ensembles refer to learning communities engaged in devised performance, process drama and dramatic inquiry experiences. The research will interrogate and evaluate how sociological theories of belonging can support and enhance understandings of ensemble development and practices. The practice-led component will also examine how a deeper understanding of each field of discourse can in turn inform and inspire the other.

Sociological Theories of Belonging

Sociological theories of belonging provide insight into the ways that individuals connect to, or disconnect from groups, communities and organisations. Theories of belonging shed light on the "process of creating a sense of identification with, or connection to culture, people, places and material objects" (May, 2013, p.3). Connections and disconnections can be seen as transactions between self and society and since "belonging is a manifestation of the connection between self and society, a focus on belonging allows us to examine the mutual interaction between social and individual change" (May, 2013, p. 6).

Sociologists note that the broad scope of social theories of belonging need clearer definitions, and deeper critical analysis (Allen et al, 2021; Habib & Ward, 2019; Miller, 2005; Antonsich, 2010) to support understanding of how groups enact belonging.

> When we say we belong, we are rarely explicit about what it is that we belong to, and even when we are there is often no logical account given as to how or why such a connection is thought to pertain (Miller, 2005, p.6).

Geographer Lynn Staeheli (2008) problematises belonging in communities, and the perceived link to marginalisation in citizenship. Social geographer Mark Antonsich (2010) agrees that the concept of belonging is "vaguely-defined and ill-theorised" (p.644) and that we have a limited grasp on what it represents, or how it might be claimed. Antonsich argues that this gap in understanding may be explained by the frequent, conflation of the term *belonging* with the term *citizenship*, and with the term *identity.* Suggesting that these two aspects of belonging need separate examination, Antonsich's advice is that

> belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging) (p.644).

In this way, Antonsich (2010) is proposing that studies of belonging benefit from an affective and a discursive analysis, separating the individual (affective) from the group (political) which in turn has implications for understanding the influences governing identity development of the individual and the collective.

Changing social, cultural and historical landscapes have influenced the ways that belonging is theorised. Well established theories of belonging, deriving from the work of sociologists Roy Baumeister & Mark Leary-(1995) for example, have underpinned how a

sense of belonging is understood, and often assumed. Youth studies scholars Sabia Habib and Michael Ward (2019) suggest that in research and scholarship belonging can appear as "a theory, a conceptual lens, as well as an analytical framework" (p.1). For educators Karen Gravett and Rola Ajjawi (2021) the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic in education contexts, seen in the swift pivot from classrooms to online learning, means that studies of belonging necessitated a move beyond "fixed times and spaces" (p.1386) in terms of the classroom. Seeing belonging from a sociomaterial perspective, Gravett and Ajjawi (2021) explore the complex relationships between people, objects and practices, understanding this as "practice that shifts within, across and beyond online and face to face timespaces" (p.1386). Gravett & Ajjawi's sociomaterial view of belonging is "situated, relational and processual" (p.1386) and in the new online education environment a fresh analysis which focuses on the space, the human and non-human interactions and teaching practice is required.

For educators, belonging as a theory is less useful than as a conceptual lens that provides new perspectives, not only about belonging but about the increasingly liquid (Bauman n.d.) nature of relationships, identities, spaces and times in which belonging is being researched. In turn, conceptual lenses applied in analytical frameworks shed light on aspects of belonging as applied to specific groups, communities and organisations.

Individuals and Groups

Theories of belonging dealing with individual or group identity development are continually changing. Belonging can be personal, or it can apply to groups and larger organisations. It can be "infused with individual and collective histories as well as interwoven with conceptions of place" (Habib & Ward, 2019, p.iv). Belonging as/ in "being-singular-plural" (Nancy, 2000, n.d.) is concerned with notions of being and becoming, and identity formation. Performance artist and academic Jennifer Willett (2016) describes Nancy's (2000) hyphenated concept here as suggesting "a sense of belonging that is in continual movement between [an] individual and the [group]" (p.37). Rather than seeing identity formation ultimately as fixed, "common thinking is that identities develop within social and cultural groups and out of the socially and culturally marked differences and commonalities that permeate interactions within and between groups" (Howard & Nguyen, in Halse, 2018, p.353).

Belonging as Living Practice

Everyday living practice is considered in research into participatory citizenship, and citizenship according to academic Shirin Rai (2017) is "a marker of belonging" (p.25). Whilst Antonsich (2010) believes citizenship and belonging should not be conflated, other youth sociology scholars claim significant links between the ways that citizenship as action, and as status, is considered to impact feelings of belonging, and the critical understanding of "the discursive processes that make belonging possible and able to be performed and experienced" (Halse, 2018, p. 40).

Belonging can be seen as a mode of being (MiIler, 2005). From a theoretical stance, modes of being (and becoming) are performative and include the diverse ways that individuals carry out their everyday living practices in groups and community (Giardello & Cuervo, 2018). Sociologically, belonging is understood in the way it is "enacted and experienced by individuals, social groups, solidarities and collectivities and wider society" (Halse, 2018, p.1). Understanding the performative nature of belonging is particularly relevant in youth studies where researchers (Giardello and Cuervo, 2018; Wright, 2015) have found that young people's sense of belonging is defined by "affective, cultural and relational practices that are sedimented over time through the daily rituals that structure social relations. Such reflexive, everyday practices [...]operate as social mechanisms" (Giardello & Cuervo, 2018, in Halse, 2018, p. 78). These mechanisms impact the quality of relationships amongst young people giving "meaning, value, identity and a sense of belonging" (Halse, p.78) to their lives despite living in diverse spaces and places often "characterised by uncertainty, social change and fragmentation" (Halse, p.78).

Belonging as /in Space

According to Wynn et al, studies of belonging in and to spaces and places frequently focus on "processes of inclusion, exclusion and boundary making" (Wyn et al. in Habib & Ward, 2021, p.14). Wyn et al. note that whilst conclusions can be drawn from this focus, what is missing is "similar insights into the relationships between individuals, groups and their environment" (in Habib & Ward, 2021, p.14). According to Wyn et al., the work of posthuman theorists Rosi Braidotti (1954-) and Donna Haraway (1944-) with their emphasis on 'new materialism' challenges "an anthropocentric view of the world, collapsing binary distinctions between nature–culture and human–and non-human" (p.14) allowing for a broader perspective on belonging. Drawing on a new materialist approach here

"acknowledges the significance of physical environments alongside people's thoughts, desires and feelings" (p.15). From a new materialist perspective, "'belonging' is an 'affect' that is derived from the assemblages of human and non-human entities" (Wyn et al., p.15). This ontological focus on belonging in relation to place and space adds to an epistemological understanding of how belonging is not only constructed, but also what it does. Wyn et al. point out that understanding this "relational underpinning of belonging" as inclusive of "all the material elements of the environment" (p.15) links to Antonsich's (2010) view of belonging as a discursive resource.

Belonging as/in Timespace /Collective Histories

Dialogue, as a discursive resource, is seen as an important aspect of the study of belonging. When exploring the contexts in which belonging is enacted, some theoretical studies have paid close attention to dialogue, and how this shapes understanding of both affective belonging and the politics of belonging, particularly with regard to identity construction (Comber & Woods, 2018; Contreras & Montgomery, 2022; Halse, 2006; Youkhana, 2015). Dialogues within shared stories and histories, local and national, play a significant role in the development of individual and collective identity narratives. Here, the concept of chronotope, a term invented by literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (n.d.) to describe a spatio-temporal concept involving interplay between time, space and relationships, can be a useful analytical tool for promoting understanding of identity as it applies to belonging.

In dialogic pedagogy, chronotopes can be used to understand cultural and historical aspects of dialogue, and in turn how dialogue shapes discourses around concepts of spaces such as home, community and nation. Whilst chronotopes are generally explored in literature, they can provide an analytical tool for understanding the impact of story on identity formation. Used in an arts-based research context, storyteller and interdisciplinary community arts practitioner Catherine Heinemeyer (2020) shows how chronotopes of storytelling for performers "bring together artistic strategies with surrounding political, economic and social conditions and ideologies" (p. 59-60). Exploring stories that are "silenced and often ignored" (Sonn et al., 2014, p.20) in drama education, for example, offers "a unique vantage point from which to rupture dominant narratives about belonging/nonbelonging" (Sonn et al, 2014, p.2). Using local histories and cultural stories as provocations for process drama, for example, can provide opportunities for diverse voices

and viewpoints to be heard through a range of roles. Learning in this case is activated through consciously reflective and reflexive teaching practices.

Educator Julie McLeod (in Halse, 2018) argues for "a reflexive and critical account of belonging that aims to do more than re-iterate feel-good intentions and the promise of an inclusive cuddle" (p.694). McLeod suggests that reflexive practice can be developed by investigating "youth citizenship, wellbeing, voice and listening, with the aim of drawing together questions and approaches that could be helpful for reconsidering the claims and contradictions of belonging as an educational project and aspiration" (p. 694).

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler (1990) provides an illustration of a reflexive response to gender performativity in practice. Butler's (1990) statement that gender should be consciously performative in group activity means that teachers and facilitators should adopt a reflexive and critical approach in their practice. In drama education practice, teachers explore gender performativity with ensembles and groups through processes such as image theatre (Forgasz, 2014) and dramatic inquiry (Hatton,2006) to question what we accept as normative behaviour. She suggests that when gender is performed unconsciously, mirroring actions without thinking, unreflexive practices are likely to affirm existing gender norms. Gender is not something we have but rather something that we do, and we learn through interactions with one another. A reflexive stance when considering belonging is helped by making practices visible, questioning the ways in which gender, and gender identity can be understood (Butler,1990; Wright, 2015)

Key Theoretical Aspects

Three key theoretical aspects of belonging can be considered, as relevant to the development of groups. These aspects have particular resonance for my research and for developing frames of analysis to gain a wider range of perspectives on belonging. Firstly, a sense of belonging, an affective response, refers to belonging that helps us to feel 'at home' (hooks, 2009). Examining how we feel attachment in specific locations and group contexts is likely to focus on the way spatial features contribute to feelings of security, or insecurity, and wellbeing. Home is not necessarily a domesticated space, particularly since this might be dominated by patriarchal relationships where oppression through violence and fear occurs (Antonsich, 2010). When feminist author and educator bell hooks (2009) writes of her return to her home in the Kentucky hills, for example, she considers home as "a space of familiarity, comfort,

security, emotional attachment" (p.213). This space of familiarity applies to the landscape as much as to dwelling places. Secondly, political theorist Nira Yuval- Davis' (2006) influential research into belonging questions "how people belong and the politics of belonging that arise when different social groups interact" (Halse, 2018, p.35).The politics of belonging in education, involves examining contestable concepts within inclusive pedagogical policies and practices, or conversely ones that perpetuate exclusivity (Crowley, 1999; Halse et al., 2018; Kidman, 2012) An example of a contestable concept in drama education can be found in the rationale for including specific content, style or playwright in curriculum programmes. "When we position Shakespeare as essential, but treat Māori literature and oracy as enrichment, we reinforce colonial hierarchies" (Roxborogh, 2025, para 2).

A third analysis of belonging, identified by gender and cultural studies academic Elspeth Probyn (2005) presents as neither an attachment to a community, as in affective belonging, nor as discursively constructed as in the politics of belonging but as a "socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields" (in Savage et al, 2005, p.22). As embodied practice (Forgasz, 2014) drama education, an optional study programme in Aotearoa New Zealand, appeals to learners who orientate towards others who enjoy mind -body collaboration and performance as subjective experiences. Like Probyn, Julie McLeod's (in Halse, 2018) understanding of belonging moves across sites as "a political category, a subjective experience and as orientation towards others" (p.692). McLeod notes the ways that pedagogical practices can facilitate, inhibit, make possible or impossible meaningful dimensions of, and dispositions towards, belonging" (p.692). Researchers Kelly Ann Allen et al. (2016) propose a socio-ecological model of belonging for schools which moves across these sites of affective and political belonging. Based on Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, Allen et al. build a student-centred model for educators showing that

> school belonging is a student's sense of affiliation to [their] school influenced by individual, relational and organisational factors inside a broader school community and within a political, cultural and geographic landscape unique to each school setting (p.99).

This model allows for a wide exploration of factors impacting belonging and is particularly useful for understanding the impact of the cultural context, "language, norms, customs, beliefs unique to each school" (p.110). A socio ecological view of drama education thus

provides opportunities to engage with indigenous knowledges existing in the ensemble, such as Mātauranga Māori in this study situated in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Analysis of Belonging

The measurement and analysis of belonging can be complex and problematic. In 2006, Yuval- Davis outlined a framework for the analysis of belonging which operates on three levels. The first level looks at the social location of individuals and includes contexts such as age, kinship, profession, gender, race, nationality or citizenship status (Halse, 2018, p.36) As Halse points out, these social locations are usually "positioned hierarchically on different power axes" (p.36) which impacts the status of individuals. Seen in the context of a "nation, a 'citizen' has greater social and political rights (power) than a 'refugee' (p.36). An example of this in terms of embodied ensemble practice could be seen in the perceived authority (experience) and power of a facilitator over the inexperience of participants.

The second level of analysis in Yuval Davis' framework focuses on the ways that individuals identify with, or attach to, social collectives. Identifications and attachments are performative in nature according to Yuval Davis (2011) because they are repeated processes in which individuals affirm their attitudes and values within particular solidarities and socio-cultural spaces (Halse, 2018). This creates an identity narrative, "the stories that individuals tell about themselves that reveal the sort of person they are or are not" (Halse, 2018, p.37). The narrative identities created in this way do not necessarily reflect truthful representations of an individual, but rather as Halse points out they "directly or indirectly [...] reveal the characteristics of the social collective and context to which an individual is attached and what this belonging involves and means for the individual" (p.38). Drama education ensembles, and practices are performative and embodied, as suggested earlier, and this may explain why drama spaces are sometimes seen as home to the drama family (Gallagher, 2016).

In Yuval Davis' framework, the third level of analysis of belonging refers to the diverse ethical and political values espoused by individuals in similar social locations and 'identifying themselves as belonging to the same community or group" (Yuval- Davis, 2011, p.18). Diverse ethical and political values invite contestation within social groups and the drawing up of social, cultural and geographic boundaries (Halse, 2018). The politics of belonging "always involves both physical and symbolic boundaries that separate individuals in the world, maintain and reproduce these boundaries and, and are open to contestation,

challenge and resistance" (Yuval Davis, 2011, p.20). Students participate in Aotearoa New Zealand in Climate Change Theatre Action events, exemplifying points made above.

According to Habib & Ward (2019), recent scholarship regarding theories of youth belonging tends towards a broader field of analysis than Yuval-Davis' (2006) "singular analytical framework" (p.5). Drawing on "interdisciplinary perspectives of space and place" (p.9) they explore "the manner in which the practices, discourses and ethos of particular locales, spaces and institutions shape the dispositions and 'ways of being' for young people today" (p.9). Habib & Ward discuss young people's experiences of belonging as "ongoing negotiation, constantly structured and restructured in a reflexive process, imbued with conceptions of respectability, authenticity and value" (p.9).

Negotiation is key, too, for Kelly (in Halse, 2018). She notes the complexities at play here in discursive explorations of belonging, particularly when considering its affective dimension:

> Belonging invokes, for me, at different times, and in different ways, a sense of the need to negotiate the complex, often difficult, often deeply emotional, embodied and cognitive effects and affects of the rules, the norms, the institutionalised practices and processes, the play of power relations that shape the diverse spaces and relations of belonging. What happens, I wonder, to the 'outsiders', the 'outriders', the 'non-joiners', the 'misfits', the 'fringe-dwellers', the 'loners', if we valourise 'belonging', if we essentialise 'belonging'? (p.324).

Applied drama and theatre practitioner, and academic, Helen Nicholson (2005) takes a similar view about valourising belonging. She questions the associated perception of community groups engaging in applied drama projects as positive, or desirable local entities. Citing Iris Manion Young, Nicholson (2005) suggests that the idea of community can be idealised. Painting sentimental images of people united within a group may serve to create a potentially exclusive space where some people feel included, and some do not. This is an example of what some sociology scholars and researchers refer to as "unbelonging" (Wren Butler, 2018) or the process of othering as offered by (Powell, 2024). Kelly (2018) contemplates outcomes for individuals who choose not to belong within institutionalised practices and processes; Nicholson suggests on the other hand that there may be no such choice for those already committed to groups, or those wishing to be part of the group if othering is a factor. Unbelonging may not be necessarily negative but rather should be considered in the context of the development of appropriate pedagogies, where a critical

reading of the politics of belonging enacted in the group is as important as the development of affective belonging. There are challenges however in terms of how both dimensions/ theories of belonging can be studied.

In Australia, Cominos et al. (in Habib & Ward, 2019) understand belonging in terms of "pedagogy, language and learning" (p.7). Their research focuses on the creation of "spaces for positive discourses of Aboriginal youth" (p.7). Identifying language in the domain of sport and masculinity, and its discursive impact on identity, Cominos et al. show how the "voices of Aboriginal young men demonstrate alternative ways of both *being and belonging* which avoid the often facile Western-traditional binary classifications" (p.7).These classifications refer to ways that Aboriginal youth are frequently represented in educational contexts: "Aboriginal youth [...] are typically characterised by deficit discourses often in relation to normative, Eurocentric educational criteria. They are described as maladapted learners, living in disengaged communities, without identifiable or recognisable literacy or numeracy practices" (Cominos et al.in Habib & Ward, 2019, p.92). Cominos et al.'s point about making space for young people to be heard and to have agency with belonging works to counteract deficit discourses, which might otherwise be instrumental in a process of othering. Rose Butler (in Habib & Ward, 2019) supports this idea that young people can impact their own being and belonging. She makes claims for belonging to be seen through "multiple theoretical frameworks" (p.8) noting that young people "produce belonging within their everyday multicultural lives [...] reproduced and made anew within socially embedded circumstances" (p.8) For teachers of groups or ensembles, facilitating opportunities within practice for participants to understand their own role in the production of belonging would appear to be of key importance.

Allen et al (2021) Study of Belonging

Kerry Allen et al.'s (2021) study of belonging maintains that "belonging is a central construct in human health, behaviour, and experience" (p.91). Their narrative review of belonging takes a close look at a range of perspectives on belonging and belongingness in the Australian education context. From the summary of these perspectives, Allen et al. provide a "integrative framework" (p.87) which supports fresh approaches to research into studies of belonging. The framework acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of belonging, and the challenges of measuring belonging. Within the framework there are suggestions for "cultivating belonging" (p.88) that focus on "four interrelated components: competencies,

opportunities, motivations, and perceptions" (p.88).

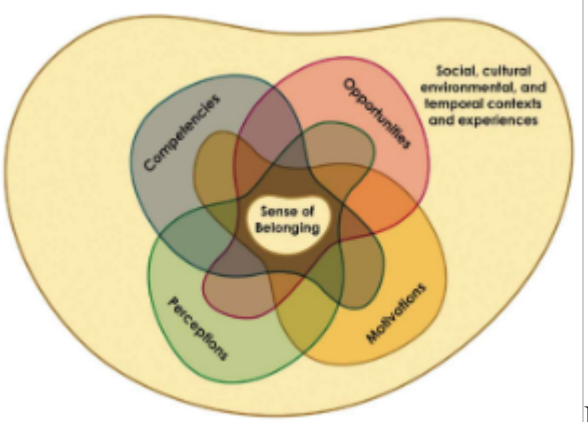


Figure from Allen et al. (p.93)

Competencies

The first of these components, competencies, relates to the skills and abilities that individuals need to build relationships with one another, to "identify with their cultural back-ground, develop a sense of identity, and connect to place and country. Competencies enable people to ensure that their behaviour is consistent with group social norms, align with cultural values, and treat the place and land with respect" (p.94). Similarly, in Aotearoa New Zealand, Key Competencies (KCs), or capabilities for living and lifelong learning, are an integral aspect of the New Zealand Curriculum seen as "the key to learning in every learning area" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.12). Opportunities to develop the five key competencies occur in social contexts (Ministry of Education, 2007). Social contexts in this respect are learning communities, such as the classroom or group of learners.

In Relating to Others (KC) students are encouraged to "interact effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts, be open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.12). Being able to relate well to others shows awareness of how "words and actions can affect others" (p.12) and distinctions are drawn here between the actions of competing and co-operating. In the Drama devising standards NZQA /NCEA for example, key competencies are evaluated alongside the use of appropriate drama techniques. This indicates equitable importance ascribed to the pro-social, cultural aspects of the drama curriculum (Neelands, 2009). Allen et al. see "understanding one's heritage, mindful acknowledgement of place, and alignment with relevant values" (p.94) of significant importance. "Social, emotional, and cultural competencies complement and reinforce one another, and contribute to and are reinforced by feeling a sense of belonging" (p.94).

Opportunities

The second component of Allen et al.'s framework for establishing belonging is opportunities. As they point out, relating well to others is a skill that can only be enacted in a group context. Allen et al. state that while there are many contexts in which groups and communities can create opportunities for positive sense of belonging to develop "some of these opportunities can [..] be motivated by a sense of not belonging" (p.93) created through trauma, abuse or rejection. According to Allen et al, the search for alternative belonging "outside, or in opposition to, established norms provides one explanation for the rise of radicalisation and extremism" (p.93) and this is borne out in Moe Gregorzewski's (2021) Aotearoa New Zealand doctoral research.

Gregorzewski showed how process drama, as critical multicultural education, could be used to "critically encounter and challenge rightwing populist rhetoric and xenophobic representations of refugees in a hyper-technological world" (p.ii). She makes the point that "right wing populist movements incite processes of excluding Others" (p.) fuelling othering rather than belonging.

Anti-democratic ideologies, attitudes and processes of othering are the antithesis of the enactment of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006). However, critical multicultural education has the potential to "catalyse critical empathy" according to Gregorzewski (2021, p.ii) and "propel the deconstruction of attitudes and behaviours in metaxic moments of f(r)iction" (2021, p.ii). Opportunities to experience a sense of belonging can arise through positive or negative connections and this depends largely on how, and why individuals are motivated to connect with others.

Motivation

Motivation is the third aspect of belonging considered by Allen et al (2021) in their integrative framework. Belonging motivation is seen as the driving force behind the need to be connected. Allen et al (2021) point out there are many different motivators which "reflect diverse sociocultural and economic environments such as indigenous-non- indigenous, collectivist-individualist, urban-rural, developed-developing" (p.94). Adding to the need to be connected, tertiary and secondary educators have reported instances of disconnection during

online learning and campus learning Post Covid-19 (Bethlenfalvy, 2020; Brown, 2023; Gallagher, 2020).

Perceptions

The final aspect of belonging that Allen et al.' consider in their integrative framework is perceptions of belonging. By this they infer that an individual may be skilled in the art of connecting, "have opportunities to belong, and be motivated, yet still report great dissatisfaction" (p.94). They claim that most individuals are constantly assessing, either consciously or unconsciously whether they fit in with those around them. Evaluating perceptions of belonging in drama ensembles have been explored in research studies (Munday and Fleming, 2015; Enciso, 2011; Gallagher, 2011) evidencing the ensemble's fertile ground for exploration.

Wood and Black's (2016) Study

A third framework for the examination of belonging, particularly appropriate for exploring theories concerned with sociology of youth, has been conceived by Bronwen Wood and Rosalyn Black, researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia respectively. They proposed a framework (2016) for "a fresh examination of the spatial, relational and affective dimensions of citizenship and belonging and a reconsideration of what these dimensions mean for young people today" (p.3). This framework was developed in response to Thomas Humphrey Marshall's (1950) "historic analysis" (p.2) of the rights and responsibilities of citizens belonging to a community. Wood and Black (2016) contend that Marshall's contributions to an arguably prevailing understanding of citizenship and belonging in terms of equity, democracy and affinity were "built on essentialist conceptions of the collective and the duties and responsibilities associated with that collective" (p.2). Wood and Black point out that Marshallian ideas, whilst acknowledging that belonging might have an affective dimension, "lack [...] consideration for gender, race, socio-economic status and transnational affinities" (p.2) and fail to "capture the complex and multidimensional experience of being a citizen and of belonging in society in the 21st century" (p.2).

Wood and Black's (2016) framework works on three interrelated dimensions of (citizenship and) belonging: the spatial, relational and emotional aspects that can be considered in any analysis of how young people connect within community groups.

The Spatial Aspect

Wood and Black note that "space matters" (p.3) and are careful to point out that in regards to belonging and citizenship "the cultural, political and social affiliations and identifications that attend it, are not geographically neutral nor free-floating" (p.3). Implications here for groups in drama education would necessarily be all about the ways that space (in its different contexts) could be seen as exclusionary or inclusive, thus carrying the politics of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006) into any discussion of how young people negotiate belonging. Wood and Black consider space here from a Foucauldian perspective, emphasising spatial power to construct boundaries around belonging/ unbelonging.

The Relational Aspect

The second proposition put forward by Wood and Black highlights the "significance of young people's connections to other people – both adult and young peers, near and far" (p.4). Relationships shape the way young people construct their identities as seen in Yuval Davis' (2006) framework, and also in the competencies aspect set out by Allen et al. (2021) in their framework.

The Affective and Emotional Aspect

The third dimension of Wood and Black's framework deals with the "neglected" (p.4) consideration of the significance of emotion in studies of belonging and citizenship. Citing Osler and Starkey, Wood and Black affirm that "citizenship is about status and practice, it is mostly first experienced as a *feeling*. Importantly, it may not always be a warm and fuzzy feeling of attachment" (p.4). Noting that participation in groups "can also happen as a result of feeling dislocated, angry or discontented" (Wood and Black, p.4), Gregorzewski's (2021) research into the groups exploring process drama warns against neglecting analysis of affective and emotional aspects of belonging and the contexts in which it is studied.

Summary

In essence, "belonging is about connection, membership, attachment and a sense of security" (Habib & Ward, 2019, p1). Two key sociological theories of belonging have been surveyed

here, affective belonging and the politics of belonging. Applying a lens of affective belonging, or a sense of belonging, to group development illuminates how individual participants experience emotions, attitudes and values in creative collaboration, and how this might afford or constrain their enactment of belonging. Seeing group development through the lens of the politics of belonging can support facilitators to understand the discursive, relational complexities of group dynamics operating both within and outside the group.

A key concept of belonging, the spatial dimension of place-belongingness has been identified across studies of affective belonging and the politics of belonging, and plays a significant role in a developing understanding of critical pedagogies. Place-belongingness includes considerations of the constitutive aspects of belonging, "people and things and processes and places" (Wright, 2015, p.393). Spatial and temporal dimensions of belonging have been examined together in education studies where local and national stories and histories, and the way they have been discursively framed, have been seen to interrogate or reinforce beliefs, values and traditions.

Three sociological frameworks, used in analyses of belonging, have been set out and weighed up for their usefulness in ensemble pedagogy. These frameworks provide a locus for the examination of affective belonging, the politics of belonging and socio ecological belonging. Within each of these theories, cultural, societal and political contexts shape experiences of belonging within groups and community. Examples of these experiences will now be explored in the following section.

According to Harris et al. (2021) belonging has been identified as a "recurring theme in youth studies, yet it is largely taken for granted and often under theorised" (p.1). They acknowledge a recent "turn'" to belonging in youth studies which aims to capture "the nuances of young people's experiences at a local level, while also accounting for the global and institutional processes and structures that shape young people's lives" (p.1).

In the previous section, theoretical underpinnings of belonging have been identified, and discussed regarding their importance in social and political discourses. As McLeod (in Halse, 2018) notes, "questions about belonging, where, to whom and why can sometimes appear subordinated as in-principle assertions of its value" (p.693). The next section provides examples of ways that cultural, societal and political contexts can shed light on where, to whom and why belonging, or not belonging is evident, particularly for young people, and "associated notions of inclusion, voice or participation are mobilised in educational debates" (McLeod in Halse, 2018, p.693).

The first example explores cultural aspects of belonging, germane to Aotearoa New Zealand in the context of te ao Māori, values, traditions and customs forming an integral part of the country's identity. The second example provides a snapshot of an Australian drama classroom in which relationships and interactions between the teacher, peers and space contribute to an understanding of how societal belonging relies on a situated sense of connection with others. Finally, the third example, again from Aotearoa New Zealand, shows the impact of political belonging on individuals and groups, their sense of identity, attachment to place, and sense of inclusion within national ideologies.

Cultural Belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand

Lesley Rameka's (2018) study of being and belonging in early childhood settings provides a Māori perspective of belonging. This study explores belonging as it pertains to *Te Whariki*, and to young children although Rameka makes it clear that understandings of belonging and being are critical for consideration for everyone working in education. They do not apply just "for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand but have broader international implications for supporting being and belonging for indigenous peoples" (p.376). Defining belonging from this personal, western perspective relates to a different world view, and feels time and space bound. Seen through te ao Māori lens, "being and belonging for Māori may not only relate to the 'here and now', but can link back through time to *te kore, te pō, te ao mārama, ātua, tīpuna, maunga* and *whenua"* (Rameka, 2018, p.377).This describes knowledge emerging from the void (kore) from the dark (te po) through light and reality the dwelling place of humans (te ao Mārama) from the gods (atua) ancestors Furthermore, as Mason Durie (1998) tells us, "Māori are not a homogeneous group and there is no one single Māori cultural way of being and belonging as Māori" (p.) Being and belonging as Māori can be defined differently for different groups (Durie,1998) but the concepts of whakapapa and whanaungatanga are fundamental to understanding of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand and have implications for workshop practices which seek to develop a critical ensemble pedagogy. Rameka (2018) advises those working in education settings to "not only recognise the importance of *whakapapa* and *whanaungatanga*, but also authentically and respectfully incorporate these perspectives into […] practice" (p.376). Whakapapa and whanaungatanga are key concepts in Owen Eastwood's (2019) book "Belonging" and they are integral here in the context of developing strong ensembles in applied drama and theatre practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Eastwood, originally from Aotearoa New Zealand (Ngāi Tahu) is a

performance coach, engaged to maximise team performance in high performing global organisations across sport and business. He works from the central tenet that as team 'players' we are all part of a strong, unbreakable human chain. We have shared experiences, and we share a culture, we share purpose. Eastwood places *whakapapa* at the heart of his practice. Through his practice he highlights the cultural and systemic importance of *whakapapa.* This is a system that "immerses us in deep belonging. We feel safe and respected. We share beliefs and a sense of identity with those around us and this anchors us" (Eastwood, 2021, para 3, loc 201).

Gender, Sexuality and Belonging: Identities

Charlton et al.'s (in Halse, 2018) study of a session in an Australian junior secondary, co-ed drama class exemplifies "the embodied nature of belonging in the classroom's pedagogical space" (p.70). Personal experience in Aotearoa New Zealand has shown that the majority of drama students in co ed setting identify as girls. A local boys' school only introduced drama to the curriculum five years ago. A vignette describes the opening activities of an established year 9 drama class, working in an open space where a jumping mat (presumably from physical education (PE) has been left on the floor. The students would usually change into PE kit, but on this occasion the teacher chooses to maximise class time and the students remain in uniform, "[t]he male students wore shorts or trousers and a button-up shirt with a tie; the female students wore dresses or skirts and blouses. All students wore socks and laced leather shoes" (Charlton et al, 2018, p.114).

The teacher instructs the students to begin improvising a scene based on the topic of arguments. The scene must end "with conflict" (p.115) and the teacher provides some instruction regarding the "behaviours that are not acceptable: 'tackling' and 'connection'" (p.120). She encourages students to consider creative ways of suggesting slapping sounds,

"You can slap your thigh. Boys, you can slap your chest if you want to" (p.116). The jumping mat is positioned in the performance space and after preparation time a frequently marginalised group of boys is 'volunteered' by the teacher to share their improvisation first with the rest of the class. Negative responses from the class are heard as the group of boys are counted in and struggle to get started. (Charlton et al., 2018, p.117) This group is followed by a group of girls, described by their teacher as "studious, not needing to be worried about, well behaved and quiet" (p.117). Their 'conflict' is depicted in an argument about choice of furnishings for interior design. At the end of the performance the feedback from the teacher

to the girls focuses on their "relating to more talking than action on the mat" (p.118) and the teacher then calls on the whole class with "Who can do this well? I want to see a group that's going to do this well. Larry, your group" (p.118). This group, popular amongst the other class members, perform a more physicalised scene than the first two (Fig 1).

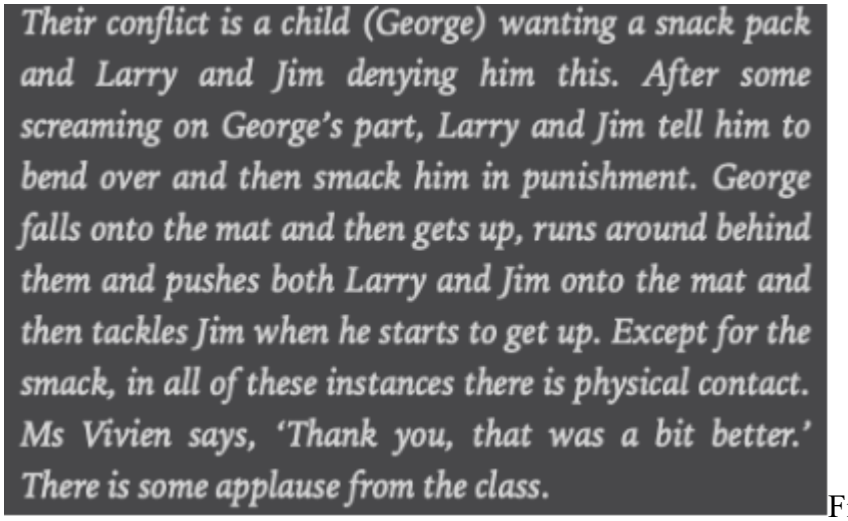

Their conflict is a child (George) wanting a snack pack and Larry and Jim denying him this. After some screaming on George's part, Larry and Jim tell him to bend over and then smack him in punishment. George falls onto the mat and then gets up, runs around behind them and pushes both Larry and Jim onto the mat and then tackles Jim when he starts to get up. Except for the smack, in all of these instances there is physical contact. Ms Vivien says, 'Thank you, that was a bit better.' There is some applause from the class.

Fig 1 p.118

The final group to share their scene perform a fight depicting the harassment of one student by three others. This group is praised more highly by the teacher for their performance than the previous groups, although the criteria for success is not clarified by the teacher in her feedback. The teacher calls on another popular boys' group to perform but they decline together with the remaining groups in the class.

In this pedagogical moment, according to Charlton et al., normative stereotypes of sex-gender-sexuality work to "constitute young people as students who belong/do not belong and successful/unsuccessful in that particular pedagogical moment" (p.115). These stereotypes are sustained through the selection and reception of the scenarios, "bar brawls and interior design, [which] says a lot about how sex-gender-sexuality is being performed in this classroom" (p.120). Violence is positioned as a "method of conflict resolution–rather than negotiation or compromise" (p.121) through its situatedness as an element of slapstick. Violence is also seen in "alignment with normative understandings of male behaviour, and as privileged" (p.120) in terms of the dismantling of non-physical boundaries, set up at the start of the session.

Charlton et al. refer to geographer Sarah Wright's (2015) conception of belonging, which she describes as a powerful way of understanding and producing the world" (Wright,

2015, p.399) and as a way of theorising how "affect and emotion can work to create both inclusive and exclusive belongings and, indeed, belongings that are messily somewhere in between" (Wright,2015, p.399). The teacher is seen to have "demonstrated practices of boundary making" (Wright, 2015, p.399) without negotiation, which conspire to affirm "boys' rough and tumble" (p.399) leaving learners with affective understandings of belonging in relationships and space. Whilst this was not the teacher's typical drama session, it serves as a reminder to drama educators that space and objects are discursive vehicles. The PE mat in this case, as part of a drama lesson, could have been put to use in a range of different creative ways that were not gender normative.

How Political and Cultural Contexts Shape Belonging

In Aotearoa New Zealand, historian and sociologist Joanna Kidman (2015) has examined reconciliation narratives in which "belonging and civic harmony are emphasised" (p. 638) in order to understand the extent to which official discourses of national identity are determined by these stories. Findings from Kidman's (2015) research reveal that indigenous young people do not necessarily identify with "notions of belonging, home, civic harmony, and nationhood that are embedded in settler or Crown discourses and often feel excluded or marginalized by these official memory regimes" (p.638). Kidman is making a point here that before 2023, New Zealand history has been taught from a settler perspective.

Kidman's (2012) earlier research highlighted "politicised constructs of belonging and cultural alienation" developed by young people in response to the tensions between indigenous and Crown discourses. These politicised constructs emerged in analysis of the qualitative research data generated from a study of 24 participants aged 14-16, who had tribal links to the regions in which they lived. Four smaller regions across Aotearoa New Zealand were chosen rather than major cities as research settings. Each area was assigned a researcher who had either tribal or cultural affiliation with the community; this was so that the study could build "trusting respectful relationships with the participating communities, many of whom would have otherwise been unwilling to admit outsiders" (p.192). Whilst the study had university ethical approval, concerns would have arisen if researchers were unable to have "upheld 'tikanga' (tribal custom [...] in the course of their work with young Māori" (p.192). Visual methodologies which included digital storytelling (Alrutz, 2018) comprised the data. Kidman points out that the research team was not interested in creating a "documentary record of young people's lives" (p.192). Instead, the team hoped that by inviting young

people to capture digital images of places and spaces that held personal resonance for them, they would understand "the manner in which Māori teenagers express their identity with reference to physical spaces" (p.192). This visual methodology and the visual artefacts created by the participants represented young people's ideas about a range of issues. Importantly, according to Kidman, the research helped to highlight young people's perceptions of the political relationship between land and identity. Understanding belonging in this way "symbolise[d] understandings in ways that could be connected with other kinds of knowledge, including social and cultural knowledge" (p.192).

Other kinds of knowledges are visible in Kidman et al.'s (2021) Aotearoa New Zealand research which continued to investigate the politics of belonging, seen this time beyond rural areas, in "young people's spatialised experiences of cities and towns" (p.24). Kidman et al. found that in addition to "racially-coded" (p.24) urban environmental impact on marginalised youth, there was another "under theorised and [..] less well understood" (p.24) dimension to be explored: citing Klinke (2013) they refer to the politics of time, or "chronopolitics" (p.24). This research found that in settler colonial societies, particularly where land issues are contentious, young people's "place-narratives, place-memories and place-identities are shaped by sharply divergent temporal practices" (p.24). Kidman et al. point out that in the same way that stories of land and place can be rewritten "by the marginalisation or erasure of indigenous claims to territory, time is also racialised and radically reconfigured by these manoeuvres" (p.24).

This particular study focused on Māori young people's future hopes and concerns and how they navigated "competing temporal frames of reference" (p.25) and "border narratives" (p.25) in urban areas. Kidman et al. note that Aotearoa New Zealand has experienced restructuring in both spatial and temporal terms; they point out that "where the conquest and occupation of land is a central concern for settler governments, the organisation of time is instrumental in upholding colonial power relations" (p.25). This, they contend, often appears as a "freezing in time of indigenous histories, by Western standards, along with systematic attempts to erase native temporalities [which] closely accompanies colonial invasions of land" (p.25).

Walk-along or go-along methodologies and methods were used in this research, where a researcher accompanies research participants on a walk, interviewing while moving. Research was concerned primarily with understanding how 109 Māori youth (13-19) navigated "experiences of segregation or exclusion" (p.25) in certain urban spaces. Each

walkalong involved 4-6 participants, who had negotiated locations for the walkalong, in an interview; researchers focused on how participants drew on "Māori understandings of space time, known as Wā, within which "individual identity is formulated in the context of one's whakapapa (genealogy)" (p.28). Wā, according to historian Anne Salmond (in Kidman et al, 2021)) is seen as a "spiral of temporal flows, eddies and currents that exist in a multidimensional matrix" (p.28). A spiral represents the continuous flow of time which is not represented as past present and future, in linear expression, but rather operates "contemporaneously in unbounded space" (Kidman et al., 2021, p.28). Many of the spaces and places in this study were deemed by young Māori to be "no go zones" (p.32) by which they meant either spaces that might be unsafe, or where they might be racially targeted, or "white-coded residential areas" often affluent, wealthy neighbourhoods where young people felt excluded. One research participant who had tribal affiliations to one of these wealthy neighbourhoods told Kidman et al. that when she passed through this area, at night, she "acknowledges the physical space with an unspoken *mihi* (greeting) and silently runs through her whakapapa (genealogical connections) which links her tribally to the area in question" (p.30). They note that this routine affords the young person "courage, purpose and sense of place- belonging and is a familiar means of passage for many Māori in both tribal and settler - colonial spaces" (p.30). Other participants spoke of the "complex identity negotiations they make with white space where they do not have family connections or networks of people who can vouch for them" (p.31). Complexity here was seen in the way these young people navigated these spaces by "actively thinking about them as if they *were* Māori-coded spaces" (p.31). By calling on whakapapa, as a form of connectedness, they could "access Māori timespace relations in Wā" (p.31). Kidman et al. note that Māori youth who are unable to call on kin on the material, tribal, spiritual, or temporal realms for assistance or protection as they move around their cities struggle to navigate "white coded or unwelcoming settler space" (p.31).

Researcher and academic Bruno Marques et al.,(2020) contend that "concepts of place, belonging, landscape and well-being play an important role in linking environment and culture as well as in contributing to creating therapeutic spatial environments that promote health and ecosystems" (p.1). Their critical review reflects on what it takes to be able to understand "place as space that is situated through the practices of belonging" (p.11). The authors maintain that

> a sense of belonging is contingent on recognising a place to belong to, and therefore, a developed understanding of a sense of place is central to its engagement, even as it maintains its own characteristics. Belonging is deeply enshrined in the politics of identity and especially of the networks of responsibility and obligation towards place that are fostered within it" (p.11)

According to researcher Carl Mika (2015) terms such as time and space are "heavily loaded" and "due to their importance for how dominant Western thought and practice has progressed, are linear and hence severely restrictive concepts for most indigenous thought" (para. 2). Any study of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand is rendered problematic if, as Mika suggests, concepts such as time and space are not deconstructed from an indigenous perspective, since "they are colonising devices which order the world in restrictive ways" (para. 2).

Having explored a range of questions about culture and belonging in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, the next section of this contextual review explores ensemble as drama education pedagogy.

Ensemble

This section of the contextual review focuses on ensemble and what can be understood about its contemporary position in drama and theatre education, both internationally and more locally within Aotearoa New Zealand. Earlier learnings about belonging, and their connections with citizenship and democracy, are woven into the search for pedagogies that can potentially activate belonging within the practice of drama education.

As might be expected in such a broad field, a range of different conceptions of ensemble within drama and theatre education research can be found. Understanding ensemble as an entity, a space or practice (a common noun or an abstract noun) or as a practice, process, action or feeling, (a verb) impacts facilitation in working to build ensemble, and understanding how ensemble subsequently functions through collective, aesthetic and embodied practice. The following section explores some ways that contemporary theatre artists, performers, and drama and theatre education (DTE) practitioners conceptualise and practise ensemble.

Definitions: Ensemble. What is it?

Creator of Self-With-Others' (SWO), and Artistic Director of Duende, a dance company, John Britton's (2010) paper interrogates the languages and metaphors used to define ensemble as experience within performance. He suggests that understanding the essence of ensemble helps to conceptualise ensemble training, so that we might understand what, or who it is that is being trained. Asking what ensemble is, he argues, is a very difficult question to answer, and he reflects on Peter Brook's (in Britton, 2013, p.23) comment that we all know when it isn't present but no one can say what it actually is. In his text Encountering Ensemble (2013) Britton reflects on moments in training

> I would ask performers to sense when 'it' was in the room. Sometimes, in the middle of a scene or an improvisation, 'it' would leave. Sometimes the performers (once they had finished) would tell me that they had felt highly connected when I, their audience, had felt no such connectedness. They may have felt 'it', I didn't. At other times, I would sense deep and instinctive interconnections between the performers but they, after the event, would describe themselves as having felt a little lost. Then there were times when we all felt 'it', all knew 'it' (p.20).

Britton describes ensemble in a series of metaphors. Whilst a metaphor cannot say what ensemble is exactly, for Britton, it can provide a view "into how someone experience[s] this elusive phenomenon" (p.19). Seeing the ensemble as one body with component parts for example, helps to understand how performers might breathe together, to function as a whole rather than separate parts.

Britton notes other metaphors used by theatre practitioners such as "jigsaw pieces, orchestras or jazz groups, guests visiting houses, stars in the sky, families and societies, independent vital organs" (p.23) describe both the collective and the individual contribution to ensemble. They "evoke and express in some way a tension at the heart of ensemble" (p.23). Britton acknowledges "[e]nsemble is a communal, shared enterprise generated by unique, highly differentiated individuals" (p.23). Like belonging, explored in the previous section, there are many different ways of understanding what is, what it does.

Arts researcher Jennifer Willett's (2016) thesis proposes that an ensemble or community is "perpetually shifting and changing, operating in the between of the subjectivities 'I' and 'We' (p.4). Like Britton, Willett believes that an "established ensemble

does not assume a static entity, and that the notion of a fixed state of the community may not be as straightforward as often assumed" (p.4). Noting that "the singular member of the ensemble can function and exist through the engagement and entanglement with the ensemble", Willett (2016, p.37) suggests that the perpetual shifts between the individual and the ensemble might be in tension, but this is not necessarily unproductive. In Willett's perspective, the ensemble provides a laboratory context "creating a co-presence where the individual can present themselves to each other as different and distinct individuals" (p.37). For Willett, the collective ensemble is "embodied practice, [...] understood as a continuous state of fluidity between individual and collective states of being" (p.4). Applied theatre practitioner Peter Duffy (2010) notes his young "ensemble beginners" (p.206) could be nurtured into "skilled practitioners" (p.206) as they worked through Boal's four stages of transforming a spectator into an actor. "We were still many "I"s playing the game but it was clear that we had a chance to become a "We" (Duffy, 2010, p.206).

Achieving this continuous state of fluidity between the individual and the collective lies at the heart of many drama and theatre education discourses. Concerns with models of education, in which there is an overemphasis on individual achievement and its assessment, have been raised by a number of curriculum theorists including American Canadian scholar and cultural critic Henry Giroux:

> Our current system has encouraged a culture of self-absorption, consumerism, privatization and commodification. Civic culture has been badly undermined while any viable notion of shared citizenship has been replaced by commodified and commercial relations. What this suggests is that important forms of political and social domination are not only economic and structural, but also intellectual and related to the way we learn and teach. (Giroux, 2017, para.7).

Giroux (2017) calls on academics and tertiary institutions to develop "a culture of questioning" (para. 8) that empowers young people to respond to social injustices, and "teach[es] young people how to hold politicians and authority accountable" (para 8). Issues arise for drama educators working within narrow curriculum models and frameworks for arts teaching, limiting opportunities for learning beyond the classroom (O'Toole et al., 2009).

Drama educator Jonothan Neelands (2009) refers to his work in schools as ensemble theatre, the term 'ensemble' describing the process participants in a drama classroom might experience. He notes that young people can learn to act together "in both artistic and social domains, so that their learning about how to act together in the drama classroom [also shapes]

their social actions as a community beyond the drama class and also, possibly, beyond school" (p.181). Aotearoa academic and applied drama and theatre practitioner, Peter O'Connor (2011) offers the following description of ensemble, noted in his introduction to the third section of the collected writings of Jonothan Neelands,

> Neelands argues that 'ensemble based learning' is a bridging concept between those pedagogies of the rehearsal and the classroom. This pedagogy centres on democratisation of learning and artistic processes through high quality relationships for learning and living together. Neelands now considers bridging the pedagogies inherent in performative tradition and the theatre of the classroom rather than bridging the aesthetic. Neelands has used this bridging approach with actors and educators at [...] the Royal Shakespeare Company. It is refreshing to see the bridge can hold two-way traffic" (O'Connor, 2011, p.116).

Applied theatre practitioner Sarah Weston (2018) refers to Neelands in her practice -led doctoral research agreeing that the ensemble is conceptualised as a process, showing how a democratic society might function effectively. She notes it is the artistry of the ensemble that can provide participants with opportunities to express theatrically how society can be experienced and imagined differently.

Weston (2018) understands ensemble as "something that can be defined through a political purpose, that is, ensemble as a collective practice that suggests an ideology of the political significance of collective action" (p.256). Weston's thesis focuses on how young women engage politically through embodied voice, used as a tool of political intervention. Weston argues that in applied drama and theatre contexts, "ensemble and ensemble training has been utilised to generate feelings of togetherness, belonging, and overcoming existing boundaries between different communities by creating a new community through the ensemble" (p.257). Weston notes the vital importance of the ensemble as a process within applied and community practice, specifically when working with highly diversified, marginalised groups.

Theatre and performance scholar Tom Cornford's (2020) research offers insightful accounts of ensemble practice, and what ensemble is, from three influential UK based theatre companies from last century. Like Weston, Cornford (2020) argues for the presentation of ensemble as a site for the interrogation of political stances, for the deconstruction of power relationships between creatives, and between creatives as a collective and the audience. In drama and theatre education, power relationships are often examined in terms of social

connection and disconnection, in issues of social equity and disenfranchisement, identity and democratic citizenship. Ensemble itself becomes a locus in which power relationships, participatory citizenship and democracy can be explored (Neelands, 2009).

In her study conducted in Athens with teenaged performers, academic and applied theatre practitioner Myrto Pigkou-Repoussi (2012) found that ensemble theatre making made important contributions to citizenship education. Using two of Sophocles' plays, the research participants (ensemble) explored theories of democratic politics and active citizenship as/in performance. Here the ensemble is a model for both theatre education and civic learning. Theatre education practitioner and scholar Jennifer Kitchen's (2018) research focuses on the ensemble in Shakespeare education in both schools and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Kitchen's ensemble pedagogy employs "teaching which is active, democratic and theatre based" (p.5). Kitchen (2018) states that "ensemble pedagogy ultimately provides a theoretical basis for a way of teaching which engenders social hope through active citizenship and thus presents the potential of robust resistance to neoliberalism" (p.26). Kitchen (2020) interrogates the ensemble's capacity to enact "democratic civic care within the classroom" (p.375) suggesting theatre education practice can be seen as offering a counter-weight to the anti-democratic rhetorics of populism" (p.375). The enactment of democratic civic care within the classroom is an important consideration and focus for my inquiry, with the emphasis on activating belonging for wellbeing (Allen, et al., 2023)

In summary, as with belonging, definitions of ensemble are contextually situated and may encapsulate the identity of participants or of the artistic work undertaken by members of the ensemble. Ensemble can be defined as a process, a practice or a pedagogy, which can relate to Ensemble may be defined as a discursive space or site in which participants explore performance skills at the same time as learning about active participation in, and contribution to, democracy. These examples explore ensemble membership, ensemble belonging, in different ways and reveal what Britton (2013) refers to as tensions in ensemble understanding. Consideration of "self-with-others" (Britton, 2013), and "being-singular-plural" (Nancy, 2000) the individual and/or the collective, lies at the heart of an understanding of how, and why participants experience belonging or unbelonging, separately or together. The next section looks at some of the influences on the shaping of contemporary drama education ensemble practice.

Influences

Ensemble practice explored in this review has been influenced largely by theatre and performance practice from the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, a time according to Jonothan Neelands and Warwick Dobson (2008) when considerable change was taking place in relationships between writers and theatre makers. Directors were becoming auteurs, and the "creative status of the actor [changed] from passive, interpretive instrument to more active, creative participant in the production process" (Neelands & Dobson, 2008, p.164). Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, Vsevelod Meyerhold's Moscow Art Theatre Studio, and Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory were supported by government and cultural agencies which allowed the ensembles to develop work "freed from the bounds of commercialism" (Neelands and Dobson, 2008, p. 164). Italian theatre director, and director of the Odin Teatret Eugenio Barba's approach developed from necessity insofar as the ensemble were not funded to develop training approaches. A self-confessed autodidact, Barba encouraged self-sufficiency within his own ensemble where established members would devise their own training and rehearsal practice, and would teach newcomers, a central tenet of the Odin Teatret philosophy (Watson, in Hodge, 2010; Ledger, 2012).

These ensembles became training schools, spaces for actors to explore and develop performance skills but also places to "engage in philosophical and scientific debate and discussion about the relationship of theatre to the wider social, political and cultural landscape (Neelands and Dobson, 2008 p.165). In the US, ensemble style practice became synonymous with a radical, collective ideology exemplified in Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop production of Oh! What a Lovely War. This play, with its episodic structure, and playful representation of the horrific events of World War 1, is frequently performed by youth ensembles providing ensemble members with opportunities to learn a range of performance skills through a social, historical and political lens.

Simon McBurney, the director of Complicite (formerly known as Theatre de Complicite) describes the company as a collective, or ensemble, engaging in "collaborative curiosity" (n.d) which drives the creative devising process through to performance. The group works with "a shared creative language" (n.d.) which anchors the work and supports Complicite in its distinctive, explorative style. Described as "leading practitioners of devised work" (n.d.) internationally acclaimed theatre company Complicite situates ensemble education at the core of their devising and collaborative practice, and their education programme uses the same techniques in educational workshops with drama students as they

use in rehearsals for their productions. Drama programmes such as GCSE, BTEC and A LEVEL in the UK , and NZQA Level 3 Drama Standard 3.5 in Aotearoa New Zealand regularly refer to Complicite's approach of "playfulness, risk taking and a willingness to fail" (n.d.) The company provides rich research opportunities for drama students to experiment with the company's style in their own devised work.

Complicite's practice is informed by its members' training, many of whom studied at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris. According to Franc Chamberlain (in Chamberlain & Yarrow, 2013) the influence of Lecoq is wide reaching due largely to the autonomy his methods offer to performers:

> There is no ensemble with whom Lecoq is uniquely associated, no performer who is the Lecoq disciple par excellence. Lecoq offers a method of working, what the students do with it is up to them. He doesn't direct them. He doesn't tell them what to say" (p.4).

Similar observations can be made about Barba's pre-expressive, expressive training and principles of practice (Ledger, 2012) in that the methods of working are identified by the performers themselves. Barba's influence, however, is not immediately obvious in drama education programmes, particularly in secondary education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Barba is studied in the tertiary Theatre Studies programme at the University of Waikato (Farrimond, n.d.).

Theatre scholar Paul Maunder (2010) suggests in his thesis that director Peter Falkenberg's rationale for the FreeTheatre in Christchurch echoes aspects of Barba's 'third theatre':

> Falkenberg explains: It is to create a society I can breathe in. Even if it is a small one. One where people can follow their own desires, where they can be as free as possible within a group situation. Where you are not dependent on other people's decisions. We feel that what we do is not to necessarily be different from the people around us, but that the people around us might like the same things we like. We want to open a door for them (Maunder, 2010, p.245)

Writer, actor and theatre academic Paul Maunder's (2013) account of the development of community-based theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand, tracks a diversity of practice across a range of different community contexts. Influences from international training practices blend with cultural forms to create

> no one story, but a diversity of stories being told. The aesthetic outcomes, showing kinds of people in kinds of places have been framed by the avant garde, the popular, storytelling, the political (mainly influenced by Boal) and naturalism. The work has called on ritual and cultural forms from Māori and other ethnic cultures, as well as popular commercial forms such as hip hop and rap. There have also been influences from the Lecoq and Gaulier schools of mime/clown/commedia, the Welfare State International style visually based work, the theatre for development of PETA and latterly human rights -based applied drama (Maunder, 2013, p.184).

The diverse influences of Lecoq, Boal, Gaulier and Māori cultural forms are seen in the highly physicalised devised work of ensemble based Massive Company in Aotearoa New Zealand. Massive was originally set up as a youth theatre company in 1990 on the University of Auckland campus. The company has now evolved into a professional touring ensemble of mostly Māori and Polynesian performers who devise material from provocations provided by artistic director Sam Scott (Hazou, 2016). Scott trained with Philippe Gaulier who was both student and teacher at Ecole Jacques Lecoq. Gaulier places great emphasis on the physical capacity of the actor body to play, particularly using the principles of clown, to disrupt and challenge expectations of role and authority (Hepplewhite, 2020). Scott's approach to ensemble theatre making and education works in the same playful way, with workshops and rehearsals providing opportunities for participants and cast to make devised work gathered from diverse personal experiences. *The Brave* (2013), a performance devised by Massive Company explores some of the many pressures that young men face today in Aotearoa New Zealand. The performance highlights the pressure that some younger born Pasifika men can experience when faced with the social expectations to act or behave like a 'real' Samoan or Tongan, for example. Underscoring the performance is a critique of particular essentialist, static and authentic notions of maleness and masculinity (Hazou, 2016, p.97). Massive Company toured *The Brave* to a number of cities in Aotearoa, and facilitated workshops for secondary drama students which explored the material students saw in performance on the stage. Like Complicite, the provocations used were no different in the education workshops from the ones that had been used to develop the work seen on stage.

The Brave, as with all Massive's devised work, provided opportunities for the ensemble to undertake training as a collective with different social and cultural experiences. Massive Theatre Company receives yearly funding to tour nationally with their practical workshop programmes to schools and communities, providing ensemble training for young

adults, and professional development for teachers. New work for audiences is devised yearly by the company, and develops young performers, directors and designers through its training wing, Massive Nui Ensemble. There is a clear focus in Massive Nui Ensemble's work on "values such as manaakitanga (showing kindness and respect for others while recognising responsibility and reciprocity) and whanaungatanga (developing a sense of family connection through shared experience)" (Christian, 2021, para 5). The ensemble here comprises mostly culturally diverse youth of Māori and Pacific Islander origins who "ultimately may be recruited into "mainstream" projects as professional, paid artists [suggesting that this is a model] of community theatre engagement in Aotearoa that can serve community aspirations while at the same time accommodating the demands of commercial sustainability" (Hazou, 2014, p.351).

Aotearoa's longest surviving independent Māori theatre company, Te Rākau Hua o te Wao Tapu Nui a Tāne have developed their Theatre Marae ensemble practice as a fusion of "therapeutic models and political theatre–in particular, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Brecht's Ensemble wrapped up in Kaupapa Māori" (p.282). Te Rākau's practice, integral to the company's applied drama and theatre work, is discussed later in this review.

Influences on the Development of Drama and Theatre Education Ensembles

Several textbooks are available to teachers and facilitators working in drama and theatre education in Aotearoa New Zealand which provide guidelines for developing ensemble practice, and training young performers for theatre production work (Boncek & Storck, 2012; Hatton & Lovesey, 2008;) Guidelines are frequently based on the development of devised work and studio practices, exercises and games originating from established ensemble practitioners mentioned earlier, such as Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal. In 2018, Monica Prendergast created an ensemble workbook for secondary school groups exploring aspects of ensemble practice for the development of performance.

Russian theatre practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski's approach to actor training infrequently appears as an ensemble building guide in drama education, more frequently the method is used to aid the development of individual performers' techniques. According to academic Philippa Burt's doctoral study (2016) of ensemble practice in Britain, Stanislavski had a clear influence on the development of Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and theatre director Peter Hall's ensemble. Britton (2013) notes American theatre director Ann Bogart's

approach is infused with a desire to create communal practice, “En route to rehearsal, I want the sensation of heading towards an exciting, romantic, turbulent rendezvous. A rehearsal should feel like a date” (Bogart, in Britton, 2013, p.52). Again, Bogart’s viewpoints are used more frequently in drama education as provocations for ensemble devised work than as a frame of analysis for the relational aspects of ensemble building.

Drama education teachers and facilitators are well versed in studio practices mentioned above, and familiar with the various theatre forms they support. Guidelines may be presented as the distillation of a company’s methodology (Complicite, Frantic Assembly, Massive Nui Ensemble) and made available to schools and community drama groups as resources. Workshops run as part of production tours by professional ensembles, however, are reported by many teachers as a more powerful and engaging way of disseminating principles of ensemble practice to schools and community applied drama groups, as students have opportunities to move into embodied experiences of developing creative relationships together.

Text based and devised performance work, and drama studies in the New Zealand Qualifications Authority’s (NZQA) National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) standards based assessment programme provides opportunities for students to make work together, and to study the international and local influences on performance that have been discussed above. Ensemble practice is assumed within the standards, rather than directly assessed particularly in the drama creation strand of devising (NCEA, n.d).

Drama educator Tracey Lynne Cody’s (2012) research into the teachers’ drama practice in Aotearoa New Zealand revealed that high school teachers placed significant attention on developing effective collaborative relationships in drama ensembles. Teachers put a clear emphasis on establishing culturally responsive practices by acknowledging value and understanding of whanaungatanga in their pedagogy. Drama educator Nicholas Brown’s (2020) doctoral research used the Māori concept of tuakana-teina to develop effective relational pedagogy in his high school ensemble rehearsals for text based and devised performance. Tuakana-teina, is a process where an older or more expert sibling guides a younger or less expert sibling. In the Aotearoa New Zealand learning context, tuakana-teina develops ako, the reciprocal act of teaching and learning. In the drama rehearsals Brown (2020) noted that this relationship supported ensemble participants to learn from each other as well as from their teacher. An added learning from adopting this approach was ensemble

students learned about developing confidence to perform on stage, finding their place to stand. This notion of turangawaewae, a place to stand, gave the ensemble a feeling of pride, and nurtured their creative identities.

Experiential learning in drama education, not leading to performance, has also been influenced by theatre practitioners explored earlier. Dramatic frames such as process drama (Heathcote, n.d.; Ackroyd, 2002; O'Neill, 1995) and dramatic inquiry (Aitken, 2021; Edmiston, 2021) in which ensemble participants engage in dramatic activities to explore different perspectives on a diverse range of social and cultural issues, have been shaped by both education and performance theories. Process drama "is structured so that participants take on multiple roles, not just one character throughout the drama experience. It is framed this way to allow participants to consider multiple perspectives" (Landy & Montgomery, 2012, p. 19). Norwegian drama educator Stig Eriksson (2011) has offered a perspective on process drama showing the influence of Brechtian theatre, although some critics have denied the presence of distancing effects, for example, of multi role playing (Davis, 2014, pp. 30-32).

British drama teacher and educational theorist Dorothy Heathcote (1927-2011) developed process drama (O'Neill) into an innovative pedagogy known as Mantle of the Expert (MotE), whereby participants enter the dramatic frame as members of an ethical team, company, or enterprise, agreeing to carry out a fictional commission for a fictional client. Heavily influenced by educational theories of American philosopher and educator John Dewey, MotE provided a locus for experiential, active engagement with learning. Heathcote, like Dewey, believed that learning should be connected to learners' lives and focused on problem solving and critical thinking. Exploration and repositioning through role is fundamental to learning in MotE; the ethical team, or company, underpinning the collaboration as a social unit.

Aotearoa New Zealand based Dr Viv Aitken has carried out extensive research into Mantle of the Expert with a view to evaluating its relevance in a bi cultural context, given it was initially conceived in the United Kingdom. Renaming the process from the trademarked Mantle of the Expert platform led by Tim Taylor and Luke Abbott in the UK to dramatic inquiry (DI) Aitken has established the Dramatic Inquiry Network of Aotearoa Trust which continues to explore this arts-based pedagogy. She believes the pedagogy to be relevant since it is

> sustained by key pedagogical principles including valuing process over product, an emphasis on active learning, positioning the learner as 'competent', valuing co-construction, seeing the learning process as messy, long term and socially constructed and a continual reflection on the ethical implications of human actions (Aitken, p.170).

Theoretical Frameworks

Dialogic Pedagogy

Dramatic inquiry (DI) describes the work of American drama educator Brian Edmiston, who has consistently analysed his DI based research through Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic pedagogy lens. Edmiston (2021) shows how "working as an ensemble may create the space in which a self-excluding student may reposition himself in relation to the classroom community" (p.105). The influence of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism on Mantle of the Expert pedagogy has been explored in my Masters research (Stoate, 2013).

Critical Pedagogy

A key influence on theoretical frameworks used in research into drama education models such as process drama, dramatic inquiry, and participatory methodologies such Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed is Paolo Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy (CP). Useful for its capacity to interrogate power imbalances in society, and connection to the notion of knowledge as rehearsal for life, "[k]nowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention through the restless impatient continuing hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world with the world and with each other" (Freire,1970, p.72). CP can support interrogation of several drama pedagogies, including ensemble pedagogy. Arts educator Claire Coleman's (2019) doctoral research explores the interplay of process drama and critical pedagogy. Academic and theatre educator Mia Perry (2011) argued that devised theatre provides a site for productive critical pedagogies.

Jennifer Kitchen's monograph explores ensemble pedagogies within a critical pedagogy framework. Whilst critical pedagogy and associated critical theory has been frequently adopted as a means of analysing and understanding drama education ensemble practice, some scholars identify its limitations (Ellsworth, 2004; Prentki,1995) suggesting that its "grand statements, clarifications, justifications" (Perry, 201, p.66) are inaccessible to

many researchers and their participants. Using a theatre analogy, applied theatre scholar Tim Prentki, (in Perry, 2011) compares CP to a particularly obscure piece of theatre where the audience may be kept in the dark. Perry (2011) suggests "redefinitions by Ellsworth, and Lather, [have] resulted in "post-critical pedagogy "borne out of critical pedagogy theory and revised and refined with feminist and post structural thinking" (p.66). The influence of poststructuralism and feminist, post critical pedagogy can be seen in the research of drama and arts educators such as Helen Cahill, Christine Hatton and Moe Gregorzewski.

In summary, in this section I have explored diverse influences on ensemble development and noted how they might impact the way that drama education ensemble work is carried out. The following section examines contemporary processes, pedagogy and practice in action.

Processes

> If students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing. In truth, how can one dialogue without any prior apprenticeship with the object of knowledge and without any epistemological curiosity? (Freire, 1970, p.20)

This section examines the processes that ensembles undertake as a collective, rather than as individual participants in drama and theatre practice. Processes for the purpose of this discussion include activities, experiences, and approaches to embodied learning. Also included are the principles or theoretical frameworks guiding selection of approaches and activities, and subsequent new knowledge informing ensemble understanding which emerges as a result of engaging in the process. Activities examined here derive from a range of theatre forms and drama education practices, some of which result in text based or devised public performances by ensembles, others which are experiential in nature and do not lead to public performances but reflect on aesthetic activities undertaken within the ensemble itself.

Ensemble Pedagogy

Ensemble pedagogy refers to specific ways of working in ensemble practice which reflect educational paradigms of values and culture. Neelands (2011) argues that the "Evidence of a common pedagogy is more important a distinction than differences in the genre, style of

drama and theatre work being done" (p.133). Much of the research that emerges from the search term 'pedagogy' when used here with 'ensemble' connects with applied drama practice (Nicholson, 2005; Mackey, 2016) rather than ensemble development, such as might be seen in Duska Radosavljević's (2013) interviews with contemporary, professional theatre ensembles. Contemporary developments in performance, and associated dramaturgy, extend understandings of ensemble to include non-professional, or untrained performers, an aesthetic experience, providing opportunities to examine connections/ disconnections with one another in community contexts.

Pedagogic Spaces

Jennifer Kitchen's (2018) critical ethnographic research has examined the use of ensemble approaches to teaching Shakespeare in schools. Kitchen suggests that the education resources developed from arts education projects, such as the Shakespeare Schools Festival, "can be understood as finite 'interventions' with a known set of outcomes" (p.90). Education resources do hold some sway in terms of supporting successful outcomes for teachers or students, but Kitchen notes that ensemble pedagogy is much more than outcomes. It is characterised by a "collaborative, emancipatory approach to [Shakespeare] education" (p.91) but has become, she argues, "domesticated" (p.91) as it focuses on results rather than autonomy. Kitchen advocates for ensemble pedagogy projects as a pedagogic space, rather than a finite intervention. Conceptualising ensemble pedagogy in this way, rather than seeing it as a toolkit of exercises for training performers, allows for connections to be made between belonging and applied drama.

Sally Mackey's (2016) work in the Performing Local Places project used performance-related practices with the ensemble. This research project was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the United Kingdom as part of an investigation into community wellbeing:

> [T]he work asked whether performance-related practices could ease or enhance personal feelings about local places. In an age of unwelcome rootedness for some, as well as extensive movement and dislocation for others, we found such active engagement can make a difference to people's lives (Mackey, 2016, p.13).

The research asked "to what extent does the shared participation of the art lead to experiencing a micro utopia and does this impact upon thoughts, operations and social

behaviours outside the performance experience?" (p.5). The project had a significant impact on the ensemble participants, and facilitators; one of the key findings being the establishing of "a sense of place and [connection] to the local community. Clients reported having built new positive associations with the local area and developed a feeling that they could have a place within the local community" (p.5).

Citizenship and Democracy

Croatian experimental theatre and multimedia company Shadow Casters, for example, explore theatre as a tool for civic engagement (Pejovic´& Bakal, in Radosavljević, 2013). Using a mixture of video, installations and devised theatre, Shadow Casters work within community to create large scale public events. Their ensemble work reflects on active citizenship, activism, and has "evolved into a multipronged exploration of the individual and collective identity, globalisation and the politics of public space" (Pejovic´& Bakal, in Radosavljević, 2013, p.226) but this is ultimately realised through performance to, or with, an audience.

Devised Theatre in Drama Education

Devised theatre, as live performance review, and devising drama as a practice is an integral part of many secondary schools' drama programmes, and tertiary theatre studies programmes internationally, and in Aotearoa New Zealand. Theatre companies such as Complicite, explored earlier, offer resources for teachers of drama education ensembles to use to develop critical reflection and response to devised and text based live performances, and to aid in the development of their own devised work.

Complicite's "Devising Notes for Teachers" (Alexander, 2001) is one such resource. In this resource, it is suggested that a high level of communication and teamwork results in work that will be rich and exciting to watch and perform. Suggested games and exercises are provided in the resource which focus on practising teamwork and communication. Teachers are reminded that "there is no way to fake this ensemble feeling. It takes many months of playing games, doing physical exercises, improvising and working together" (p.11). A focus on play as ensemble building does not necessarily have to result in performance, but can be seen as strengthening performer awareness of self, and relationships with others.

Playing Together

This focus on the physical, and on playfulness is seen in John Britton's Self with Others (SWO) method of ensemble practice. In a paper presented at the Encountering Ensemble symposium in 2010, Britton speaks of his own practice after chasing a few workable definitions of ensemble. "It is not what the performers do that creates the ensemble, it is how they do it" (2010, p.8). Britton describes his practice as a "psychophysical approach to training performers within ensemble...based on a simple, rigorous suite of interconnected principles, combining fixed exercises with structured and unstructured improvisation". The SWO approach, according to Britton, is constantly evolving. Britton believes creative practice is able to evolve *because* it is not a set of laws or rules, nor a manifesto for practice, nor a blueprint. The use of the term 'principles' in theatre anthropology, as Eugenio Barba (2005) suggests, is not to impose a set of rules on practice but rather to allow for evolution of practice:

> [Principles] are nothing more than particularly good 'bits of advice', information useful for scenic practice. To speak of a 'bit of good advice' seems to indicate something of little value when compared with the expression 'theatre anthropology'. But entire fields of study – rhetoric and morals, for example, or the study of behaviour – are likewise collections of 'good advice'. The 'bits of good advice' are particular in this respect: they can be followed or ignored. They are not inviolate laws; rather – and this is perhaps the best way to use them – one respects them so as to be able to ignore them and go further (p.6).

Britton describes the six principles he has created for SWO as "attitudinal pillars". The principles do not suggest any specific theatre technique but rather as Barba (In Britton, 2013) are good bits of advice to prevent actor blockage as a result of confronting obstacles. The principles are as follows:

- Pursue Pleasure
- Have No Opinion
- Only Pay Attention To Things You Can Do Something About
- Don't Be Helpful
- Know Your Hierarchy of Tasks
- If There's Nothing For You To Do, Do Nothing

Britton, 2013 (pp.100-104)

In terms of physical activities for the developing ensemble, Britton developed the Ball Game, a significant aspect of his SWO method, as a means of training performers to engage in an

> encounter with the self. It serves as a mirror in which the participant can observe the self and, through observation, come to know then change that self. The primary attention the exercise requires is attention to the details of the encounter between self and the requirements of the improvisation (n.d.)

Whilst it may appear counterproductive to focus on the individual in ensemble practice, Britton maintains that

> The 'self' the participant encounters is both the privately experienced landscape of her activated bodymind and the publicly-manifested actions of her interaction with others.
>
> Though these two 'selves' are separate, they require, and are partially perceived through, one another. The experience of bodymind is, in part, predicated on observation of how the self reacts to others. The appropriate perception of others is discovered through mindful attention to the reactions of the activated bodymind (n.d.)

Participants playing the ball game, which can be a protracted activity with several more balls added, report feeling a spectrum of emotions, but ultimately the game serves an important purpose in the building of ensemble. The game, Britton (n.d.) explains, is a process which has no end point and

> like any ensemble improvisation, is predicated on a need to communicate and be complicit. An individual's psychophysical engagement is placed in the context of serving the ensemble. She serves others so that the exercise flows. Thus she helps maintain a domain in which she experiences the details of her bodymind (Britton, n.d.).

Massive Nui Ensemble (MNE) theatre company's schools' workshops always start with a ball game (Scott, n.d.) As noted earlier, the values espoused by this youth wing of Massive Theatre Company include whanaungatanga, understood as a close connection between people, a type of kinship. A physical focus on building the ensemble is clear from the outset with Scott's response to Gaulier's Le Jeu in the square ball game, played out with similar intentions as John Britton's ball game in Self with Others. MNE provides opportunities for the ensemble to undertake training as a collective with different social and cultural experiences. The devising process in the studio starts with what Scott (2012) calls

"physical brainstorming" (private correspondence) with problem solving activities like using the whole group to move one of the ensemble across the floor. Vocal and physical performance skills and techniques are activated in these sessions, but as Britton (2013) reminds us,

> Usually 'ensemble' training has an intention more fundamental than the acquisition of technique; it promotes the development of shared sensibility, enhanced sensitivity, common vocabulary, collective understanding and even [...] shared ethics (p.206).

Stories

Storytelling can be considered as signature ensemble pedagogy, particularly when a localised curriculum is being enacted.

> As human beings, storytelling is fundamental to our very existence. The telling of our stories is our personal enactment of the realities of our worlds through a form of shared communication. Whether it be viewing rock paintings on a cave wall, reciting whakapapa on the marae or reading stories in a journal article, it has been the endeavour of the human existence to translate to others what it is that we know to exist within the workings of our minds (Woodhouse, 2020, p.).

Storytelling and its cultural importance in activating belonging has been highlighted earlier in this review. Stories explore contested histories, illuminating the politics of belonging. (Kidman, 2012)

Theatre Marae

Established by Jim Moriarty and Jerry Banse in 1989 theatre company Te Rākau Hua o te Wao Tapu Nui a Tāne is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Treaty principles of protection, participation and partnership. Te Rākau (shortened appellation as referred to by the company) works in Theatre Marae, with its programme of performances which communicate and collaborate "with communities to create works which resonate culturally, therapeutically, and artistically for audience members and participants alike" (Pearse Otene, 2020, p. 282). According to Pearse Otene (2020) Theatre Marae is a fusion of two theatre forms: political and therapeutic, drawing on Brecht's Ensemble Theatre and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, contextualised in Kaupapa Māori:

> The ensemble is key to our work. Casts are large and rehearsals are considered wānanga with movement workshops, voice tutoring, script analysis, ensemble work, waiata and kapa haka work. Sets and props are minimal, costumes suggestive rather than literal and music and sound effects are often performed live on stage. The Theatre Marae experience enhances the mana of all involved, fosters whanaungatanga, and provides a creative outlet for participants and audiences (p.283).

Ensemble pedagogy is explored in applied theatre practitioner Helen Pearse Otene's (2021) study of Theatre Marae. Her study is the first piece of research to be undertaken on the development and implementation of Theatre Marae pedagogy as a research methodology in Aotearoa/New Zealand (p.128). In her research Pearse Otene (2021) conducts a performance-based analysis of a pūrākau.

Te Rākau's tours workshops across Aotearoa New Zealand, sharing their practices with schools and communities. Their core ensemble methods are te kāhui, the creative paepae, and te porowhita. Pearse Otene (2021) explains each of these terms, "Te kāhui, describes the combined mauri (essence) of the company at work as well as the collective noun for the chorus/ensemble" (p.39). The name reflects the "flight patterns of birds, specifically the murmuration performed by starlings at dusk" (p.39) and acknowledges that whilst every individual has their own "strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives" (p.39) they have opted to work together towards a common objective, usually a production. This is a physical process, which develops whanaungatanga with activities working towards the creation of a "common movement language and a collective choral voice" (p.39).

The creative paepae is a means of cultivating the professional and creative development of the ensemble, particularly focused on junior members. Pearse Otene (2021) elaborates,

> members [are encouraged] to swap roles (including technical/production positions) to participate in the creative process outside of their contracted role. This facilitates the potential for fresh new insights and strengths to emerge that might otherwise have remained hidden. For example, one of the actors who played a lead role in The Swing is a highly accomplished dancer and so, over the course of the production, he also became a choreographer. During one of the devising sessions, the stage manager decided to improvise some music on acoustic guitar to inspire the performers; this led to him becoming the live guitarist who played throughout the show. The creative

> paepae builds on the concept of the kāhui in flight, when birds swap positions with each other, along with their associated responsibilities (p.40).

Otene (2021) draws on her experience as a psychologist for Māori health and social services in the third dimension of Theatre Marae, te porowhita.

Te porowhita emanates from tikanga Māori and is informed by group therapy principles which work towards empowerment in community contexts:

> the porowhita is a process for checking in with the overall well-being of the group, as well as anticipating and addressing disruption, conflict, and tension that can occur at any time in the studio. When a porowhita is called, the entire company "down tools" and form a circle on the stage to participate in a hui to discuss and resolve the take. The porowhita reimagines the stage as a marae ātea, the space for public discussion, dissent, challenge, deliberation, [..] and ultimately, resolution and collective agreement (p.41).

The three core methods of Theatre Marae's ensemble practice may be conceptualised in terms of shared language, (te kāhui) shared responsibility (the creative paepae) and shared care (te porowhita). By engaging in this way and exploring through pūrākau, Pearse Otene (2021) shows how the ensemble may be drawn together through a practice of "Māori and non-Māori performance traditions, therapeutic models, Māori language, and customs in a process for creative inquiry" (p.i).

Ensemble as Inquiry

Considering the notion of creative inquiry, I return now to a review of drama education pedagogies which are based on dramatic experiences rather than performance such as process drama, Mantle of the Expert, dramatic inquiry and Theatre of the Oppressed's (Boal,n.d) image and forum theatre, and Enhanced Forum theatre (Burton, 2007) to take a closer look at how ensemble may engage in "inquiry" approaches to learning.

Mantle of the Expert, described earlier, has been used extensively in primary schools internationally, and locally, to engage children in arts based learning and is structured to encourage creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. Older students in secondary and tertiary programmes are likely to have experienced versions of Mantle of the Expert in Rolling Role projects (Hatton & Davies, 2014) or Commission Model projects (Allen & Handley, 2022).

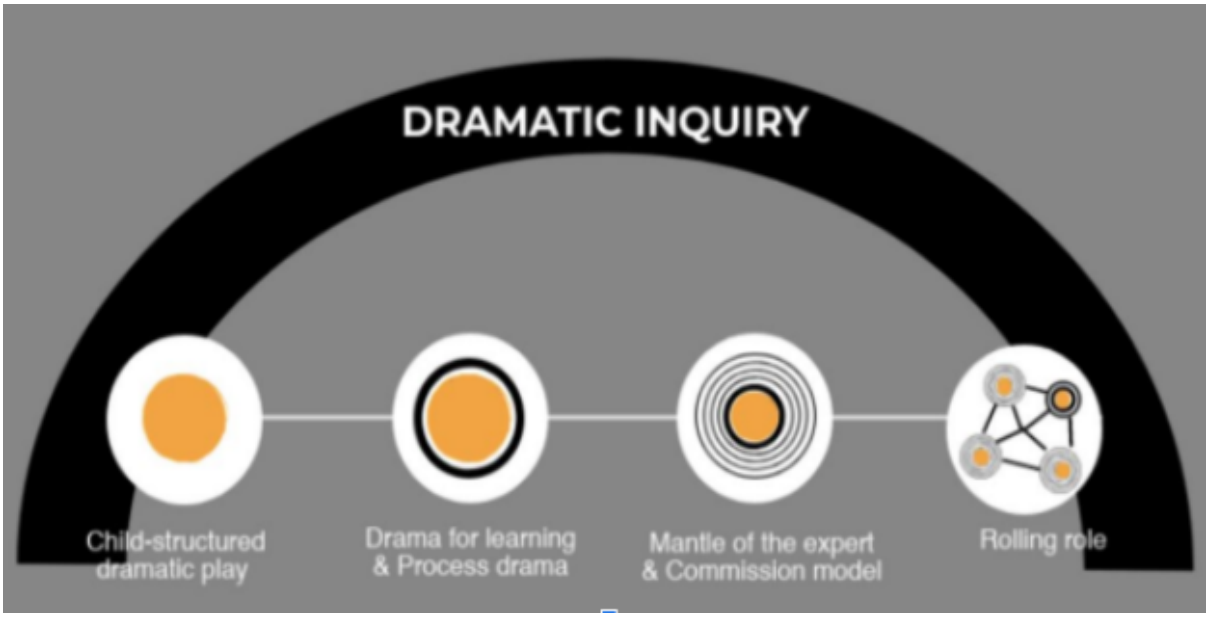


Image: Dramatic Inquiry Network of Aotearoa

The Commission Model

A way of working in the real world. The commission is real life, the client is real life too… as opposed to an imagined one. This model "carries the social element that is present in other models right out into the community beyond the school" (O'Neil, 2015,p.15).

Rolling Role

Set up by Dorothy Heathcote (n.d) this version aims to disrupt a silo based curriculum model in which learners have little opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary manner. Encouraging a view that all subjects can be connected, or integrated, different learning communities in a school collaborate as an imagined community to carry out an inquiry based on a local issue or interest.

In each of these versions the principle remains constant, in that the company or ethical enterprise carries out the work, in response to the collective acceptance of a commission from the client. This company or enterprise can be seen as an ensemble, paralleling contexts in drama and theatre programmes in which students work creatively and collaboratively to develop devised work for performance (Stoate, 2013).

Mantle of the Expert operates in both real and imagined worlds for the company or enterprise. Participants agree to move between these two worlds, the real world of the learning context such as the studio or the classroom and the imagined world that the company collaboratively construct (Aitken, 2021). Participants remain aware of both worlds at the

same time, in metaxis, (a term borrowed from Boal describing this dual awareness) and it is this capacity to engage with complexity and multiple possibilities that enables participants to engage with wicked problems according to researcher Rachel Bolstad (2011). Arts educators and academics Priya Gain & Viv Aitken (2022) see Mantle of the Expert as a mutant pedagogy, a term coined by arts educators Stephanie Jones & James Woglom (2017) in their research graphica on arts-based teacher education. Mutant pedagogy places emphasis on the capacity of teaching approaches to adapt and evolve in response to changing societal, cultural or technological contexts:

> Wicked problems can't be solved definitively; they are problems that must be continuously worked on. Engaging with wicked problems requires a dynamic and evolving process rather than a search for a single correct solution as an end point. Wicked problems can only be tackled by exploring multiple possibilities and perspectives and are best attempted through the creative collaborative efforts of a group, who grapple together over time (Gain & Aitken, 2022, p.110).

Problem solving is carried out as a group activity in Theatre of the Oppressed (TotO) methods such as Forum Theatre, Enhanced Forum theatre, Image theatre and Rainbow of Desire, and it could be argued TotO could be seen as mutant pedagogy, too. The aim of TotO is to engage in collective complexity, and explore multiple possibilities and perspectives (Forgasz, 2017) searching for alternatives rather than solutions.

Research into MotE as an ensemble building practice has revealed some constraints as well as benefits. When languages and arts educator Jenna Nilson (2021) used a Mantle of the Expert approach to build an ensemble community within the context of language learning with bi-lingual participants in Arizona, USA, findings revealed that there were some inequities around exchange of dialogue and power dynamics. In some aspects related to learning languages the pedagogy was seen to be empowering, but in terms of relational empowerment as ensemble pedagogy, there were imbalances. Citing Cañas' (2015) manifesto for community artists and facilitators she concludes that "at every stage in the partnership process, drama practitioners and artists must question their intentions and reflect on how power dynamics operate in spaces" (p.60) when working with participants. A key finding of the pedagogical approach of positioning participants as experts, was that this approach was not a "foolproof methodology" (p.59).

Claire Coleman's (2019) research into the intersection of process drama and critical pedagogy includes a case study of a Mantle of the Expert project in Aotearoa. Using an

innovative narrative inquiry method of rewriting data in role she questions the way that a company (ensemble) in Mantle of the Expert is established. Further questions arise about the resulting balance of power once the (young) participants take on adult roles in the company. Claims that being part of a company Mantle of the Expert is inclusive practice and encourages critical thinking, are challenged here by Coleman's fictional academic Bernard who is reflecting on the commission that has been offered to the company by a client. Bernard observes that

> colleagues were praised for their obedience. Sanctioned critical thinking skills are employed, to decode the letter, but no questions are asked about the structure of the company or who the letter invites or excludes through the complicated language, the legitimacy of the fictional context decided by mass compliance. There is nothing radical about "how it is" and everyone relaxes back into familiar territory (p.173).

Inclusive Ensemble Practice

> Every craftsman belongs to his or her own culture but also to the culture of the craft itself. The theatrical profession is also a country to which we belong, our chosen homeland without geographical borders; it is not strange that performers meet within the common borders of their profession. It is strange that it seems strange (Barba in Barnett, 2016, p.)

Award winning UK theatre company Equal Voices Arts, now established in Aotearoa New Zealand, explores bilingualism in performance between spoken and signed languages. Director Laura Haughey devised the company's first production in Aotearoa New Zealand with an integrated cast of Deaf and hearing actors. At the End of My Hands explored Deaf culture and history and the contrasting experiences of Deaf and hearing adults growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand. This production made an important contribution to international research and trends in Deaf and inclusive theatre practice (Moody, 2016) and showed how both D/deaf and hearing audiences could experience the same performance without the need for sign translation, or interpreters. Both spoken and signed languages were presented as a "strong political and cultural statement of equality, without the superiority of one language and culture over the other" (Haughey & Armstrong, 2019, p.76).

Rachel Turner, a Deaf person and member of Equal Voices creative team, recognises the power of "true allyship in the space" (p.25) in terms of collaborative practice. She makes

it clear that along with both languages positioned equitably in performance, neither language nor audience is privileged over another. Writing in Bollinger and Mudge (n.d.) she shows that Equal Voices practice disrupts traditional, oppressive performance structures, and champions a cultural and linguistic awareness in mainstream theatre companies,

> It's not just about providing interpretation in the space. That's the baseline of access. We try and find ways to respect the very different cultural and linguistic diversity of working with a Deaf and hearing team and Deaf and hearing audiences. Our idea and our way of working is to recognise and respect cultural diversity. For example, the Deaf audience know about language oppression, and they know about the impression of NZSL. The hearing audience not so much. So these audiences get slightly different storylines. That's why when we develop work, we've got the Deaf storyline and and the hearing storyline and they're purposefully different. That's because our communities are different and our lived experiences are different (p. 25).

Playwright and researcher Alexandra Lodge (2020) who was a hearing member of the cast of *At the End of My Hands*, has developed a trilingual dramaturgical kaupapa, for her doctoral study. This practice- led research resulted in a playscript using the three (official) languages of Aotearoa: New Zealand Sign Language, te reo Māori and NZ English. Her study identified Pākehā language in Deaf and hearing creative practice as "an oppressive force" (p.253) and she has developed her script by leaning "more heavily toward Māori tikanga for structure and overall creative practical guidance" (p.253). Referring to her trilingual dramaturgy as Mā Takitoru Katoa, which translates as "a group of three people", she makes a case for ascribing a Māori name to her dramaturgical practice. Mā Takitoru Katoa is more appropriate for "the people that the practice is for, rather than the languages that they use" (p.253).

Mind over Manner

Mind over Manner is an Auckland based charity organisation creating theatre for social change with teenagers who think, learn and work differently. Susan Haldane is the artistic director of Mind over Manner which she set up over a decade ago in response to teenagers with high anxiety, including her own son, who were labelled with Aspergers, OCD, ADHD, DYSPRAXIA, ADD, ODD. Haldane saw families, schools, and health professionals struggling to support young adults displaying challenging behaviours which often resulted in dysfunctional relationships with their own whānau (family) and school. Mind Over Manner's

workshops are led by applied theatre facilitators, and played out by "experienced theatre practitioners and then improvised …shaped…altered using the input and suggestions of the workshop participants" (Mind Over Manner, n.d.). Haldane's approach is influenced by Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TotO) intentionally working to interrogate traditional modes of communication with an emphasis on Forum Theatre, Image Theatre and The Rainbow of Desire methods.

I have experienced two Mind Over Manner's workshops, one which Haldane led at Waikato University in 2017 with 15 theatre studies students on the Theatre for Schools and Communities paper; the second workshop was part of a presentation to school communities and leadership teams in New Plymouth in 2019. Theatre Studies students engaged in the workshop as spect-actors, and were able to experience Mind Over Manner's practice in embodied action. The students' informal feedback during and at the end of the workshop revealed an increased understanding of the scope of neurodiversity, and the application of TotO practices. The large audience at the workshop and presentation to school communities and leadership teams comprised school counsellors, teachers, whānau, health and youth justice professionals. Questions, and observations, at the end of the session indicated a growing need for programmes such as Mind Over Manner which present neurodiversity in young adults as a positive attribute. Audience members commented that the TotO activities had helped them to shift their thinking from a deficit model, where young people need to be 'fixed' towards a perspective where neurodiversity could be celebrated, and young people could realise their full potential in education and workplaces. Mind Over Manner in both these workshops showed how it is possible to belong *in difference.* Despite making important contributions to both education, community and health sectors, Mind Over Manner is not fully funded and its outreach is limited. It provides a clear example of ensemble pedagogy in action in the way it reworks "hypothetical and real life scenarios" (Mind Over Manner, n.d.) with Boalian interventions for ongoing dialogue rather than public performance.

Curriculum Changes

So far, this review has surveyed some theatre ensemble training approaches and considered some drama education practices deriving from education originating from, and outside of, Aotearoa New Zealand. At the time of writing, significant changes to the curriculum are taking place in this country. A six-year programme to refresh The New

Zealand Curriculum and to redesign Te Marautanga o Aotearoa is underway. The aim of this refresh is to ensure that all learners can access rich and responsive learning experiences (Ministry of Education, 2023). All the changes taking place honour Aotearoa's past, and our obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The refresh acknowledges Mātauranga Māori which is "the pursuit of knowledge and comprehension of Te Taiao – the natural environment – following a systematic methodology based on evidence, and incorporating culture, values, and world view" (Hikuroa, 2017, p.5). Mātauranga is "a method for generating knowledge, and all of the knowledge generated according to that method" (Hikuroa, 2017, p.5). The New Zealand Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is part of the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) qualification and assessment framework for senior secondary students aged 15-18, in school years 11 -13, and is included in this refresh. Mātauranga sits at the heart of the new Achievement Standards for Level 1 (Year 11). Teachers piloting the new Level 1 Drama in several secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are reporting to subject associations the positive impacts of a focus on Mātauranga on drama students' health and wellbeing, belonging and inclusion.

There is a significant shift here in how drama education is conceptualised. Drama is seen in terms of connections, and statements on the NCEA webpage reference inclusive best practice with "Drama is for everyone" and "We all have kōrero pūrākau to share".

> Drama helps us to understand cultural perspectives and worldviews and connect with our community. It celebrates and explores te ao Māori, Pacific, and European whakapapa and helps us prepare for the future by challenging us to explore the attitudes and beliefs of characters in drama from Aotearoa New Zealand and globally (Ministry of Education, NCEA Education, n.d.)

In a recent article discussing the anticipated direction of the curriculum refresh towards a more indigenised curriculum model, O'Connor and Gregorzewski (2022) have mapped the "eurocentric" (p.9) foundations of the current drama curriculum.

Tracing the evolution of drama education through the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neill, O'Connor and Gregorzewski draw links to theatre practitioners, Augusto Boal and Bertold Brecht whose work they assert as political in intent to "engage people generally excluded from theatre performances to critically explore their social realities and the structural forces that uphold it " (p.13). They situate drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand within what they call a Conventions Approach (CA) acknowledging its British drama education innovator, Jonothan Neelands. This CA approach is a development of

process drama, its structure having much in common with Brechtian episodic form. O'Connor and Gregorzewski (2022) note that CA allows for learning by "imagining ourselves in different situations and roles while being conscious, critical and reflective of our acts of imagination" (p.10). They conclude that drama education in New Zealand has always been about more than actor training. "It has been about fostering the development of actors who engage in, on and with the world. This determination has led to the particular pedagogical and curricular response that frames how drama is taught in New Zealand" (p.9). Going forward towards the embedding of mātauranga in drama education, and hence in ensemble pedagogy, the authors of this article advise those drama educators involved in the refresh to be mindful of how the curriculum has been "shaped conceptually, theoretically and place carefully this global whakapapa alongside calls for a more indigenous and localised curriculum" (p.17).

Frameworks

Academics and arts educators Helena Gaunt and Danielle Treacy (2020) note that "[e]nsembles and group working have long been fundamental to practice across cultures, genres and contexts" (2020, p.419). Noting that research into ensemble development in the arts has gained momentum in the last decade "little research appears to have been done at an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary level" (p.421). They claim that teamwork and collaboration, as enacted in ensembles, are seen as critical and transferable professional attributes and are viewed as teachable skills in arts based education. Gaunt & Treacy (2020) make the point that

> much teaching of ensembles is practical and embodied, relying on tacit knowledge within a focused specialism. This kind of approach champions depth of expertise in a particular field, but may have limitations, particularly where more explicit awareness is needed to support transferring practical skills to new contexts" (p.419).

Gaunt and Treacy appear to suggest here that ensemble training is distinct from ensemble pedagogy. The skills based components of ensemble training prepare ensemble members for depth of expertise in specialised performance skills, or theatre form. When transferring skills to new contexts, awareness in the sense of competency based learning is necessary. This supports the idea in turn that effective ensemble pedagogy should include more than performance skills. Current Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in secondary drama education train pre-service teachers to develop their pedagogical content

knowledge (PCK) as it applies in the drama education context. PCK can illuminate discourses in practices used in drama education, enabling teachers to reflect critically on the teaching and learning in classroom ensembles. Gaunt & Treacy (2020) urge teaching artists to

> be able to understand and reflect on their own individual practices, and to collaborate reflectively as well as creatively to facilitate inter- and transdisciplinary work, embracing multiple diversities across social and cultural borders. This is as important for long-established traditional art forms as it is for newer and hybrid art forms if they are to thrive as professional practices within contemporary societies (p.421).

Establishing that the art of collaboration and teamwork is fundamental to ensemble development, Gaunt and Treacy (2020) have designed a reflective matrix which takes a critical look beyond the skills taught in drama education programmes. Originally designed to promote and enhance collaborative learning in higher education contexts, the matrix is a useful reference point when considering the transdisciplinary connections between drama and theatre education and belonging. One strength of the matrix is that it acknowledges ensembles may be challenged by "differences or conflicts between the group members" (p.429). The matrix focuses on aspects of practice that mitigate the negative impact of conflict, or the uneven distribution of power within ensembles. Four separate dimensions make up the matrix: Purpose and vision; Resources; Leadership; Qualities of Interaction. Three key areas of significance emerged from the matrix which inform ensemble development and practice:

- Relationships between inter/transdisciplinary collaboration and abilities to embrace multiple diversities and work effectively across boundaries;
- Explicit and implicit distributed leadership, and its relationship to creative tensions between individuals and the ensemble collective;
- Ways in which trust, intimacy and feedback revolve between ensemble participants.

From: Gaunt & Treacy, 2020, p.438

Gaunt & Treacy's (2020) work resonates with some aspects of Allen et al.'s (2021) framework focused on the analysis of belonging in the previous section of this review. For example, Allen et al. (2021) note the interdisciplinary nature of belonging, and the importance of exploring skills in terms of competencies, through effective relationships built with others. With a focus on collaboration, Gaunt & Treacy (2020, p.436) explore ensemble

participants' "readiness to move beyond their existing comfort zone and pursue the boundary breaking potential" of working in interdisciplinary groups. They suggest that where ensemble participants "act as if their technical knowledge is so specialised as to be unquestionable" (p.437) a focus on "mutually beneficial goals" (p.437) gives way to "defensive and controlling behaviour" (p.437). This in turn has a detrimental effect on the all-important role played by feedback and reflection, "connecting back to issues of leadership and democracy (who is empowered to give feedback and of what kind)" (p.437). Motivation to belong in Allen et al. (2021) is one of the four aspects of their framework, and motivation is considered of equal importance in Gaunt & Treacy's (2020) matrix. Citing dance researchers Lerman and Borstel (2003), Gaunt & Treacy (2020) note that for ensemble participants "feedback can be profoundly motivating but equally can baffle and demotivate artists, particularly when they are left with a sense of lack of ownership of their work" (p.437).

Summary of Ensemble

Ensemble is seen as an important concept in drama and theatre education, and claims are made for its capacity to prepare learners for performance work, but also importantly to provide a context in which learners can develop skills of working together as a democratic entity. Ensemble pedagogy in drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand has been influenced by the development of theatre and performance ensembles largely from western culture. Processes in ensemble pedagogy reflect a need to understand the way an individual member of an ensemble might interact with others, and effectively collaborate in creative work. Exploring the notion of identity in these processes is entangled with dramatic form, inclusive/ exclusive spaces and places where dramatic inquiry is situated, and a critical examination of power relationships within the ensemble.

Imminent changes to the existing curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand show a continuing concern that ensemble pedagogy should be responsive to cultural, social and political awareness.

Conclusion

This review is focused on two fields of knowledge: Ensemble pedagogy and practice within drama education, and belonging. In this sense the study is boundary crossing. Elspeth Tilley (2023) reflects on James Thompson's comment in 2009 that applied theatre should "make

alliances with other forms of practice, draw inspiration from different cultural forms and learn from disciplines both within and beyond the field of performance studies" (p.6). Tilley agrees with Kershaw's (2011) statement that theatre and performance are "always operating in yet to be defined intersections between disciplinary fields" (p.66). She questions however, whether bridging disciplinary boundaries can preserve applied theatre's uniqueness, and can work in practice (p.1). Ultimately, Tilley's (2023) study of *Just Us*, an applied theatre project undertaken with undergraduate students in collaboration with community programmes addressing youth justice, showed that trans-disciplinarity can be "a potentially useful applied theatre theory and method" (p.1). In the Just Us project, transdisciplinary research methods (TRM) were seen to help practitioners "conceptualise and manage projects, [....] articulating this alignment may be helpful to both practice and analysis" (Tilley, 2023, p.2). Despite each of the groups involved in the collaboration being unfamiliar with the other group's areas of expertise, adopting TRM resulted in enriched understanding of youth justice practices.

Seeing belonging and ensemble in consort, mutually engaged in enriching understanding, is the central tenet of this research. This contextual review underpins my understanding of which specific aspects of practice need to be shaped into principles of practice for the facilitation and activation of belonging within ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand. The methodology and methods framing the research are now examined in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In this chapter I identify the conceptual framework in which the research is located and document the research processes. I describe this methodology as it fits with my drama education practice. I discuss methods that have been selected to generate a deepening understanding of the facilitation of ensemble pedagogy, an "active, democratic and theatre based" (Kitchen, 2018, p.8) creative approach to teaching and learning. In the field of drama education, ensembles have been seen to function as sites of democracy, by way of acting together socially and artistically (Kitchen, 2015; Neelands, 2009; O'Connor, 2010; Pigkou-Repoussi, 2012). Connection and collaboration lie at the heart of ensemble pedagogy, an approach wherein teachers support "young people [to] understand their rights to participate, [...] make decisions about things that truly matter, and [...] have their voices heard" (O'Connor, 2010, p.xxiii). In Aotearoa New Zealand's secondary school drama curricula for students aged 15-18, learners are encouraged to explore connection and collaboration in drama creation through the values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and whakapapa. These values all relate to the aspects of belonging.

In this thesis I argue that three aspects of youth belonging, explored through ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand, impact social and artistic connections and collaborations between all participants, including the teacher. A sense of belonging, the politics of belonging and socio ecological belonging each contribute to an overarching framework which I refer to as critical belonging. I offer a rationale here for employing critical belonging as a lens to consider the situated, relational, temporal and spatial aspects of belonging functioning within ensemble pedagogy.

The following questions have driven my inquiry:

- What theories of youth belonging inform and impact drama education ensemble practice? What contexts of ensemble pedagogy provide a site for the exploration of belonging?
- What principles of practice can be developed to support teachers to explore and activate belonging, as part of the high school drama curriculum, in ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What changes to my own drama education practice can be made to support the activation of belonging in Initial Teacher Education ensembles?

This research focuses on embodied teacher education practice. Drama educator Rachel Forgasz (2019) states that the term "embodied" can apply to "teaching, learning, pedagogy and reflection, and to teachers and learners themselves" (p.407). In drama education, embodiment refers to the holistic approach to learning where mind, body and emotion all inform knowing. Ensemble pedagogy, as practice, is lived and experiential, social and emotional. It involves "bodily persons, engagements, and activities" (Forgasz, 2019, p.407) that emphasise the agentic capacity of teacher and learners as they connect, collaborate and co- construct knowledge (Dewey,1933; Neelands, 2009). This research, which draws on embodied understandings of both belonging and ensemble pedagogy, is situated within an overarching qualitative methodological framework.

Qualitative Research

Inflected by the essence of qualitative research, this study prioritises the "socially constructed and contextually-dependent nature of knowledge" (Cody, 2013, p.58) acknowledging and validating my own, and research participants' "preconceptions, meanings and lived experience" (Cody, 2013, p.58) as a polyphonic response to the research inquiry. Methods of data generation and capture traditionally associated with qualitative research are employed in the study; interviews, observations, and autoethnographic reflections.

This study does not attempt to capture and interrogate aspects of belonging within the drama education ensemble by measuring or quantifying any objective truths. A quantitative study concerned with identifying aspects of belonging, within a positivist research paradigm, would seek to establish some objective truths "existing independently from observers" (Cody, 2013. p.58). In this research I am informed by the understanding that "there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln,1994, p.12). Conversely, drama education scholar Brad Haseman (2006) suggests that quantitative research, employing a statistical approach to the analysis of data, results in a "set of research methodologies which aim to eliminate the individual perspective of the researcher (and, if human subjects are involved, the views of those subjects being studied)" (p.98). Maintaining my own embodied, individual perspective is central to this study. To that end I borrow from other interpretivist methodologies which have helped to shape my methodological research frame.

Performative Research

Haseman (2006) asserts that for arts researchers inquiring into their own practice reducing research findings and analyses to numbers in quantitative studies and an "emphasis on written outcomes" (p.100) in qualitative studies, is limiting. Instead, Haseman proposes a "third paradigm" (p.99). This paradigm, performative research, employs an interpretivist theoretical perspective which emphasises the centrality of "doing" (p.99) creative acts in meaning making. Performative research is contextualised through the researcher's "symbolic language and forms of [...] practice" (Haseman, 2006, p.100). Considering drama teaching as a creative, embodied act (Greene, 1995; Robinson, 2018) performative research has relevance to my study. The "pro –social theatre education" (Kitchen, 2020, p.372) approach inherent in ensemble pedagogy uses its own dramatic and dialogic language in the enactment of its creative practice.

Performative research emphasises the experiential nature of the research and allows the researcher to "set up a different relationship with the research problem which drives the research study" (Haseman, 2006, p.99).

> Many practice -led researchers do not commence a research project with a sense of 'a problem'. Indeed they may be led by what is best described as 'an enthusiasm of practice'- something which is exciting, something which may be unruly, or indeed something that may be just becoming possible as new technologies or networks allow (but of which they cannot be certain) (Haseman, 2006, p.100).

Haseman maintains that practice should not merely be relegated to its inclusion in the research process but through performative enactment should "*lead* research" (p.100).

The impact of Covid –19 during the period of research meant that I did need to contend with the unruly nature of new technologies as education drama experiences shifted to online platforms. Whilst this was problematic given the embodied nature of drama education practice, I viewed the transition to online platforms as an opportunity to discover new ways of creatively connecting and collaborating in drama education practice. I sought to understand how my practice, as ensemble pedagogy, might lead research, as Haseman highlights.

Practice–led Research /Practice as Research

There are significant synergies between this study and the methodological framework of Practice –led Research (PlR). As Haseman (2006), arts-based researcher Carol Gary (1996) and writer and researcher Linda Candy all note, PlR seeks to uncover new understandings and "knowledge that has operational significance" for the field (Candy, 2006, p.3). Ensemble pedagogy, as noted earlier, is both social and creative, and operational significance for this field focuses on the embodied creatives practices that teachers employ. Practice –led creative practices according to arts researchers Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2014) have the capacity to transform academic research and in turn, academic research can make positive impacts on creative practice. Implying the existence of an iterative, symbiotic relationship between research and practice, Smith & Dean's (2014) insights apply in this research to the development of principles of practice to activate belonging in the ensemble. The principles are developed and then enacted in a workshop setting. Findings from the creative enactment of the principles inform further changes, or additions to the principles. Further creative enactments, as cyclical process, aid the operational development of ensemble pedagogy for teachers practising in Aotearoa New Zealand.

According to theatre studies scholar Suzanne Little (in Nelson, 2013), PlR has a "particular appropriateness" (p.125) of approach for its capacity to "enhance a distinctive culture in bicultural Aotearoa/ New Zealand" (p.125). Little writes about scholar Hilary Halba's research (PlR) projects which explore how "biculturalism may inform intercultural processes and performances and, [...] be embedded in pedagogical practices (p.125) in theatre and drama education programmes. Little notes that Practice as Research (PaR), an umbrella term covering (PlR) "can mobilize the introduction of a non –Western research lens and the ethos [...] of collaborative practice (p.126). Adopting a kaupapa Māori approach in which there is a "strong emphasis on embodied knowledge" (p.126) drama students use their bodies to examine and perform discourse" (p.126) articulating understanding of "personal and cultural identity" (p.126). PlR has "great potential for facilitating cultural cohesion within Aotearoa New Zealand through bringing different discursive modes into negotiation" (p.126). In this study, I interrogate my own practice, as teacher and drama practitioner for contending cultural discourses in play within ensemble pedagogy processes.

Practitioner Research

Practitioner research focuses on "insider perspectives and develops out of concerns emerging from everyday practice" (Manfra, 2017, p.132). As practice-led research the concerns that emerge for my everyday practice are focused on the provision of opportunities for participants to experience and explore aspects of belonging within the ensemble. Social studies teacher educator Meghan Manfra (2017) suggests practitioner research, in teacher education, "is uniquely suited to the field of social studies given its enduring commitment to democracy, democratic education and social justice" (p.597). Manfra (2017) also notes that practitioner research promotes a "'communal focus' in which teachers or other practitioners and students are working collaboratively to understand practice and to work toward more democratic forms of schooling" (p.597). This research project aims to draw parallels between the fields of drama education, belonging and practitioner research by providing "insider knowledge, [...] perspective[s] about what works and what must change" (Manfra, 2017, p.597). Practice-led research in this study is used in tandem with a methodological framework Self -Study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP). Theatre and performance teaching artists and practice -led researchers Tanya van der Walt and Tamar Meskin (2018) point out,

> if you are trying to understand how and why you are the artist you are, and how and why you make the work that you do, traditional methodologies do not always work. And this is where self-study can open a door to a new and hitherto unexplored research realm (p.43).

S-STEP opens the door on my teaching practice, particularly in Initial Teacher Education, which in turn has operational significance for the drama education field, informing and supporting teachers seeking to activate belonging within ensemble pedagogy.

Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP)

As a teacher / practitioner/ researcher working in drama education in primary, secondary schools and in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes, in this practice- led project I am conducting a self-study. Self-study in teacher education practices (S-STEP) as research inquiry is becoming more widely used (Forgasz & McDonagh, 2017) and is seen as an effective means of connecting scholarship and practice (Butler & Bullock, 2022). S-STEP as a methodology is a development of reflective inquiry (Dewey, 1933; Loughran, 2005;

Schon,1983) adopted by educators seeking to improve and deepen understanding of their pedagogy through a systematic exploration of their teaching practices. Education researcher John Loughran (2005) has highlighted some of the affordances and constraints of S-STEP. Suggesting firstly that there is a problem "implicit in the language itself. Self-study carries a tacit message that suggests individuality" (p.6). Loughran & Northfield (1998) clarify that S-STEP cannot be carried out without

> the involvement of others so that the learning outcomes are much more than personal constructions of meaning; self-study must go beyond personal reflections of practice so that the learning about teacher education practices might truly resonate with others (p.7).

Teacher educator Mark Diacopoulos, together with education researchers, has investigated aspects of S-STEP which have resonance for my own investigation into ensemble pedagogy and belonging. Acknowledging that S-STEP is continuing to develop as a methodology, Diacopoulos et al.'s (2022) research findings of their own S-STEP inquiry process, are offered as "signposts, support, encouragement, and direction for the teaching and learning of self-study methods" (p.175). They identify six steps in their journey. "(1) [A]dvancing a willingness to improve; (2) acknowledging the power of reflection, (3) examining practice through collaboration, (4) identifying changes in practice, (5) developing new identities, and (6) sharing with others" (p.175). Each of these steps can be linked to the three research phases of my inquiry, as will be explored later in this chapter. The reflective aspect of S-STEP requires acknowledgement of researcher stance, and I will now set out my position in relation to the research.

Researcher Stance

This research has been undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand with full acknowledgement of my role as treaty partner in Tiriti o Waitangi /The Treaty of Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. I identify as tangata Tiriti (non-Māori), a pākehā cisgender woman of English and Welsh descent. As tangata Tiriti I am committed to building a relationship with tangata Whenua (Māori). I am committed to understanding the history of the forming of Aotearoa New Zealand and I am an ally in the ongoing fight for Māori self - sovereignty. I understand and acknowledge that Aotearoa is a multicultural country and that Pākehā aren't the only grouping brought together with Māori under the Treaty (Dewes, 2022).

This research was supported by the guidance of three cultural advisors whose knowledge and experience informed the ethical, relational, and interpretive dimensions of the study. Cherie Waititi, Māori visual arts specialist, encouraged me to understand my responsibilities as a treaty partner, moving my practice forward to support the mana of Māori and pākehā learners within the ensemble. Matarahi Skipper is a secondary drama specialist with a background in community theatre. Matarahi provided advice throughout the research process, particularly in relation to culturally appropriate research protocols, relational accountability, and the interpretation of participant narratives within their cultural contexts. Pūrakau, containers for Māori ancestral knowledge, are more than stories and Matarahi supported my concern about engaging in te ao Māori, with pūrakau and their cultural significance as a pākehā. Their guidance included using the whakatauki to introduce the Principles of Practice as an opportunity to move practice beyond tokenism. Tashi Tarawa brings expertise as a secondary drama teacher with experience working with ensembles in devised work and as an advisor with Whakaari Aotearoa Drama New Zealand. Part of their work included running national workshops which I attended to support the NCEA Level One devising and text-based performance standard requirements. Tashi helped me to understand the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga in creative ensemble work, and also the concepts of ihi, wehi and wana, integral to performance excellence and audience connection. Their guidance supported the design and facilitation of the process dramatic inquiry workshop, ensuring that tikanga was followed and the principles of practice were enacted in ways that were culturally responsive and ethically grounded.

Of particular importance from all three advisors was the advice to tread gently and maintain the boundaries between the two worlds, Māori and Pākehā, avoiding the "assimilatory and consumptive modes of our forebears learning about and taking from te ao Māori for our own benefit and aggrandisement" (Bell, 2024, p.82). Engagement with cultural advisors was dialogic and ongoing rather than consultative at a single point in time. Their insights informed my reflexive decision-making as a pākehā researcher-practitioner; however, responsibility for the research design, analysis, and interpretations presented in this thesis remains my own.

I research and teach in pre-service arts teacher education and work as an applied drama practitioner in schools and community contexts. I have continued to practise throughout the journey of my doctoral study. As a reflexive researcher (Neelands, 2006) developing "ongoing and continuous self-inquiry into [my] own professional practice" (p.17)

within a qualitative paradigm, I am aware of my social position, personal experiences, attitudes and values potentially impacting the research findings, analysis and application. Making my position clear here in this chapter allows for transparency, and a developing understanding of reflexive researcher stances within my practice. In this self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP) I am positioned as a subject of the research. I am situated as a facilitator /researcher inside and outside (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2020) the research. Qualitative researcher Roni Berger (2013) argues that reflexivity is a "crucial strategy in the generating of knowledge" (p.219) maintaining that research is impacted if the researcher is "part of the researched and shares the participants' experiences" (p.219). Berger describes qualitative researchers moving in and out of the research gaze, exemplifying this by describing shared researcher and participant experiences. Shared experiences of practice weave through each of the three phases of the research process. In the third phase of the research I work as Teacher in Role (TiR) which requires stepping from the real world into the world of the fiction, moving within the fiction and outside of it (Aitken, 2021; O'Neill, 1995; Dunn, 2016). This repositioning through role is experienced alongside ensemble participants, informing "ongoing and continuous self-inquiry into [my] own professional practice" (Neelands, 2006, p.17).

Researcher Practice

My professional practice is situated in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) lecturing in primary and secondary drama curriculum programmes. From the outset, and over the course of the research project, I have continued to practise as a high school drama teacher, a community performance artist, and as dramaturg for community based contemporary dance and devised theatre projects. My work is informed by a range of ensemble-based drama pedagogies which include Dramatic Inquiry and process drama, image and forum theatre from Theatre of Oppressed (Boal,1079) devised and text-based theatre performance. My practice is both process and performance oriented, facilitated in ensemble-based workshops, conducted over several sessions or structured as 'one-off' events. All sessions focus on the performative nature of ensemble-based drama education pedagogies. Ideally all practice takes place in a context where active face to face, body to body connections and collaborations, can be made. Where "what happens on the workshop floor, the tacit learning that emerges in the doing, where the body often guides us to new and sometimes unexpected discoveries" (Belliveau & Sinclair, 2018, p.25) is not always realised through online facilitation.

Dramatic Inquiry

A significant proportion of my practice is situated in a dramatic inquiry (DI) framework; in the DI workshop, embodied teaching and learning is central to the practice. DI is a term used to describe a "range of teaching approaches where participants are supported to explore questions and solve problems in imagined contexts" (Aitken, 2021, p.13). Active participants in these imagined contexts engage in physical movement and vocal work, as in theatre ensembles, connecting with one another through breath, body, and spoken word. Participants include the teacher/ facilitator/practitioner, most often when stepping into a role as part of the imagined context. Examples of DI include dramatic play, drama for learning, process drama, Mantle of the Expert, commission model and rolling role, defined in the Introduction to this study and explored in Chapter One. Whilst there are different names for these approaches, they are all connected by the construction of an imagined world (Aitken, 2021; Edmiston & Towler- Evans, 2022; Swanson, 2016). The imagined world is built collectively by the enterprise, company, ethical team or drama education ensemble. DI sessions are episodic and developed the use of dramatic conventions. Two genres of drama convention are generally used in DI: Dorothy Heathcote's (1925- 2011) 34 role conventions from her Mantle of the Expert (MotE) system, and Jonothan Neelands and Tony Goode's (2000) dramatic conventions used as poetic and structural devices for developing dramatic episodes (Cziboly et al.2021; Taylor, 2016).

As a participant, teacher in role, during the playing out of imagined contexts within DI projects, I am able to undertake self-study (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Wells et al, 2023) in which I see myself as collaborative body-subject within the ensemble; that is, one that "weaves the biological body, the cognitive, social, the affective, and all other ways in which bodily experience has been viewed separately, into the integrated, holistic way in which we experience life" (Satina and Hultgren, 2001, p. 522).

Theatre of the Oppressed

In Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TotO), the umbrella name for community-based theatre practices used widely in drama education and theatre programmes, non-theatre specialists/ participants can be offered "the means of production to begin to locate and describe their own collective visions of a better world (Prendergast, 2016, p.16). TotO can be described as a process whereby the boundary between audience and performer is dismantled

and the ensemble redefined as “spect-actors” (Boal, n.d.) The stage becomes a place for a collective exploration of the social imaginary (Prendergast, 2016) or an issue involving and identified oppression. The ensemble undertakes a reimagining, through simultaneous dramaturgy (the original name for forum theatre) of a range of alternative outcomes, of how things might be differently enacted. TotO includes (but is not limited to) forms such as Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, Rainbow of Desire, and Legislative Theatre. Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, and Enhanced Forum Theatre (EFT) (Burton & O’Toole, 2005) have been used in schools and communities to explore social issues (Duffy & Vettraino, 2010) and also to blur the divide between actor and audience. Part of their appeal as a facet of drama education is accessibility, in the sense that they can be set up quickly, do not require ensemble participants to have undergone specialist actor training, and provide numerous opportunities for critical reflection from the ensemble particpants. Ultimately, Boal saw the function of TotO to be primarily the promoting of dialogue and the enactment of dialogic and critical pedagogy (Gutierrez, 2013).

My stance in TotO assumes the role of ‘difficultator’ a term coined by Boal to describe the ‘Joker’ role in Forum and Legislative Theatre. The joker is the person or figure who facilitates the workshop, or the performance of the simultaneous dramaturgy. The role is often assumed by the teacher, or facilitator. The joker acts as mediator between the “actors and spect-actors and invites the spect-actors to join the action” (Lee, 2015, p.) Several scholars note that Boal preferred the term “difficultator” given the approach taken in TotO highlights the complexity of oppression, and the dramaturgical problematising that takes place in the enactment of the oppression by the spect-actors (Duffy & Vettraino, 2010) Again, as ‘difficultator’ I become a self-study subject because I am bound up as mediator within the dramatic framework of ensemble action. Where I use TotO methods in my practice, I include self-study as part of the analysis (Forgasz, 2014).

Devised Drama

Collectively created performance pieces with the ensemble, devising or playbuilding practices (Hatton, 2003) are an ongoing part of my work, ensemble pedagogy, in schools and community. Performance scholar Virginie Magnat (2005) describes devising as “a mutual endeavour whose goal is the active involvement of each participant in the overall process” (p.82). Magnat (2005) states that the “teaching of devising exposes students to the broader existential question of how human beings can learn to live and work together, [...] theatre

education can achieve much more than preparing students to join an increasingly precarious professional world" (p.82).

I use the episodic structures set up within DI and TotO as seeding, or provocations, for the development of devised work into longer forms for performance to audiences (Stoate, 2013). In these devising processes as part of ensemble practice, my research stance shifts from DI's Teacher in Role and ToTO's joker role operating inside and outside the drama, and moves into one of facilitation and direction. Self-study here focuses on the shift in practice from inside-action to outside eye-on-the-action, provocateur and the ways that these different roles and their developing identities (Diacopoulis et al.,2022) impact the ensemble's experiences of connection, collaboration and belonging.

Summary

I have established S-STEP as the methodological framework for this study, providing a rationale for its selection and an overview of drama education practices adopted in the research. I have described other methodological frameworks which have informed and influenced my inquiry into ensemble pedagogy and critical belonging. I now turn my attention to the three-phase structure of the research, detailing how the methods used initiate a response to the research questions, generate and capture data for analysis, discussion and conclusion.

Three Phases of Research

Overview

In the first phase of the research process, I interviewed research participants who had lived experience of working with/as drama education ensembles. I wrote autoethnographic vignettes and poetry, as a means of wayfinding through my own experiences of ensemble pedagogy, in response to interview dialogues. I transcribed, coded and analysed interview data. In Phase Two, I wove the transcribed and coded interview data into six principles of practice for high school drama education teachers seeking to activate critical belonging in ensemble pedagogy. Principles of practice covered the following aspects of ensemble work:

- Identity
- Processes

- Provocations
- Space and Place
- Performativity
- Reflexivity

In Phase Three of the research, I developed a design for a single three- hour dramatic inquiry workshop session to provide a context for the exploration of the six principles of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand contexts. I facilitated five of these workshops, using S-STEP to reflect on their usefulness in activating critical belonging in ensemble pedagogy.

Phase One

Interviews

In order to gain a wider view of ensemble practice in high school drama education beyond my own experience, I collected phenomenological accounts of research participants' historical involvement with ensemble practices and experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Interviews were conducted over 2018-2020. I invited research participants to share experiences that related more to devising for performance, or Dramatic Inquiry and Theatre of the Oppressed processes, rather than text-based ensemble performance. I did not provide a definition of ensemble beyond suggesting it as a collective engaged in creative collaboration because I wanted to hear research participants' perceptions of what ensemble meant to them. The interviews were designed to elicit and illuminate the experience of ensemble practice as a process in which participants had experienced connections, joys, successes, finding what worked for participants and why. Conversely, I hoped participants would identify disconnections, what didn't work for them in terms of creative and social context of the ensemble. Of particular importance for me, in terms of the research, were experiences which explored notions of community, democracy, the uncrowning of the teacher (Kitchen, 2020; Neelands, 2009). Welcome too, were lived experiences which touched on aspects of critical belonging through manaakitanga or whanaungatanga.

Semi structured interviews were selected as means of collecting this data for two reasons. Firstly, I was aware that I would be hearing a range of different experiences because of participants' diverse personal histories. The research participants came from different contexts (teachers, artists, and ex-students). Interview schedules would need to accommodate different discourses, attitudes and values. A standardised interview schedule would mean

using the same languages and result in limited exploration of participants' responses. Secondly, a semi structured interview schedule allowed me to situate myself dialogically in the conversation, although I avoided sharing stories of my own during the interviews. An open ended, unstructured interview design would have run the risk of missing the specific connections to the research I wanted to make.

I had drawn up a list of guide questions to be used as prompts which were sent to participants prior to the interview. I encouraged research participants to reflect on both affective and aesthetic, embodied aspects of participating in ensemble devised processes and performances. The full list of guide questions is attached in the appendices.

In order to record my own reactions and responses to something mentioned by a research participant without interrupting the flow of dialogue, I used a note app on my smartphone to timestamp the moment I experienced a personal connection with the dialogue. This enabled me to locate the point in the transcript where I made the connection. I wanted to focus on these 'moments' for further analysis and discussion and would be relying on my memory of the event to which I made connection. Saldaña (2022) defines 'moments' as a collection of short yet significant (as interpreted by the researcher) participant actions, reactions and interactions in the data that merit focused analysis and discussion. Guided by Johnny Saldaña (2016) I referred to Bud Goodall's (2000) Verbal Exchange Coding as a way of identifying types of conversation and key moments from the interview transcripts, creating an "evocative representation of the fieldwork experience" (p.121) with autoethnographic research vignettes. Through narrative and poetic inquiry (Kara, n.d.) I examined the textual data, transcripts, vignettes and poetry, looking for personal experiences of ensemble practice which connected snapshots of belonging: affective, political and socio ecological.

Research Participants for Interviews

Participants were selected by means of purposive sampling. I identified potential participants in Aotearoa New Zealand through the professional network: Whakaari Aotearoa Drama New Zealand. Whakaari Aotearoa is not a big network and many of the research participants were known to me. Teaching artists/performers, directors, dramaturgs, teachers, ex-theatre and drama students, and facilitators were invited to participate in interviews. Artistic directors from two ensemble companies were willing to participate in a group interview. All research participants had experience of ensemble practice related to working with young adults in secondary schools, drama and theatre studies groups in tertiary institutions and/or youth arts

groups within local community settings, in Aotearoa New Zealand. All participants were previously known to me except for one of the two companies interviewed. I had collaborated with three teaching artists prior to the start of the research, and had taught the ex-students at least three years prior to the start of this research. Invitations to participate were sent to participants via email, social media direct messages or telephone call. Pseudonyms for interview participants have been used in this study to prevent any identification with educational institutions or communities.

Research participants	Number	Notes
Teaching artists	3	Actors, dancers and teachers 1 F2F; 2 Zoom
Director	1	Youth theatre company F2F
Dramaturgs	1	Community Theatre Company F2F
Secondary Teachers	2	Teaching 15-18 age group 2 F2F
Ex drama students	3	Secondary school students 2F2F ; 1 Telephone
Theatre Companies	2	Youth and community companies 1 Zoom 1F2F
National Qualifications Framework Moderator	1	NZQA/ NCEA 1 Telephone

Face to Face Interviews

The interviews were conducted Face to Face (F2F) in Aotearoa New Zealand North Island settings when possible, and online or telephone where distance mitigated against meeting together. The F2F interviews took place in a diverse range of settings: domestic, academic, a studio location and outside on a busy city high street. Locations were selected in negotiation with the research participants, I wanted to ensure that locations were accessible and that participants could feel comfortable. The diverse range of settings impacted the relationship between myself and the research participants: dialogue became more formal when the interview was set inside at a table, informal when we were standing and moving in a studio or the street. With these variations, making note of the moments I wanted to consider later in light of my own experiences became challenging when we were not sitting at a table for the interview. I felt at times, that an interview replicated an everyday conversation I might have with the respondent, other times the dialogue felt very formal and business like, not conducive to relating lived experiences, emotions and memories of working in ensemble practice. According to applied theatre academic Sarah Weston (2018), interviews are performative purposeful events. Even if they feel like everyday conversations,

> memories and representations produced in interviews are co-produced between the interviewer and interviewee: what the interviewer wants to hear, or what the interviewee thinks the interviewer wants to hear, as well as many interpretations of communication and miscommunication (p.108).

Despite my earnest attempt to perform my researcher role with authenticity, I was aware of steering the conversation to connections between ensemble and democracy and belonging. One interviewee yielded important data, unprompted, regarding ensemble and belonging. I considered how easily my semi structured schedule could be unintentionally manipulated to support what I wanted to hear. I was also aware of how the space where the interview took place had a significant impact on the way that we might co produce memories and representations.

Two interviews took place in an office on campus at the University of Waikato. Research participants were both students, one tertiary postgraduate science student with ensemble experience from their time at secondary school, and a drama student in their final year of NCEA. According to Holton and Riley (2014) there is growing recognition of the importance of place in research encounters. Studies have explored the relationship between

where interviews take place and the type of response given by research participants (Evans and Jones, 2011) These studies confirm an understanding that we are shaped by where we find ourselves in space and place and this includes the place of the inquiry, of the research interview itself. Holton and Riley (2016) maintain that "the place of the interview itself has, historically, been under- recognised and under- considered within methodological discussions" (p. 2). Accepting that we have paid attention during interviews as researchers to the ways in which the power relationship is impacted by the positions of the researcher / participant(s) in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and how these aspects might shape responses, we have paid limited attention to the "more material aspects of place "(Riley and Holton, 2016, p. 3). The same office space was used for both these research participants on separate occasions, but respondents and responses were different. Despite plenty of data being generated during these 45 minute interviews, I felt awkward at times as I struggled to move myself beyond a question / answer structure into a dialogic space.

The last two of the individual face to face interviews were conducted in a shared studio space with a fellow ensemble physical theatre and movement teaching artist. We had collaborated on several projects prior to this interview, had many discussions about ensemble and company practice, and shared a curiosity about aspects of belonging as they impacted our creative practice. Neither of us was born in Aotearoa New Zealand, we had emigrated from Europe to New Plymouth and on arrival both found it hard to 'fit in' as creative artists. Planning sessions for collaborative work were embodied and frequently took place whilst we were on our feet, moving around the studio space and outside in a public garden used for site-based movement work. The interview was audio recorded on a smartphone which presented a small challenge once we moved outside ensuring audibility, but the recording was still clear and transcription was completed without issues.

Laura Ellingson (2017) discusses the importance of embodiment in qualitative research as it resists the mind-body split. Ellingson advocates for infusing qualitative research with "the vitality that comes from embracing knowledge production as deeply embedded in sensory experience" (p.2) Embodied interviewing, a method which Ellingson describes as encounters in which researcher and participants express experiences, emotions, cultural perceptions as bodily action, felt more aligned with the way we would move around in a typical dramatic inquiry or Theatre of the Oppressed workshop setting. Although the semi structured schedule of questions was the same, I found I was able to engage more easily in dialogue with my colleague, doing what we normally would in our practice, exploring

provocations, processes and space whilst moving, or what Riley and Holton (2016) describe as place based walking interviews (PBW).

PBW interviews allow for "de-centering" (Riley & Holton, 2016, p.5) in two ways. Participants are able to share a view of the place or space being explored and secondly, where the practice is situated, in a studio for example, engaged in a workshop activity. Riley & Holton explain that PBW feels less confrontational than traditional interviewing. Secondly, this method allows the interview to move beyond just a "singular narrative of experience" (p.5), allowing for polyphonic contribution as dialogue becomes part of the movement. This supported my aim of capturing phenomenological experiences by introducing the notion of reflexivity through a dialogic approach to the conversation. An embodied experience suggests a bridging of the theory -practice divide discussed by Wells et al. (2023).

F2F interviews were transcribed through Digital Fingers, a transcription service.

Online and Telephone Interviews

Online interviews were held on the ZOOM platform, participants agreed to the recording of the interview, audio files were extracted and transcribed using the Otter.ai application. Telephone interviews were conducted through mobile messaging applications and recorded with participants' permissions on iPhone voice memos. These were subsequently transcribed using Otter.ai. An impaired signal resulted in very poor audio quality on one of the telephone calls, providing limited data for analysis.

Summaries of the Interview Data

A drama teacher with over 10 years of experience in single and co-ed settings, responded to the research questions by focusing on the building of ensemble in devised drama in composite senior drama classrooms (students aged 15-18 taught simultaneously across levels 1-3). This teacher identified the challenges associated with devising drama in educational contexts, noting the pedagogical content knowledge required to support students to collaborate equitably in the creation of effective drama. This teacher reflected on the provision of adequate spaces, resources and inspiration for their students to create original devised drama. They described the varied student self-perceptions/identities as correlating with the aesthetic outcome of the work, as well as feelings of inclusion and exclusion in the classroom ensemble.

A second drama teacher with over 15 years of local and international experience responded to the research questions with a focus on ensemble experiences in both text-based and devised contexts. This teacher highlighted ensemble as a potential site for the safe navigation of cultural and gender identity. During our discussion, this teacher reflected on students' feelings of both pride and shame in their self-identification as ensemble performers. The notion of shame as related to ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand has been mentioned in Hannah Banks' (2018) doctoral research and is analysed in depth in Keri Opai's (2021) text dealing with tikanga and te ao Māori practices. Vignette 1 was written in response to this discussion of pride and shame and how these emotions impacted belonging within the group. This teacher talked about the implementation of drama teacher practices and processes that support freedom of expression of those developing identities. They described drama processes as reflective and reflexive, emphasizing the significance of relationships between students and their peers, and teacher within the ensemble.

Interviews with former senior drama students focused on their experiences of ensemble devising, noting the processes adopted by their teachers in terms of supporting autonomous creative collaboration within the group. Both research participants acknowledged the importance of feeling valued for their contribution to the development of the work, and how pedagogical processes afforded or constrained authentic contributions to be made. This interview data correlated with literature highlighting the idea that transportational, rather than transformative processes (Nicholson, 2005; Schechner,1985) underpinned more effective pedagogical approaches to building ensemble.

Both theatre companies interviewed discussed the importance of personal and local story to their work and shared that provocation and collaboration were key components for the creative output of the community ensemble experience. Chronotopes, the fusion of time and space in narratives, emerged from their discussions and both companies acknowledged how temporal and spatial considerations deepened ensemble connections and enriched devised work for local audiences. The vignette for Principle of Practice 3: Provocations, and story was written in response to the chronotopes discussed in the interviews. The interview with the youth theatre company was conducted during one of the Covid-19 lockdowns and the interviewees described the significance of maintaining the ensemble complicité through practice, even when the group were not together in the same rehearsal space. Interview data from both theatre companies contributed here to Principle 5, in which both performativity and performance are discussed in terms of their capacity to activate belonging.

Teaching artists interviewed focused on the experience of devising as ensemble, noting the importance of working in non-hierarchical contexts, within creative collaboration. Two of the artists emphasised the embodied aspect of ensemble pedagogy, referencing the need for adequate and appropriate space in which an embodied approach could be implemented effectively. These teaching artists, in particular, conceded lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on embodied approaches to ensemble development, fracturing connections within the ensemble. Interview data generated from the artists contributed specifically to the development of Principles 1, 2 and 4.

Interview data generated from the discussion with the national qualifications assessor for drama revealed how teachers and their practice could influence the kind of work created in student ensembles. The assessor identified the need for a sensitive approach to support adolescent groups who could become overly focused on creating work which risked traumatising or triggering audiences. This discussion led to the writing of Vignette 6 and its inclusion in the last Principle of Practice: Reflexivity.

This descriptive account of research participant conversations outlines the scope of the data. The subsequent section explains how I moved from this raw material into first cycle coding followed by reflexive thematic coding which shaped the six principles of practice.

Vignettes

As stated earlier, during several of the F2F interviews I found it a challenge withholding my own creative, facilitative experiences from the conversation. Memories of similar experiences would come to mind as participants were talking. After the interviews, and before transcriptions were complete, to acknowledge these memories I wrote very brief prompts in my journal so that I could return later to consider them in comparison with participants' experiences set out in transcriptions. These 'moments' (Saldana, n.d.) shared by participants that had piqued my curiosity provoked, sometimes distant, memories of my own. Focusing on the feelings and emotions the memory elicited, I wrote the vignettes as a way of situating myself in the conversation. Vignettes afforded me a place in the social context of the research dialogue around ensemble, and allowed me to reflexively consider my position as researcher, practitioner and research participant (Pitard, 2016). This approach helped encapsulate a dialogic, wayfinding approach to generating the data, appropriate for the Aotearoa New

Zealand and pacific context of this study. Like performance ethnographer Sharon Mazer (2015) describes, I found it helpful to see the dialogue as

> a form of utu within the framework of a shared, or at least intersecting, kaupapa: The writer sets out his/her position in a mihi of sorts, beginning with whakapapa and tūrangawaewae: who he or she is – who I am – in relation to everyone here, how I come to be in this or that room watching this performance, what I saw and what I make of it now, talking to all of you (p.100).

The writing of the vignettes, a performative, autoethnographic enactment of memory, occurred at different temporal distances from the interviews. Some vignettes were written within hours of returning to my desk, others took shape days or even weeks after the interviews. Some started life as fragments and were coaxed into narrative form. One vignette derived from correspondence with a colleague during the research process, the epistolary form lending itself well to a conversational discussion about place belongingness and ensemble. Other vignettes flowed quickly into short narrative sequences becoming, as organisation researcher Guy Huber (2022, p.3) describes, "contextually complex self-Other stor[ies] that encompass the plural understandings and outlooks that constitute the environment studied" (p.3). By combining my own personal experiences and memories of working within ensemble practices with the cultural, social or political analysis of belonging, I had another qualitative data source for analysis alongside the interview data (Denzin, 2004; Saldana, 2015).

The vignettes are embedded in the Principles of Practice document, as provocations for further conversations around practice and its link to praxis. The vignettes form part of my research within "inquiry as stance" (Cochran- Smith & Lykle, 1999, p.289) in accordance with the notion that "the practitioner/researcher is both user and creator of knowledge, which is always regarded as generative and tentative, to be questioned, challenged, connected, tried out, revised, reshaped, and held problematic" (Cochrane -Smith, 2003, p.21). I align my approach with McNiff's (2008, in Walton, 2012), understanding of knowledge as "generated by a knowing subject, from within a social context, and ... best communicated through narrativised accounts that tell the story of one's learning" (p.63).

As mentioned previously, this research is a study of self (S-STEP) as participant-practitioner, alongside others, acknowledging the significance of practitioner research in both drama education (ensemble) and social studies (belonging) contexts. Vignettes in this research provide a method for capturing the "willingness of the researcher to look vulnerably

at [her]self ; to unravel the complex network of thoughts, emotions, assumptions, histories and aspirations that motivate pedagogic action and reaction" (Forgasz, in Owens et al.,2014, p.26). The interviews and vignettes, whilst concerned with practice, are presented as text.

Connection Between Vignettes and Principles of Practice

Principle 1

This vignette captures a moment in which ensemble identity is revealed not as something declared in advance, but as something enacted through reciprocal cultural practice. The students' acute awareness of having "nothing to give back" signals an intuitive grasp of manaakitanga. The vignette attempts to show that belonging within a community is sustained through acts of mutual care, hospitality, and acknowledgement. At the start of the play the students are separated, watching the performance as individuals rather than as an ensemble. This underscores how collective identity cannot be assumed simply because a group arrives together. It must be cultivated.

Our quiet student's decision to stand and offer a waiata operates as a turning point: an embodied assertion of identity, cultural knowledge, and generosity that binds the group into a collective. Her voice becomes a nourishing force, dissolving panic and shame into shared participation, transforming a fragmented audience into a temporarily unified community. In that instant, the ensemble experiences itself as capable of offering, not merely receiving, a foundational condition for belonging.

Looking back reflexively, my own discomfort and lack of preparedness to respond culturally shows how facilitator positionality and institutional habits can unintentionally inhibit opportunities for collective identity to surface. Yet the students' response demonstrates that identity within ensemble practice can be student-led, culturally situated, and grounded in shared ritual. The later creation of a departmental whakataukī as an act of koha shows how this moment seeded an enduring marker of ensemble identity, sustained through ongoing practices of reciprocity and care.

Thus, the vignette is intended to exemplify Principle 1 by showing that nourishing ensemble identity involves creating conditions where diverse voices are welcomed, cultural knowledge is honoured, and collective belonging is enacted through shared symbolic and embodied acts.

Principle 2

This vignette exposes the tensions inherent in drama education practices that privilege transformation as an intended outcome. The narrative captures my growing sense of dislocation as repeated attempts to introduce dramatic forms and socially engaged processes failed to activate connection or cohesion within the ensemble. Despite drawing on a wide repertoire of strategies — devised theatre, Readers' Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Mantle of the Expert — the group remained affectively and relationally disengaged. The vignette therefore illustrates the limits of assuming that the introduction of transformative pedagogical structures will, in themselves, generate belonging.

The rejection of the Mantle of the Expert process is particularly instructive. Its refusal highlights how transformation, when positioned as something to be achieved, can be experienced by participants as misaligned with their emotional readiness, personal circumstances, or sense of agency. Rather than being transported into the fictional world, the student remained firmly anchored in her lived reality, highlighting her lack of capacity to "sort her own issues out" and questioning the legitimacy of the dramatic frame. This moment underscores Nicholson's (2005) concern that transformation risks becoming something done to students, rather than being undertaken with them.

The poetic reflection of the vignette marks a critical pedagogical shift: the realisation that belonging emerged not when I attempted to offer roles, narratives, or solutions, but when I relinquished control over the destination of the work. The metaphor of students "moving out" and "inviting me over" reframes the teacher–student relationship in line with the principle of transportation. Here, belonging is activated through trust, reciprocity, and shared journeying rather than through predetermined outcomes. The vignette and poem thus enact Principle 2 by demonstrating that transportation, travelling alongside students, allowing them to lead the journey, creates the conditions under which transformation might later occur, but is not demanded.

As autoethnographic data, this vignette functions as both failure narrative and pedagogical insight. It makes visible how insisting on transformation can inhibit belonging, while prioritising transportation foregrounds partnership, readiness, and relational ethics within the ensemble.

Principle 3

In this vignette I conceptualise the ensemble as adult participants in an enhanced forum theatre experience, reflecting the scope of my practice which includes adult learners in drama education experiences. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) concept of the chronotope, this vignette functions as a condensed space–time configuration in which personal narrative, institutional culture, and collective meaning-making intersect. The vignette captures a particular moment in which time (the rushed conference session, the career stage of early-career academics, the temporal pressure of academic performance) and space (the institutional setting of the faculty, the digitally mediated social media post, the workshop room itself) converge to produce specific conditions for belonging and unbelonging.

The social media post operates as a portable chronotope: a narrative fragment lifted from one spatio-temporal context (an academic conference dinner table marked by power hierarchies and gendered dismissal) and re-situated into another (a drama workshop framed by enhanced forum theatre conventions). This transposition allows participants to enter a shared imaginative time–space in which the original story can be re-examined, paused, and re-scripted. In doing so, the ensemble temporarily inhabits what Alrutz (2020, p.27) describes as "transgressive transportation" (see Principle 2), travelling into another world that permits the problematising of familiar institutionalised structures.

Within this chronotope, individual histories become collective histories. Participants recognise their own experiences of institutional marginalisation in the provocation, generating affective alignment and shared temporal orientation. The workshop becomes a site where past experiences, present dialogue, and imagined alternative futures coexist. Belonging here is not tied to stable identity or institutional membership, but to momentary co-presence in a shared narrative time–space.

The poetic coda "my story (maybe) isn't your story / but I have made it your history" marks the closing of the chronotope, naming the shift from individual account to shared temporal ownership. The vignette therefore operates as chronotopic data: a crystallised moment where story, space, time, and relationality fuse to activate ensemble belonging through collective narrative re-authoring.

Principle 4

There are three vignettes in this section. These illuminate how space and place operate as more than physical settings for ensemble practice; they function as relational, affective, and ethical architectures in which belonging is negotiated. Across the vignettes in this principle, space is repeatedly shown as something produced through interaction, shaped by gesture, trust, voice, and shared attention, rather than as a neutral container in which drama merely occurs. The vignettes therefore make visible how space becomes place when participants collectively invest it with meaning and relational presence. In addition to the vignettes, I use autoethnographic poetry to create imagery of space and place.

Vignette 4 captures the emergence of ensemble space as a site of mutual risk and recognition. Playing Columbian Hypnosis, a gamercise from Augusto Boal's (2002) canon in which players work in pairs to lead one another through space as one participant follows their partner's hand. The gamercise must be enacted with trust, awareness and agreed non-verbal communication to enable safe movement through the space. There is vulnerability inherent in entering shared creative space, where bodies and stories encounter one another. Trust appears here as "the querulous nature of trust / trusting the spaces between," emphasising that belonging is activated not through certainty, but through willingness to inhabit uncertainty together. The repeated invocation of "you belong here" in the poem performs the very act of place-making: the space of the workshop is transformed into a site of invitation, acknowledgement, and collective dwelling.

Vignette 4a extends this by locating belonging within embodied and spatial intimacy: "in this space here, stripped bare / inside our skin." Space is no longer simply the drama room, but an intersubjective field produced between participants. The metaphor of "architecture of YOU" foregrounds how the ensemble itself becomes a constructed place, a living structure held together through reciprocal attention and care. In this chronotopic moment, time slows, bodies attune, and a temporary home is co-created. Questions remain, however: Is this home inclusive or exclusive? Who decides? Vignette 4b was written to express the way that the politics of belonging can be enacted spatially, with audiences reminiscing about the pressures of assessment and boundary maintenance.

Together, these vignettes enact Principle 4 by demonstrating that belonging in ensemble practice is spatially produced. Space becomes place through relational trust,

embodied co-presence, and shared vulnerability. As autoethnographic material, the vignettes function as analytic evidence that cultivating space as an ethical and affective environment is central to sustaining ensemble belonging.

Principle 5

This vignette, depicting the dramatic context through the lens of teacher observers, foregrounds Principle 5 by showing how performance and performativity are enacted in a dramatic ensemble context through silence, distance and resistance. The girls' urgent pleading in role is clear performance of advocacy, the boy, on the other hand, deciding to say nothing and remaining at the edges of the drama is already acting (in Boal's terms). The vignette attempts to make visible the fact that participation can be enacted through withdrawal as much as through intervention. The staging of the desk and chair highlights authority and scrutiny, through which knowledge and power are enacted, not just through dialogue and embodied action.

In the vignette I attempt to capture the impulse, as teachers, to rescue the boy, to ensure a collective experience where no one is left out. This is a metaxic snapshot in which the fictional urgency heightens our teacher anxiety and belonging becomes tangled with the capacity of each participant to inhabit the performative demands of the dramatic moment.

Principle 6

This vignette operates as a moment of reflexive rupture, where my embodied history outside the drama classroom collides with my positionality inside the fictional world. By opening with my lived experience of being threatened in role, within dramatic inquiry, and teaching students who have experienced actually being threatened at gunpoint, I foreground that facilitation is never conducted from a position of neutrality. Personal histories, fears, judgments, and learned responses are carried into the ensemble space and inevitably shape how I enter, inhabit, and direct dramatic inquiry. The vignette therefore enacts Principle 6 by making visible the necessity of acknowledging facilitator power, not only in pedagogical decisions, but in visceral, pre-cognitive reactions to role and narrative.

Within the dramatic inquiry, I move between low-status villager and high-status government official through Teacher-in-Role. These role shifts are intended as bridging devices to support learner agency. However, the vignette reveals how my own affective

memory of real-world violence inflects the authority I project in role, and the intensity with which participants respond to me. My question "how was it that I could still overpower them?" marks a reflexive turn: a recognition that power circulates through tone, stance, history, and institutional positioning, even within ostensibly democratic drama structures. This recognition unsettles the assumption that process drama automatically redistributes power, aligning with McKenna's argument that positionality is the overt outcome of reflexive work.

The fictional chronotope of the remote village becomes a site where facilitator identity, participant assumptions, and narrative tension converge. The participants' spontaneous intervention to dissuade the gun wielder, justified through community values, reveals how ensembles negotiate ethical agency within dramatic worlds. Yet the vignette simultaneously exposes how my facilitation choices — the framing of threat, the pacing of escalation, the inhabiting of authority — shape what actions become possible or imaginable. Reflexivity here is not retrospective reflection but in-the-moment awareness of how my presence structures the ensemble's relational field. I have subsequently moved away from using this Teacher in Role character, leaning towards a less authoritarian stance lest my actions become triggering and unsafe with ensembles who have experienced real life violence and trauma.

In terms of autoethnographic material, the vignette demonstrates that belonging and power are co-produced through facilitation. A reflexive stance requires ongoing attention to how facilitator histories, emotions, and role adoptions afford or constrain ensemble action. In acknowledging this, Principle 6 completes the cycle begun in Principle 1: identity, now not of the participant, but of the facilitator, is recognised as central to the activation of belonging in drama education ensembles.

Analysis of Data

As noted earlier, Phase One interview data was thematically coded (Saldana, n.d.) using the themes generated from the synergies of belonging and ensemble practice emerging from the contextual review

- Identity
- Place belongingness

- Processes
- Provocations in practice
- Performativity
- Reflexivity

I had decided against using qualitative analysis software given the small-scale nature of this research project. Manual analysis provided me with a more personal approach to the data and helped me to respond to unexpected themes and patterns emerging from the data.

I employed researchers Virginie Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis framework (RTA) an emerging form of Thematic Analysis which " emphasises the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as analytic *resource* and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation" (p.330). According to researcher David Byrne (2021) Braun & Clarke's RTA has sometimes been misrepresented or confused with other approaches to thematic analysis, which depend on themes being developed early in the research process. Byrne states that coding which develops too early in the process can lead to a positivist analysis of the data, not what Braun & Clarke have intended with their RTA process. Using Braun & Clarke's (2021) "six phase process for data engagement, coding and theme development" (p.331) acknowledges "the researcher's active role in knowledge production and interpretive analysis of the data" (Byrne, 2021, p.1391). Braun & Clarke's RTA (2021) establishes a closer partnership with qualitative analysis in the sense that there is no intention to find one accurate or correct answer within the data.

Phase Two

Principles of Practice

Drawing on a contextual review of theories of belonging, and ensemble practice literature, research participant interviews, and researcher observations and experience within creative practice, I developed six principles of practice for drama education facilitators and practitioners working in Aotearoa New Zealand with high school drama education ensembles. These principles of practice are underpinned by a commitment to ensure the creative work of the ensemble takes place in culturally, physically, emotionally and ethically safe spaces for all participants.

The key principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation set out in the Treaty of Waitangi underpin my thinking within each of the six principles and are influential in

establishing how these six principles impact the "ensemble way of working" (Radosavljević, 2013, p.7) and enactment of aspects of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Principles of Practice are guidelines for ensemble practice, not rules. They are listed below with brief descriptions. The full document of the Principles of Practice is set out in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Principle 1. Identity

How identity is shaped; the impact of diversity, inclusion and equity within the ensemble, how the identity of the ensemble can be nourished.

Principle 2. Processes

Explores the difference between transforming the ensemble through drama education and transporting the ensemble, with facilitator walking alongside.

Principle 3. Provocations

Stories and storytelling are an important part of socio-cultural development, explored as provocations for creative work. Do participants of the ensemble see themselves and their world reflected in these stories?

Principle 4. Space and Place

How a sense of belonging might be fostered through use of space, and a critical analysis of place where ensembles practise.

Principle 5. Performativity: Activation and Sharing

Considerations of performance v performativity; the performative nature of belonging, how ensemble practice is shared in terms of performances within the creative episodes of workshops.

Principle 6. Reflexivity

This principle explores the relationship between the practitioner and the ensemble, and considers how affective belonging and an understanding of the politics and socio ecological nature of belonging might be operating within the ensemble.

Phase Three

Herekorenga Workshops

The principles of practice developed in phase 2 are tested in this phase of the research. A dramatic inquiry workshop framework is offered as space to explore the principles through creative embodied/ performative acts (Haseman, 2006; Cahill, 2006; Bird, 2011; Gallagher, 2012). The methods/conventions used in the workshops are experienced as boundary objects (Star, 1988; Star & Griesemer,1989; Van Saaze & Dekker, 2013) where both facilitator and participants enact critical ensemble practice/pedagogy as border crossing.

Data from three F2F workshops, and two online workshops held during lockdown periods, has been generated from my own embodied, reflexive autoethnographic responses as facilitator; this data has then been used in a re-examination of the Six Principles of Practice in action, and their efficacy in/for the exploration of affective belonging, the politics of belonging and socio ecological belonging in a fictional context. At the end of each of the five workshops I invited participants to share their reflections on working as an ensemble and observations of the activation of aspects of belonging. Several participants offered verbal feedback at the end of the workshops. Three participants from separate workshops offered formal feedback, two participants were part of the primary pre service programme and one participant was part of the secondary pre service teaching programme. Two participants agreed to be interviewed by me, and one participant (primary programme) sent a reflective email. All three participants gave permission for the (anonymised) data to be published in this study.

Herekorenga: A Dramatic Inquiry

Herekorenga (freedom) is the name of a fictional township somewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand. The dramatic inquiry provides opportunities to explore life in this fictional community through a dramatic frame and is based on two provocations. The first replicates a dramatic tension used by drama education researchers Adam Cziboly & Adam Bethlenfalvy

(2020) in one of the examples from their study exploring the facilitation of process drama in online contexts. The second derives from a dramatic tension at the heart of The Lost Bag, a process drama unit in drama educators Patrice Baldwin and Rob John's (2012) text, *Inspiring Writing Through Drama*, in this case providing a provocation as impetus for historical investigation.

Herekorenga fiction opens with a celebration of 25 years of liberation, referencing imagined events from occupation of the area by authoritarian forces. The flexible (Dunn, 2016) framework of Herekorenga is underpinned by the pretext that a community can be built, its ethical values affirmed (Hadjipanteli, 2020) and then challenged, but within the community rather than from outside. Historical investigations of this fictional space serve as safe frame distanced explorations. The name of the township is considered before it was liberated, and named Herekorenga. This dramatic inquiry asks what it means to "be in place" (Mackey, 2002, p.1) and yet not be in place. Applied theatre practitioner Sally Mackey's research focused on devised drama at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall UK and takes into account the significant impact of the wild coastal clifftop environment of the Minack on the ensemble performers and their devised performance.

The idea of responsibility to both the land and to each other is woven through the productive tensions of the inquiry and the essence of this responsibility is captured in movement and dialogue sequences- in drama conventions and participatory drama strategies.

Data as self-study were generated from three separate 3 x hour long workshops conducted in studio settings; two workshops of 2 x hours length each took place on the Zoom platform. The studio and zoom workshops were facilitated with pre-service teachers from the primary and secondary education sectors, as part of the arts education programme at the University of Waikato. An outline of the workshop plan is provided at the start of Chapter 4.

Ethical Approval

Application for ethical approval to conduct this research was formally submitted and granted by the University of Waikato's Ethics Committee. A copy of the ethical approval has been included in the appendices.

Theoretical Framework

Academic and initial teacher educator (ITE) Trish Wells (2023) and her team critically examine the "theory -practice divide" (p.1) through explorations of process drama with pre-service teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand. What is meant here by 'divide' is that ITE students are likely to meet theory outside of practice, in contexts which do not connect with the actual practice of working in learning communities, or classrooms, but are conducted and evaluated as isolated study. Finding ways to weave theory and practice has been an ongoing issue in ITE (Mc Donagh et al., 2016). Wells et al., (2023) suggest that theory and practice, merged through an embodied pedagogy such as process drama, assists learning to become an "integrated holistic and meaningful experience, which engages both the mind and the body" (p.1). ITE academic Rachel Forgasz'(2014) research which uses Boal's The Rainbow of Desire (TRoD) to merge theories of reflexivity and practice supports a very similar process. Both approaches can be traced back to Karl Marx's (1974) and Paolo Freire's (1970) concept of praxis, a process considered to be liberatory for learners (Nicholson, 2005). By honouring learners' existing knowledge, and connecting their thoughts and action, praxis has been considered as a

> creative and politically interventionist strategy [...] an active process of critical engagement with experience aimed at disrupting established power relations on both a material and intellectual level" (Nicholson, 2005, p. 43).

The examination of ensemble practice through the experiential lens of belonging in this research aims to consolidate practice as an embodied pedagogy engaging both mind and body (Mc Donagh et al., 2016). Selecting a conceptual framework for the study has been driven by an intention to gain a deeper understanding of the relational processes in the facilitation of ensemble pedagogy. Theoretical lenses used in the framework are discussed here in terms of their relevance and application to the activation of belonging within ensemble pedagogy.

Jennifer Kitchen (2021) understands ensemble pedagogy "as a reading of theatre and drama education which sees within its collaborative, egalitarian and performative nature potential for the enactment of democracy" (p.375). The term 'ensemble pedagogy' developed from the collaborative partnership between the University of Warwick and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) during the period of Michael Boyd's artistic directorship 2005-2010. This partnership focused on the blending of the aesthetic in ensemble theatre practice with "collaborative readings of theatre and drama education pedagogy" (Kitchen, 2021, p.375). From this collaboration, the ensemble classroom, or drama learning community,

could be seen as analogous to an effective rehearsal room (p.375). I argue in this thesis that the concept of ensemble can be applied to the company, enterprise, forum, community or group within a dramatic inquiry and Theatre of the Oppressed context. Jonathan Neelands 4 points.

Theorising ensemble pedagogy through a lens of belonging invites a critical approach, one which traverses educational, sociological and aesthetic terrain. Critical pedagogy Freire, 1970; Boal,1979); has been adopted by drama educator Claire Coleman (2018) in her examination of process drama practice. Social constructivist and sociocultural theory (Bruner, 1966; Dewey,1938; Vygotsky,1896-1934; used in Aitken, 2021; Davis, 2016; and Edmiston, 2014, explores the importance of learning as a collective experience with others. This aligns with the notion of ensemble and belonging as the "anthropological and performance studies concept of 'communitas'" (Kitchen, 2021, p.376). However, I am drawn to venture beyond employing communitas as a conception of a non-hierarchical sense of togetherness, towards Monica Prendergast's (2016) articulation of ensemble as "the collective creation of socially imagined performative utopias" (p.2). This is the essence of a socially committed pedagogy, (Neelands, 2004) one in which the situatedness of belonging can be explored as "an extension of the aesthetic[...] connect[ing] us to each other, performers and spectators/ teachers and learners, in more meaningful ways (Prendergast, 2015, p.12).

Prendergast draws on key philosophical and conceptual theories espoused by performance scholar Jill Dolan to explore how utopian thinking informs our field's understandings of "drama as social dreaming[...] socially- committed pedagogy, ensemble and democracy" (p.3). Arguing that the concept of communitas can equally apply to right wing extremist groups, Prendergast urges caution against attaching to it "progressive, socialist or even democratic ideals" without critique (p. 11). This is particularly relevant to my research, given that the drama education ensemble explores social dreaming through the experiential nature of the work in which the idea of audience is problematised. Prendergast applies Dolan's theories to the "participatory and process-based understandings of self - spectatorship in process drama" (p.10) and also to Augusto Boal's (1995) notion of the spect-actor in the theatre of the oppressed" (p.10). Suggesting that the terms 'audience' and 'performance' could be replaced by 'students' and 'process drama " respectively when describing Dolan's (2005) utopian performatives, Prendergast's concept of ensemble is encompassed "effectively outside the theater" (p.10) as well as having relevance to the communitas generated within

> [T]he moments in a theater event or ritual in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way; spectators' individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive, if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience.

Positioning dramatic inquiry, process drama and Mantle of the Expert as examples of "radically hope-filled practice[s]" (p.3) Prendergast suggests that utopian thinking can "can be adapted and seen as a fresh and welcome way to see, reflect on and assess what we are doing as drama educators,

> We're all in this together; No one is is more important than anyone else; We all have talents and gifts to share; We can agree to disagree; We can feel free to take risks, even to express dissent, within a peaceful and cooperative space; No-one is outside of the group; We aim to respect, trust and appreciate each other (Prendergast, 2016, p.3).

Utopian thinking in drama education, reflecting a pedagogy of hope (Freire, 1970), has been taken up by several drama education scholars over the past two decades. Gathering momentum with Madonna's Stinson's (2013) keynote speech at the Drama Queensland State conference, drama education's role in ameliorating some of the post-normal (Sadar, 2010) social and political crises continues to develop. Post normal society is one in which there is increasing diversity and complex economic and environmental uncertainty. Sadar (2010) suggests that "much of what we have taken as normal, conventional and orthodox just doesn't work anymore" (cited in Stinson, 2013, p.2). However, Helen Nicholson (2005) is careful to draw a distinction between the concepts of hope and optimism. Hope acknowledges that circumstances are rough whilst optimism suggests a positive spin on the roughness. Too much positivity leads to inaction. Acknowledging the crises and their absolute awfulness is a catalyst for transformative action.

Utopian thinking covers a broad field. Applied theatre practitioner Selina Busby (2021) builds on French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's utopianism as a motivation for change. Utopia is presented in applied theatre practice as a testing mechanism rather than a place, a "tornado of ideology" (p.106). The circular image generated by the idea of a whirling ideological tornado is a far cry from the way that circles, particularly in drama education classrooms, are generally perceived as safe, inclusive spaces. Busby claims that applied theatre can shapeshift the closed character of a circle towards a more hope-full perspective.

> Once we see the tornado of ideology that surrounds us, the circle becomes a spiral. The spiral stretches the ideological circle so that gaps are created to allow for

reflection on what *is.* We may conceive alternatives and, in so doing, change becomes possible (Busby, 2021, p.106).

An ideological tornado is currently gathering intensity in drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the time of writing, 2024, significant redirection is planned for curriculum, and the arts are likely to be further constrained in a system which intends returning to a technicist framework. Recent changes are likely to include abandoning the refresh and reset of the curriculum which hitherto focused on restoring indigenous knowledge, *matauranga,* to a central position in education through Te Mataiaho.

Ideologically, my approach in this thesis to activating critical belonging, within ensemble pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand is explained by my partial adoption of a critical pedagogy lens, whilst acknowledging its limitations. A central feature of critical pedagogy is its dialogic nature (Freire, 1970). Freire's idea of emancipation of the oppressed rested on being literate and able to engage in dialogue, a key aspect of applied drama (Finneran & Freebody, cited in Busby, 2021) and dramatic inquiry (Edmiston, 2021). The embodied nature of dramatic inquiry and theatre of the oppressed (McDonagh; Wells et al.,) will necessarily incorporate analysis of physical and emotional dialogue, such as might be seen in Boal's gamercises (Columbian hypnosis is an example). Elizabeth Ellsworth (1998) has questioned critical pedagogy's usefulness in application to embodied pedagogy, a critique developed by Mia Perry (2013) in her examination of devising processes in drama education. Perry turns instead to Deleuzian rhizome theory for its focus on open ended, non-linear interconnectedness for devising processes. Critical pedagogy however, as applied to devising, can be limiting given its tight focus on power distribution and social justice ambitions.

Drama education's increasing focus on an ethics of care (Cahill, 2015; Herrmann et al., 2021) highlights a need for theory and practice to address the means of balancing power relationships more carefully.

In Aotearoa New Zealand the concept of ako means both teaching and learning, and acknowledges the importance of the interactions between learners and teachers. Employed in drama education ako recognises the way that new knowledge and understandings can grow out of shared learning experiences, and a sense of interconnectedness, such as process drama and Theatre of the Oppressed methods (https://tereomaori.tki.org.nz)

As a self-study (S-STEP) in this research I explore the complexities of the power relationships between facilitator and ensemble participants, conscious of my capacity to

> ‘teach’ students and participants to accept oppressive power structures. Education and Applied Theatre are well-equipped to produce a docile, well-behaved group of subjects while reinforcing the power dynamics that create and maintain racial, colonial, gender and class inequality (Busby, 2021, p. 108).

De-activating belonging, both its affective and political dimensions, has been a concern of mine in terms of my facilitation of drama education workshops with ensembles. Critical pedagogy, as Busby suggests, can help identify instances of a counterimage to belonging, othering. Othering is an act of oppression. A pedagogy of utopia in Busby’s view builds on critical pedagogy through the application of Paul Ricouer’s lens of distanciation, a hermeneutic theory of interpretation which promotes critical thinking and reading of collaborative work through examination of biases and assumptions in the creative work.

As S-STEP study this research examines the complex relationships which develop in ensemble practice and interrogates the role of the facilitator as an activator of belonging. Belonging is at the heart of this complexity. Eve Youkhana (2015) suggests a new consideration of belonging is required which “cross-cuts [...] race, class, gender, and stage in the life cycle, and integrates a material semiotic perspective” (p.10). Complex relationships with others encompass “circulating objects, artefacts, and changing social, political, and cultural landscapes, thus mirroring both the material conditions and the underlying power relations (p.10). Youkhana suggests that a

> space-sensitive theorization of social relations and belonging opens up new perspectives on the question of how social collectives are naturalized and by whom, and under which conditions they open up to new forms of belonging; it thus brings forth new findings about collectivization, social mobilization, and change (p.10).

As the contextual review which precedes this chapter highlights, both fields of belonging and drama education are turning to post-human theories, particularly Karen Barad’s (2007) work on new materialism and intra-action through agential realism to understand our post Covid-19 world. This is a world in which the study of belonging and drama education does well to consider changing relationships between the human and non-human world, the situated, temporal and spatial nature of both fields (Gravett, 2021; Gallagher, 2023). Employing a critical belonging lens which acknowledges elements of post-human thinking (Lacković & Olteanu, 2024) in this research, provides greater opportunity to examine the impact of a material semiotic perspective on ensemble pedagogy. The principles

of practice developed for drama educators offer advice for engaging with social, political and cultural landscapes through the principles of reflexivity, identity, processes, story, space and performativity. Adopting a critical perspective enables me to interrogate my practice as it relates to the complex aspects of belonging and creative connection and collaboration in ensemble pedagogy.

Chapter Three: The Principles of Practice

Ki te kotahi te kākaho, ka whati; ki te kāpuia, e kore e whati

If a reed stands alone, it can be broken; if it is in a group, it cannot

This chapter sets out the findings emerging from the methodological research design as documented in the preceding chapter. Analysis of these findings informs and supports the development of six principles of practice aimed to advance understandings of practice for teachers and facilitators working with drama education ensembles. Specifically, these principles of practice underpin critical ensemble pedagogy activating how participants experience, understand and perform affective, political and socio-ecological belonging.

I introduce this chapter, and five of the principles of practice, with a whakataukī, an indigenous proverbial saying from Aotearoa New Zealand where this study is set. Whakataukī, ancient "nuggets of wisdom that provide life lessons, guidance, notes of caution, sometimes a source of comfort" (Elder, 2020, p.5), contextualise these principles of practice guiding the approach to a critical ensemble pedagogy. The opening whakataukī emphasises, the relational function of the group in terms of individual strengths weaving together to provide collective strength. Reeds, or stems – kākaho – as metaphor for the individual and

collective in the whakataukī, are used by weavers to create a range of functional and aesthetic artefacts in Aotearoa New Zealand. Weaving has deep cultural significance in te āo Māori as a living art form, and as means of preserving artefacts and story, drawing attention to its particular essence, purpose and relevance for drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This whakataukī thus serves as both an introduction to critical ensemble pedagogy, in the form of principles of practice, and as a provocation, to interrogate and conceptualise belonging within the ensemble. When we work effectively as an ensemble, uniting and belonging creatively on a physical and emotional level for a shared purpose, the collective and its work is strengthened.

1. Principle 1: Nourish ensemble identity
2. Principle 2: Transport before you transform
3. Principle 3: Ensemble as storytellers
4. Principle 4: Spaces and places to call home
5. Principle 5: Explore performance and performativity
6. Principle 6: Be reflexive: a teacher's superpower

The principles are framed from the perspective of the facilitator, or the teacher, though all participants I consider as partners in the teaching and learning processes contained within the practice (Aitken, 2021). The principles emerge from dialogic inquiry, a teaching and learning relationship sustained by reciprocity. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this teaching and learning relationship is contained in the concept of ako. Ako is a discursive and co-constructed pedagogy wherein teachers and learners learn from each other "with all involved in processes of imparting knowledge as well as of acquiring knowledge" (Hargraves, 2022, p.4).

As foregrounded in the methodology chapter, the Principles of Practice represent the distillation of data generated in two phases of the research process. This first phase generated data from interviews, observations and self-study autoethnography as vignettes describing lived experiences with ensembles in process, performance or as audience. These data have been coded and analysed using a blended approach informed by thematic coding (Saldaña, 2021) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2023; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Phase two comprises autoethnographic material reflecting my own experiences of teaching drama

education ensembles. I support my autoethnographic writing process using what researcher Philippa Hunter (2012) calls research vignettes to describe these experiences. I use poetic inquiry to capture the essence of experience (Prendergast, 2016; Kara, 2020). Poetic fragments conclude each principle 'to more fully express the affective, embodied, transitory and ephemeral nature" (Prendergast, 2016, p.6) of ensemble practice and belonging. The six principles are not intended to be the definitive word on the activation of belonging within a drama education ensemble. In the spirit of dialogic inquiry and ako they represent potential areas of exploration as a continually evolving polyphonic process; an invitation extended to other facilitators to contribute to a conversation focused on the activation of belonging within critical ensemble pedagogy.

The principles apply to two practical contexts in which affective aspects of belonging, the politics of belonging and socio-ecological belonging are considered. One relates to facilitating opportunities for participants to experience facets of belonging in the ensemble as themselves, as diverse learner identities within a drama education group. Two, students can be guided to reflect on belongingness from the perspective of role(s) adopted in dramatic inquiry frameworks or within the development of devised performance.

As Boal (2002) points out: "[t]heatre is the art of looking at ourselves" (p.15). We are the only creatures who are able to observe ourselves in action, and this can be action in real life as we feel we belong in a drama classroom or studio, and also as we reflect on the roles we create in the dramatic action of either dramatic inquiry episodes, Theatre of the Oppressed practices, or developing devised performance.

The collection of principles listed here is not set out in hierarchical order. Although each principle is described separately and can be used as a singular focus for explorations of belonging, there are connections between them; they are in dialogue with each other and can be used in combination for practical exploratory purposes.

The principles align with the drama elements in the New Zealand Arts Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). These elements include role, action, situation, time and space, focus and tension. Drama conventions, or strategies, (Aitken, 2021; Cziboly, 2020; Neelands, 2000; Taylor, 2018) used to develop dramatic action in process drama and devising for performance are identified in each of the principles. I start with the principle of nourishing identity to reflect the importance of subjective ontology in a te ao Māori world view.

Theatre anthropologist Eugenio Barba (2005) explains that the use of the term 'principles' avoids the imposition of a set of rules allowing instead for evolution of practice,

as noted in John Britton's (2013) 'Self with Others' ensemble training approach. 'Principle' here refers to a fundamental guideline that serves as a foundation for practice, and one that allows for flexibility, creativity and individual interpretation.

Describing principles as "nothing more than particularly good 'bits of advice'[...] Barba (2005, p.6) nonetheless acknowledges that "entire fields of study- rhetoric and morals, for example, or the study of behaviour - are likewise collections of 'good advice' (p.6). In terms of the study of belonging in the drama education ensemble then, advice is welcome. At the same time there is a certain sense of freedom associated with the term 'principles' here, as Barba uses it within the study of theatre anthropology, which I likewise want to offer:

> [t]he 'bits of good advice' are particular in this respect: they can be followed or ignored. They are not inviolate laws; rather – and this is perhaps the best way to use them – one respects them so as to be able to ignore them and go further (Barba, 2005, p.6).

Eugenio Barba and John Britton (2013) conceive principles as accessible practices for performers that afford deep mining into complexity. John Britton's Self with Others principles, discussed earlier in the contextual review, exemplify simplicity and complexity. On the one hand ensemble participants are likely to find "when there is nothing to do, do nothing", an easy enough action. At the same time this action develops the capacity to practise attention and presence, both deeply complex aspects of performance. In theatre maker, and socially engaged performance facilitator Jan Cohen Cruz's (2005) study of community theatre in the United States, four principles justify the value of community-based performance: "[—] communal context, reciprocity, hyphenation, and active culture" (p.91). In his study of community theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand, Paul Maunder (2013) describes Cohen- Cruz's principles as "best practice" (p.24) and having "the virtue of simplicity" (p.24). Maunder (2013) points out that these principles are not binding "biblical commandments but a means of negotiating the complexities of describing community-based theatre process" (p.24). Although Cohen-Cruz's principles mainly focus on the relationship between artists and community, synergies with facilitator and drama education ensemble practice can be identified, particularly in terms of developing principles that are easy to follow for facilitators but provide scope for deep exploration of belonging through ensemble practices.

Drama educators are familiar with the notion of principles as they relate to theatre performance and process practice, as features that distinguish one style from another in

process and performance. Examples of this can be seen in the different teaching approaches, in drama education, to acting in Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) dialectical theatre, Konstantin Stanislavski's (1863-1938) theatre of psychological realism or key features of performance in Antonin Artaud's (1896-1948) theatre of cruelty. Students may be introduced to principles of creative practice adopted by a range of theatre companies, or they may identify the principles underpinning learning through dramatic inquiry by engaging with a range of drama conventions. There are many different teaching approaches and as Viv Aitken (2021) points out, using Green's (2018) lighthearted blogpost, there is no such thing as a manual for perfectly successful teaching:

> You can no more create a binder full of classroom practices that are scientifically proven to work than you can create a scientifically proven courtship and marriage manual. Yes, some practices are more likely to work more often for more practitioners than other practices are, and yes, some practices are probably not going to work most of the time, mostly. But there will always be outliers and exceptions and there will never be guarantees. Never (Green in Aitken, 2021, p.156).

Principles are useful tools for wayfinding, more story than map (Iosefo et al, 2023) establishing a direction to take when exploring the specific objectives of this research, a self-study of ensemble practice. Eight principles in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) "embody beliefs about what is important and desirable" (p. 9) in national and local curricula. They relate closely to how programming of courses in each of the eight learning areas is developed and are "particularly relevant to the processes of planning, prioritising, and review" (p.9). At the time of writing, the NZC (2007) has been undergoing a significant reset which has resulted in newly drafted key curricula frameworks being put on hold. One of these draft frameworks, Te Mātaiaho, "designed for all ākonga, ensured all learners a right to belong and flourish through high-quality learning experiences" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p.2).

In its draft, Te Mātaiaho proposed three curriculum principles, set out as "calls to action" for teachers and school leaders. One principle "Give effect to Te Tiriti Waitangi" indicated a marked change from "acknowledgment to authentic understanding and valuing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p.13). Like Te Mātaiaho, the following principles of practice in drama education ensembles have been conceived not as abstract concepts but as calls to action for facilitators. I offer the principles of practice as a conversation starter about how, as facilitators, we manage human closeness

and connection within the ensemble, and interconnectedness as a collective within, and beyond, our classroom spaces. This document, a boundary object sharing language of drama education and belonging, presents ensemble practice as a pedagogy of care (Noddings,1995; Herrmann, 2021). It advocates for equity and inclusivity for all ākonga (learners) engaging with drama education in ensembles, and acts as a catalyst for activating affective, political and socio ecological belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Principle 1: Nourish Ensemble Identity

E koekoe te tūī

E ketekete te kākā

E kūkū te kererū

The tūī squawks, the kākā chatters, the kererū coos.

This principle focuses on practice which nurtures diversity and dimensions of identity in drama education ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drama ākonga (students) "experiment, develop, and express their own artistic identity to flourish into creators, performers, and audiences of theatre, [...]as makers and creators they] carve out spaces for themselves to nourish their artistic skill, knowledge, and expression" (Ministry of Education n.d.https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama). Nourishment, a term associated with health and wellbeing, is a significant aspect of manaakitanga, the value of respect and care for people's wellbeing in te ao Māori. The concept of manaakitanga, as introduced in Chapter One, is concerned with hospitality, respect, generosity and the plentiful provision of kai (food). Kai "and hospitality are at the heart of showing care and respect for others[...] this is at the core of our identity (Elder, 2020, p. 54). Māori theatre company Te Rākau o Te Wao Tapu provide food for the company at their drama rehearsals and for audiences at many performances. Kai is a central element in te ao Māori world view as it is considered to come from the atua (the gods). There are many rituals involved in the growing and preparing of kai, all combining to keep a community healthy and happy. At wānanga (education gatherings) a waiata will usually be offered by the students, thanking the cooks for the care taken in preparation and presentation of the kai, honouring through song all the arduous work carried out by those in the kitchen (Elder, 2020).

Providing food at rehearsals and performance events in educational contexts is not always possible. However, using the preparation and provision of food as a metaphor for valuing the efforts made by others in a group, drama students can show "mutuality of responsibility [...] and reciprocal nourishment of relationships (Elder, 2020, p.56) in the ensemble. Supporting drama students to show manaakitanga (respect) towards each other, their drama space, and their creative, collaborative output in ensemble work is a key aspect of drama teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Students submitting work for assessment in NCEA Drama Level One "must demonstrate manaakitanga in the context of exploring theatre Aotearoa" (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Noting that teachers are "pivotal in the creation of [this] sense of belonging" (Darke & Howard, 2023, p. 63) manaakitanga can be modelled by facilitating spaces of physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual safety. This generates metaphorical nourishment for ensembles where everyone can feel they are in a place where they belong.

Identity is tangled up with notions of affective belonging and the politics of belonging (Allen et al.,2021; Halse, 2018; Kidman, 2021; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Sociologist Joanne Kidman's (2021) research, discussed in Chapter One, found that young Māori people's identity was shaped through the experiences of felt belonging, or unbelonging, in white spaces. In this study Māori youth reported to researchers that they used karakia (Māori ritual, chant or prayer) when walking through white spaces to help feelings of security and connection to their indigenous identity. Darke & Clark- Howard (2023) found in their study of school belonging there was a need for students to access spaces where they felt "comfortable and at home" (p.65). Spaces that reflected "diverse students' cultures, either through practices within those spaces (kapahaka, singing, music) or through art displays and artefacts" (p.65) made belonging much more likely (Berryman & Eley, 2019; Longley, 2021). Students can be impacted by systemic institutional inclusion and exclusion through "monocultural structures and dominant practices" (Darke & Clark-Howard, 2023, p.66). Nira Yuval Davis (2006) describes this as separating a "population into 'us' and 'them'" (p.204) maintaining boundaries and borders, the politics of belonging,which serve to exclude and include some students. More than felt belonging, students can experience exclusion or inclusion in school programmes based on self-perceived aptitude, physical capacity, competency, gender, race or socio-economic privilege (Allen et al., 2021; Darke & Clark-Howard, 2023). Allen et al., 2021) affirm the importance of students understanding themselves and facets of their identity, outlining self-perception as a measure of belonging.

Positive self-perception makes the reciprocal demonstration of manaakitanga more possible.

Artistic Director of Massive Nui Ensemble, (MNE) Sam Scott notes that building strong self-perception supports her young company to take creative risks:

> I really see people in my room, I really look at them as individuals and go how can I help them understand their beauty? In this day and age, and the times we live in, where there's so much fear and anxiety and judgement, I try to help actors understand they are really fabulous beings, encourage them to be brave, to not think there's a right answer, to trust themselves (Scott, in Halba & O'Donnell, 2025, p.130).

As well as being able to trust themselves, students need to be confident in the ensemble's creative capacity (Duffy, Duffy & Vettraino, 2010). Teachers and directors are uniquely placed to help facilitate a collective identity. A significant aspect of MNE's kaupapa (Māori principles that inform behaviour and custom) is to establish a collective identity in which a sense of belonging is experienced through complicité, shared playfulness and connection with each other (https://www.massivecompany.co.nz/about-massive-company). Scott nourishes her young ensemble, helping them to achieve complicité through adaptations of Gaulier's concept of le jeu (play) and focusing on diverse strengths within the company. Even during the pandemic lockdown, MNE reported the benefits of taking time to connect and nourish the ensemble

> We still feel like an ensemble even though we aren't in the same room. We meet online and still get on with the work. We have the same commitment to the work we have when we are in the studio. It's about complicité. We are always working on that. (MNEOI/2020)

Taking care of each other is integral to the creation of a sense of belonging in the company. This was evident as Scott continued to engage online with the company during the pandemic lockdown periods, setting up playful exercises that could be completed with a laptop and plenty of commitment. Warm up tasks that mirrored the fun of the studio environment kept the young actors engaged and inspired. In a professional development session organised by Drama New Zealand to support online drama teaching, Scott described the process of maintaining this connection even when everyone is in a

> separate space. We connect in and we *connect* out. We spend some time checking the tech and it's touching how we make sure each one of us is supported to join [the zoom]. It's important (Online zoom meeting April 28 2020).

Taking time to connect and nourish the ensemble is not always easy for busy teachers in a crowded curriculum. Helping students in ensemble to feel valued, a fundamental aspect of a sense of belonging, is key for Teacher A. During our interview Teacher A talked about the challenges presented by their composite senior classes (three age levels in same class n=26) when presenting devised drama for assessment. Drama classes are set up in this way often because of low enrolment numbers.

> The younger students can feel a bit overwhelmed by the Year 13s, some need a lot of encouragement to even get started, self-belief isn't strong and they haven't found their style, less time to get to know each other I think (TA, p.1)

To mitigate the challenges here and to give space to nourish each of the year groups as 'mini ensembles', Teacher A separates their composite group into 3 different ensembles when working on the Level 1-3 devising standards for NCEA. Before separation the whole group engages in introductory play that affirms complicité, avoiding any elimination games. Space to work separately during school time is compromised. Teacher A's time is similarly constrained, spent moving between the three separate ensembles, or managing appropriate spaces for learning. Final rehearsals for the performance of devised work take place over a weekend on the school site culminating in three performances on the Sunday evening to the school community. It is during this weekend time that Teacher A notices students' differing self-perception, the different approaches to developing their own style, their own collective identity

> the groups that considered themselves out of their comfort zones, the ones who think they aren't that good at acting enjoyed the work, the group with the ideas and the experience put themselves under huge pressure to achieve (TA p.1).

Teacher A was keen to develop their own facilitation of devised work, identifying their big challenge lay in getting different student identities within each of the three ensemble groups to collaborate. They described the diverse student creative strengths within each group noting how the devising process itself encouraged students to work with, and weave, their differences to create original work. Teacher A reported that two of these three groups spent considerable time during the final weekend playing, chatting, snacking and singing together. Both these groups were seen by the teacher as invested in each other's artistic success and were comfortable giving and receiving feedback to each other on their devising progress.

The teacher reported that both groups approached the devising tasks with much more enthusiasm, making stronger connections with the provocations.

Groups 1 and 2 really got excited about performing their work, I think they surprised themselves. Spending the weekend at school, out of uniform, away from classes they seemed quite a tight unit. Group 3 didn't mix with the other two, or me- only to report some issues and arguments.

Encouraging students to show manaakitanga to each other helps to activate positive self-perception. Group 3, according to Teacher A, focused on their own assessment, and did not engage in any peer activity with the other two groups. Teacher A indicated that they did not appear to enjoy the process of devising, that it had been very challenging for them to realise their intended dramatic intention with the work. Students highlighted the importance of social connection for their learning and belonging in Allen et al.'s (2023) study, seeing "teachers as facilitators who had the capacity to [...] provide students with activities to build connection and bond with other students" (p.933). Together with Teacher A's experience, this suggests that nourishing the ensemble through manaakitanga increases chances of successful and enjoyable learning outcomes in drama assessment.

Drama teacher TS, told me during our interview that some of their rainbow students talked of having to leave their identities at the school entrance. An uncomfortable image. They continued:

> the only place these students say they feel like they belong in this school is in the drama room, it's full every lunchtime, it does my head in because I worry about them, like when they aren't in the drama room. I know they are struggling (TS, p.2)

I asked this teacher why students might think the drama space was different. They said that the students spoke often about being allowed to be themselves, they talked about feeling safe to speak about conflicting emotions. Some students were transitioning and experiencing a range of attitudes, some supportive, others confronting and negative, from peers, adults and parents. However, the teacher revealed that the drama programme in the co-educational school had been exploring gender in a number of classical texts, and a group of senior students had recently experienced national success with a non-binary performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. This teacher spoke about their cisgendered and non-binary students having a "real sense of pride" (TS, p.2) in this success, being selected as an ensemble to perform in Wellington, and noted their enthusiasm to engage in more performances like this one. The image of the identities left at the gate returned as the teacher was speaking, making me think

about the slippery nature of belonging; these binaries polarising emotions, and impacting identity formation for these students. The teacher noted the drama space provided a safe space to nourish and welcome the students to explore this aspect of their identity but the school context constrained this. The drama lesson involving the jumping mat described in the contextual review (Halse, 2018) reminded me that as teachers we can reinforce, or resist, attitudes to diverse identity through our pedagogy, we can nourish or starve identity through the provision, or limitation, of safe places.

Research participants talked about developing a positive identity through their ensemble work; being seen as a women's group, tackling big issues like climate justice, or developing a particular style of performance. In one interview with an ex high school student, the participant talked about the pride they felt wearing a hoodie with the name of the school when on tour to perform at a national event. "Like everyone knew where we came from, our sports teams had hoodies, but this was the first time we had them as drama students. It put [school] on the arts map for once, we were winners" (St.2, p.3).

Physical and verbal expressions of identity, national anthems, haka, chanting on terraces, deepen a feeling of belonging, beyond wearing a uniform, team kit or hoodie. In Aotearoa New Zealand, pōwhiri (traditional Māori welcome) is performed by the host people to welcome visitors to their region. Pōwhiri, and its "culturally specific meaning [can be understood] as a metaphor for the process of belonging" (Rameka et al., 2022, p.23).

During the interview with the ex-drama student and the hoodie reference, I thought about an experience I had after being in Aotearoa New Zealand for just over a year, when I had a limited understanding of pōwhiri and tikanga (Māori customs). I was attempting to nourish my senior classes with plenty of live theatre visits. We were on tour to see Battalion, a play written and performed by Māori theatre company Te Rākau o Hua o Te Wao Tapu.

Vignette 1

In 2006, after only a year's teaching in Aotearoa, I accompanied a group of senior drama students in Years 11-13, with a colleague, to Wellington for a week's worth of theatre visits and devising time. Our visit to Wellington coincided with the International Arts Festival and we booked to see Te Rākau o Hua o te Wao Tapu's *Battalion* in Whirinaki Whare Expressions Theatre in Upper Hutt.

The performance was preceded by a karanga as we (the audience) were called into the auditorium. We entered silently and respectfully, as the theatre transformed into a marae and we the manuhiri. On stage, a chorus of wāhine dressed in black widows' weeds enacted a choral mime of opening what we imagined to be military death notices, their mime ending with a collective physical collapse and heartbreakingly silent "auē!". This opening tore me in half. I was watching Greek Theatre from my pākehā seat, framed in a Māori space, the women on stage silent - or silenced?

As the play continued beyond this arresting prologue, familiar western drama conventions weaved together with mau rākau creating a powerful depiction of our shared family histories, be they pākehā - Māori, universal, intergenerational. We all feel pain, we all seek fairness, equity, we all seek to belong, be loved.

I loved this play. At the end, during the curtain call, I looked along the rows at our drama students. They were leaning forward in their seats, as if urging more from the cast! After the applause diminished, the school group sitting in the front rows jumped to their feet with a resounding haka, followed by the group in the rows behind us singing the most beautiful waiata. Others in the audience joined in the *waiata*, and when it finished there was a very tangible, awkward quiet that rippled along our three rows

One of the students hissed in my direction, "Miss, say something! You have to say something!" I glanced sideways at my colleague. What, what do I say? I can't speak any Māori …nor could my colleague … I was panicked, a feeling that I was not prepared for, out of my depth, desperately hoping that someone would come to my rescue. I looked back at the student who had originally told me to speak and said the same thing to him. He had a Māori surname so surely **he** could 'say something'? Turned out he couldn't. I felt ashamed. I think all this happened very quickly but my memory says otherwise, still focuses on the thick silence. Although we had come as a group, we were so separate from each other, we had watched the play as individuals, we had put our individual hands together in the act of clapping our appreciation. We had nothing to give back as a group. And we were the only group in that moment with nothing but our panic to offer to the performance.

But now one of our students (quite possibly the quietest member of the whole group) in the row below was rising to her feet, "I will sing." And she chose a waiata familiar to others in the audience, who joined in; she chose a waiata known by the cast who also joined in. Her voice connecting us all, forgiving our separateness. This was a gift, an act that united us. Allowed us to feel we belonged in this space because this person singing, quieting the space with her voice was part of us, our, ours.

I remember feeling a kind of buzz as we left the theatre, all around me her peers were variously thanking her, or were still bewildered by the beauty of her singing, and how did we not know she had this voice? I did know she had this voice. One day I watched her stop an over exuberant Year 9 student disrupting our rehearsal of Stephen Sinclair's *Bellbird* by singing. Just singing.

But one student's comments remain with me all these years later. "Miss, that was so shaming that we had nothing. We have to learn a waiata, something that says who we are, something to give back."

I realise now, some years later, that my very subjective response to this experience showed I was unable to sit with the discomfort, the knowledge that as teacher I had somehow let the students down by not preparing them to respond to the performance with a waiata. What this vignette does exemplify however, is that the students already recognised how manaakitanga

could be enacted, how they could feel connected to the performance and to others in the audience. Students said they wanted to reciprocate like the other school groups, wanted to give back to the performers and performance we had seen, wanted to be able to perform a rousing haka, sing a waiata together, not for the joy of performance so much but to show that we understood the importance of honouring each other's work. Performing, demonstrating or feeling part of a group seemed to be a powerful driver for these young people. The students had a feeling of belonging, and an innate sense of collective identity but no mechanism to express and build on it. We agreed that we should embark on some sort of marker of our identity as an ensemble. From that experience the drama department collaborated with the Māori department in the school to work on a whakatauki that we could perform as an act of reciprocity, koha, when we wanted to show manaakitanga to honour other performers and live performances we had seen.

who am I

where do I come from
where do I fit
my singing, hang my coat
who are we
look
proud
look down, be/don't be, belong
humble
we are many, from many places, with many selves to offer
as taonga -gifts-

here: precious, nourishing essence

authentic
heart mind body

Principle 2: Transport Before You Transform

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket, with my food basket, the people will thrive

Drama educator Megan Alrutz (2020) notes that research in applied drama and theatre practice supports claims for the "transformative potential of arts-based pedagogies, particularly when working with youth" (p.27). Applied theatre and drama / arts based social justice work without doubt does much to raise awareness of systemic inequities. Dani Snyder Young (2013) claims many artists and teachers "operate from a fundamental utopian desire for theatre to make social change" (p.2). Augusto Boal's (1998) radical work in Legislative Theatre succeeded in engaging citizens to call for transformational change in social and political conditions (Dolan, 2005; Prendergast, 2015). Forum theatre and other participatory forms of Theatre of the Oppressed, such as image theatre, are frequently used in drama education programmes to resolve conflict (O'Toole et al., 2005) engage in difficult conversation (Hartley, 2012) or as reflexive tools in self-study of teacher education practices (Forgasz, 2014). Arts based pedagogies such as dramatic inquiry can be used to transform teaching and learning by repositioning teacher and learner in a reciprocal relationship (Aitken, 2021) changing the learning dynamic for learners to have more agency with their learning. However, the notion of transformation for drama educators can be problematic (Nicholson, 2005; Snyder -Young, 2013). Snyder Young suggests these goals of societal, or individual, transformation are sometimes too ambitious. Jan Cohen Cruz (2009) reminds us that there is potential for "theatre [to] reproduce the same hierarchies that plague the world at large, the same assumptions of who can speak, who must listen and who is not even invited into the conversation" (2010, p.5).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, high school drama teachers support [ā]konga (students)[to] understand that the function of drama is to heal, educate, entertain, or transform society. They discover how theatre can either challenge the status quo or reinforce it, gaining an awareness of how impactful the medium can be (Ministry of Education, n.d. https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama). The devising of drama provides opportunities for ākonga to express their identities and heritages, and explore the heritages of others, creating empathy and understanding for the experiences and whakapapa of people from diverse backgrounds. Drama and theatre is considered to have the capacity to "heal, transform,

educate and entertain". Teachers must encourage students to work with the following concepts:

> *Whanaungatanga* promotes ways of working collaboratively that can be directly applied to the selection and use of creative strategies. It is about relationship, kinship, and a sense of belonging.
>
> *Creative strategies* are practices and processes that include communication and collaboration between creators and performers, where ideas can be safely voiced and negotiated in order to achieve a shared vision in devising a drama.
>
> Student ensembles must form, nurture and "maintain collaborative, reciprocal relationships with performers, audiences, writers, designers, and directors." (Ministry of Education, n.d.)

Teachers interviewed noted their changed role when devising with school group. Some found it a positive experience: "love the freedom, and watching kids start from nothing and end up with something that really works" (TS1, p.4). For others the policy was "more like a guide" (STh.2, p.1). Others noted the difficulty of the form, "keeping them on task is hard when one of the ensemble is absent, they have a tendency to sit and do nothing or just talk endlessly about what they are going to do rather than doing it (TA, p.3). One teacher described themself as "like a troubleshooter – groups get stuck and I have to get in and rescue them" (TS, p.4).

One student interviewed reflected on the difficulty of devising when motivation in the ensemble was uneven, suggesting that teachers were not really helpful in providing workable solutions. When ensemble projects encounter roadblocks, group cohesion is affected. Research participants in my interviews reported that group cohesion when the process is working creates a sense of belonging amongst the ensemble, but when groups get creatively "stuck" disengagement, disconnection can occur.

As teacher or facilitator, maintaining cohesion in the ensemble is a challenge, it affects a sense of belonging amongst the participants with the responsibility for transformative creative work remaining with a few, rather than the collective. An ex-student notes:

> there was a really small group of us that would reflect as a group and we would often, not intentionally, but we would end up being together after the class. Whether that be

> we were giving each other rides or someone was chatting or we were going to lunch or whatever, that small group, we did have that reflection time together where we were either going (1) okay these were the challenges within this group and how are we going to overcome this, or (2) had the support of the others. I often got pushed, not pushed aside, alienated a bit for the role I played in the process (TDSt1, p.4)

In this example, the work doesn't come to a halt. It has to continue because it is an assessment. It continues possibly because the participants who do take on the responsibility for seeing it through have more experience of group work. However, an example offered by Teacher A, discussing devised work for assessment shows a different response.

> The Year 13 group that I thought would do really well were full of all the superstars, self-perceived superstars, they failed. They fell on their face and failed, they absolutely failed. The group of students who have not been achieving such high grades actually did a bloody good job. I don't know why that was (Teacher A, p.3).

I asked the teacher if the latter group's way of collaborating differed from the first group's method in any way,

> They spent a lot of time, especially on the Friday night, just bonding as a group. I don't think they really did much work at all. They played a lot. Once they hooked onto it, I think it just took one image to get them going. Once they had that image, it was enough to stimulate them, to get them working. They just had a lot of fun together. Whereas I think the other group had a lot of pressure, self-perceived, it was on themselves. They wanted to do good work but actually, when it came down to it, they didn't know how to work together and they didn't know what the good work was. Whereas the other group didn't have any expectations, they just had fun (Teacher A,p.3)

Both examples of devised work here are presented for assessment and the impact on ensemble is clear. As noted, students are expected to work collaboratively, relationally "in kinship, and a sense of belonging". Teachers can attempt to transform disconnected ensembles but as philosopher Lauren Berlant (2016) noted "just because we are in the room together doesn't mean we belong to the room or to each other" (p. 393). Ensemble building practices do not guarantee that the ensemble will know how to work collaboratively. If assessment becomes a powerful driver here, and for some students it appears it does,

relationships within the ensemble become less important than achieving a successful grade for the work, group commitment is uneven and cohesion possibly limited.

Students may feel a more powerful sense of belonging to a group whose values are more in line with their own. Allen et al.'s (2021) framework for measuring belonging discusses the motivation for belonging in different groups and this example supports their claim. Belonging in the ensemble is exchanged for belonging to another group, where a different value system operates. Staying with Allen et al.'s framework, a focus on the transformative aspect of drama education processes may be hindering the activation of belonging in the drama education ensemble. Several respondents in the interviews mentioned devising 'potholes' (Shirle, 2005). The interview schedules were focused on ensemble experiences with the devising process, and consequently I had no data from respondents which focused on potholes in dramatic inquiry. I did, however, have plenty of my own data. The following snapshot details some challenges I experienced with a group of 15/16 year old drama students.

Vignette 2

I had tried 'everything' drama related to engage this group of 15 year olds. A drama class comprising over 20 diverse learners who were "in drama" for the fun, or because there was room (the other options were full) or because the other options had impossibly hard prerequisites, or just simply because, in one case, someone (else) had decided that drama would be a good place for them to learn, relocating as they did from a different part of Aotearoa, and drama would help settle quickly and build their confidence. Confidence they had. I was the one that needed confidence. Nothing ever felt whole.

The group felt as separate two terms into the year as they had at the beginning …. My process toolkit had been emptied, I couldn't present them with anything they liked or wanted to pursue beyond a cursory maybe we will enjoy this. Also I was worried because they were not like other drama groups I was teaching. They were mostly miserable for the best part of every hour we spent together, or at least present in the same room. Together is an ambitious description.

I tried reading a play with them adapted from a Benjamin Zephaniah novel, another play about the Springbok Tour of 1981 and its ensuing catastrophic social division, I tried puppet theatre, Greek Theatre, Readers' theatre, devised performance, a mime unit leading into a study of melodrama as theatre form, and even an impossible to resist (or so I thought) Mantle of the Expert (MoTE) project based on a Teens 4 Teens advice consultancy which I had located on a UK website.

I was quite positive about introducing the group to a MoTE process. I had recently experienced its inclusive, democratic approach to group work for myself in an adult session. I saw how a group could 'become' an ethical, fictional enterprise in a short space of time and as long as I kept the 'hook' relevant this could have a very successful outcome. I was so confident that this approach would activate a deep sense of connection, and belonging, in the group that I invited one of the school RTLBs to observe the introductory lesson.

Rather than being the answer to the engagement conundrum, this last attempt resulted in one of the students declaring that the work was rubbish, boring, pointless and she wanted nothing to do with it. She bluntly stated that she was in no position to "sort her own issues out" so why would she be able to advise anyone else? Who would want to come to Teens 4 Teens (carefully set up space with the symbolic pot plants and telephones) surely they would go to the school counsellor who knew what they were doing, were properly qualified. I couldn't help but feel her comments could have been directed at the shortcomings of my practice.

The RTLB was listening to this conversation, watching students drift away to the far corners of the drama room and writing a lot of notes. Far from being a success, the change, the transformation was elusive as ever.

Theatre and community academic Helen Nicholson (2005) discusses her feelings about using the term 'transformation' to describe the capacity of drama education practices to effect any kind of change. Suggesting that transformation carries with it "grand claims" (p.12) to the efficacy of practice, it also questions the political intent of the practice:

> If applied drama is socially transformative, is it explicit what kind of society is envisaged? If the motive is individual or personal transformation is this something which is done *to* the participants, *with* them or *by* them? Whose values and interests does the transformation serve? (p.12)

Nicholson's preferred term for the process of social and personal change to be effected is 'transportation' (p.12). There is an emphasis on partnership and collaboration here:

> In the process of transportation, the outcomes are clearly focused but not fixed and change may take place gradually, a collaborative and sustained process between participants and often in partnership with other supportive agencies. It is about travelling into another world, often fictional, which offers new ways of seeing, and different ways of looking at the familiar (p.13).

As practitioners and teachers, if we want our ensemble to feel a sense of connection to the work and to one another we should perhaps see our process as a journey, rather than a fixed destination. Using a metaphor of journey here allows for what Alrutz (2015) refers to as "trangressive transportation" (p.27) or moments where our ensemble can travel temporarily into another world and experience something new. Monica Prendergast (2015) suggests there is nothing wrong with us wishing through drama education practice "a collective desire for a better world than this one" (p.34)

nothing worked
until I stopped giving

out
roles and words
distributing histories and performances
I thought all these gifts made

a home
where we could all belong
but
nothing worked

until they moved out
found a home of their own
where they could invite me over
and
trust
that
I would join them in their journey
of self discovery
and we could
travel together to find treasured selves/

not insist they change
the wallpaper

In so wishing, our processes should reflect the notion of travelling alongside our students rather than ahead of them as co adventurers rather than simply as tour guides" (Hatton, 2003, p.148) Let us travel together, trusting in our partnerships and the journey itself.

Principle 3: Provocations and Pre-Texts, Collective Histories

"the universe is made of stories, not of atoms"

Muriel Rukeyser (1968) writing in her poem 'The Speed of Darkness'

Drama is a narrative art form, and the creative practice of storytelling has always provided opportunities for the exploration and representation of "selfhood, culture and community" (Nicholson, 2005, p.63). Rukeyser reminds me that through story and storytelling we can consider our complex relationships with each other, our human and non-human world. This principle focuses on the relationship between aspects of belonging and the stories, or provocations, we employ as drama education practitioners to engage ensembles in creative experiences in dramatic inquiry practice.

Storytelling is a powerful means of making sense of our lives. Drama educators Warren Linds and Linda Goulet (in Duffy & Vettraino, 2010) working in image theatre with young people state that students "represent their world by nonverbally sharing stories through Image. Stories are central to the learning process as they mediate between self and others" (p.164). Using Theatre of the Oppressed forms such as Image Theatre and Forum theatre, Linds & Vettraino explore experiences of power, oppression and racism identified with their students. Examining created images

> Students recognise they are not alone in their experiences of exclusion and powerlessness [...] this recognition of self illustrates the commonalities shared by students forging bonds between them (p.164).

Drama is a narrative art form, and the creative practice of storytelling has always provided opportunities for the exploration and representation of "selfhood, culture and community" (Nicholson, 2005, p.63). The terms 'hooks' (Aitken, 2021) 'pretexts' (O'Neill,1995) 'starters' and 'provocations' all story in a sense, create fertile ground for narratives to develop, and let us make connections between "life as it is and life as it might be" (Benjamin, in Nicholson, 2005, p.64). Stories are interpreted through a multiplicity of lenses, and in the act of interpretation generate new and alternative insights (Nicholson, 2005, p.64).

As described in Chapter One, storytelling is an embodied way of interrogating the shared histories of indigenous and settler Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a means of preserving heritages and cultural knowledges. In stories we can find a sense of common ground, but also understand there are many interpretations, many different perspectives of the same event.

In interviews, several research participants related the importance of the ensemble "finding the right story" for devised work and the audience who would be watching the performance. Feedback after one ensemble performance indicated that a member of the community audience had been prompted to reconnect with an estranged relative:

> if you find through the story something that connects you to the audience that's great. To spark a thought is one thing, but to spark an action is something else" (ThS.C.p.4)

One participant in the interview held with a school-based theatre company (teachers and senior students) remarked on the importance of mining story (in this case a Shakespeare play) through ensemble devised practice to find the connections and applications to the local community. To do this, the respondent noted that it was necessary to look at story from the perspective of the collective:

> people focus more on the truth so the characters that we create the audience feedback was oh my God, you totally got me, you know, that was so truthful. That was real, it was believable. Devising, because it comes from us, we put on the stage us and so that's the feedback that we get. Whereas say we did a Laramie Project, we put on a beautiful production, we've won best ensemble with some award thing. We put on a great show but those characters are American and they're of that time and that place and we can put on a great show, but it was different feedback [pause].
>
> It wasn't our story [emphasis on 'our'] Transcript STh.1 35.15

The ensemble look for connections through their devising to roles that might be recognisable by the audiences but are also aware of social issues emerging from narratives that are connection points between the members of the ensemble and the audience. Kathleen Gallagher (in Nicholson, 2005) points out that the dialectics of story in drama theatre is "an educative force" (p.64) and an invitation for exploration beyond "calcif[ied] cultural and ethnic boundaries" (p. 64) which might limit participants' "abilities to affiliate with multiple cultural identities, productively maneuver across borders and develop capacities for functioning in diverse situations" (p.64). Gallagher reinforces the need for story to confront, and interrogate dominant discourse towards an understanding of whose stories have been traditionally told, and whose stories remain buried. Belonging is tied up with identity and if we cannot see ourselves, our values represented in a critical (literacy) sense there is a risk of disconnection, unbelonging (Wren- Butler, 2018).

During an interview with an emerging Māori theatre maker, the concept of disconnection was introduced. Their aims with theatre making was to create stories in which their own identity was acknowledged, described as "theatre that I can come home to, where I belong, where these other women are women that I recognise, that I understand" (TM1.p 1).

As noted in Chapter One, finding a place in which we share the same values and attitudes as others helps to create belongingness. Teachers of school based ensembles commonly use provocations that connect to issues at local community sites, tell histories of local community or advocate for local environmental protection. Coming together for a cause creates community. Exploring wider global issues such as Climate justice in devised work has been seen to promote "experiences of interconnectedness, widen perspectives of sustainability, and motivate acting differently" (Lehtonen al. 2020, p.2). Connection to one another through drama forms such as Theatre of the Oppressed and the devising of anti-models for Forum Theatre, in my own practice has increased connection and collaboration in the ensemble, despite different perspectives. In an interview with a national qualifications framework moderator, issue-based theatre, particularly those with environmental and sustainability foci closely linked to students' own contexts, created very powerful theatre. The moderator had assessed this work at the highest level of achievement but more importantly had selected the work as exemplar material for teachers across Aotearoa to benchmark their own assessments. In turn, the school drama department recruited more participants for dramatic activity, and stimulated ongoing discussion around the issues raised in the drama in the performed drama work. observed that drama students who had been "given" a social justice stimulus by their teachers produced less perceptive work and reported a lack of cohesion during the process.

Vignette 3

In a bid to feel at home in the faculty, and offering something that afforded some credibility, I put my hand up to run a session in the Arts for the Heart of the Arts. I submitted this abstract so that participants could make an informed decision about attending. Or dodging!

Making a Scene: Act-ivating the anti-model in Enhanced Forum Theatre

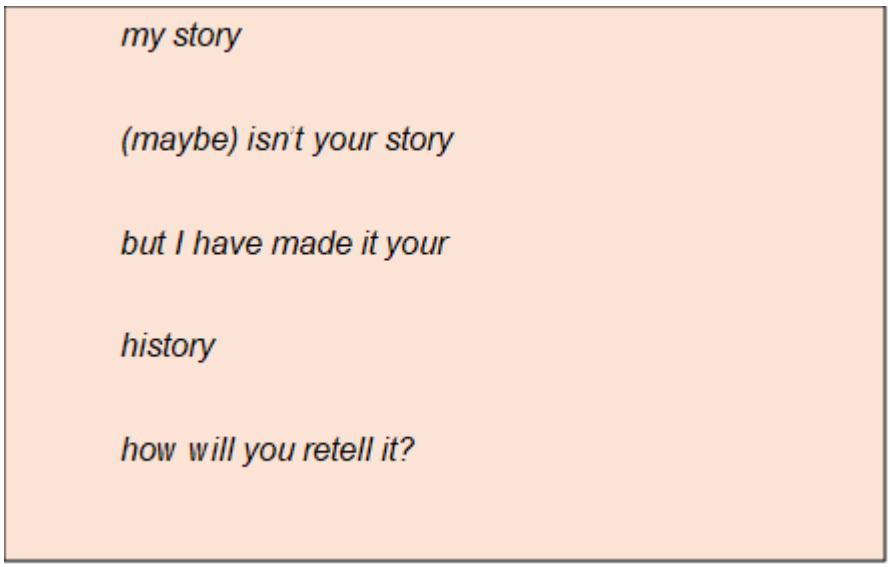
This session will explore the Enhanced Forum Theatre model in which a short dramatic sequence is devised by the ensemble, based on an issue or conflict arising from shared concerns in the community. Participants are positioned as both spectators and actors, or 'spect-actors' (Boal,1995). Invested with the capacity to pause scenes, question situations and roles and offer embodied alternative dialogue and action, participants can explore different outcomes as rehearsals of lived experiences in a manner that is "conscious, critical and collective" (Souto- Manning & Cahnmann Taylor, 2010, p.4) Enhanced Forum Theatre can be structured to include a range of digital technologies and devices to enhance the situations being explored. Digital technologies can establish a wider platform for the inclusion of greater diversity of voice, identity, gender and culture. (Anderson, Carroll & Cameron (2009).

Bring your issues! Prepare to take action! We'll give the method a quick work out!

I found the ideal starter / provocation on a social media site for women in academia. The OP had been invited to present her research at a national conference but during the conference dinner ahead of her presentation two senior researchers at the table suggested her research was irrelevant and would be a waste of everyone's time should she go ahead with presenting it. The OP's distress was tangible, she felt isolated and out of place and asked the online community if she should pull her presentation or go ahead with it....

The session I felt was going to be quite rushed and that feeling of trying to squeeze in all the justifications for using this process as well as explaining how we work triggers the incompetence in me - or is it an apology for taking up people's time? The session ended with a discussion about the realities of life in academia. Particularly for women academics. I recall one participant saying that toxic relationships flourished in university departments, and that the session had identified the need for dialogue around this. I immediately felt a sense of connection with her as she took a keen interest in the process and generously offered some references which she considered would be helpful to my research. This action stirred belonging in me. Through the process of EFT, dialogue was stimulated about a real issue some of us have experienced- or will experience in our careers and one participant connects in such a way as to draw not only closer to me in my facilitation role, but connects with the process itself and the act of drawing it into significance draws me into the ensemble.

Someone's lived experience is translated here into a provocation for an anti-model in forum theatre. Although the session was rushed, there was an opportunity for participants to see the connections to their own experiences. Whilst forum theatre does not set out to solve a problem, only to encourage dialogue around alternative actions, the anti-model provided scope for the ensemble to see itself in the story, to see the relevance of the story to the ensemble participants' own lives.



Principle 4: Spaces and Places I Call Home

E kore au e ngaro, he kākano ahau i ruia mai i Rangiātea

I can never be lost, I am a seed sown from Rangiātea.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Rangiātea is understood as both physical and metaphorical space. As individuals, our (dis)connection to physical and metaphorical places and spaces in which we play and work creatively, impacts our collective action and our feelings of collective wellbeing. Places and spaces can exclude, despite intentions to include; the staircase leading up to our community studio is steep, badly lit and for anyone using a wheelchair, inaccessible. There is no elevator. Extending invitations to the community to anyone who would like to join in our Climate Change Theatre Action (CCTA) group was thoughtless and exclusive, on several levels. Spaces and places play a role in the activation of belonging in the ensemble.

Feedback from workshop participants in CCTA sessions, as part of my ongoing community practice in 2019 in this a studio, created a certain sort of expectation that there was a requirement to perform despite our best efforts as facilitators to remove all pressure of performance from the process. Indeed, we had recruited on the basis that no one joining our activist ensemble would be required to perform, or to have had experience of performance work. The space, and the place, however, spoke more loudly than the facilitators.

Naming spaces according to Dr Hinemoa Elder can "bring us home to a huge sense of comfort and reassurance" (Elder, 2020, p.105). Often, however, our spaces and places have already been named for us, and proposed changes or reversions to original names become contentious. Within our schools, our tertiary institutions, the names we give to the spaces and places where theatre and drama programmes are developed, undertaken and shared, carry discourses which are discomforting (Sidebottom, 2024). The wooden proscenium arch stage, often dark and cramped, isn't conducive to ensemble building. In our education practice we might be squeezed out of shared spaces, halls, gyms and have to find, sometimes unsafe, alternative accommodation (Thomson, 2022). Naming alternative spaces in this context won't work to comfort or reassure us that we are valued and that we belong. In fact, it has the opposite effect, we can feel excluded and marginalised.

Teacher A spoke about the limitations of their school drama space during our interview:

> It's really difficult. My drama room has been renovated this year and it worked relatively well for both productions we did, but for the longest time the kids really can't get a sense of what it potentially could look like because they don't really have access to a proper theatre space. They can't think up really interesting lighting plans because we have no lighting. We have a raggedy old costume room, so they're limited to what they can bring from home into what I have in the cupboard. It costs far too much to hire stuff for something like that.

What might reassure us is an awareness of *how* space, even as an abstract concept, can affect our feelings of belonging, and by acknowledging this we move towards an understanding of the politics and socio ecologies of belonging.

As facilitators we see space as opportunity. I noted the following observation in my research journal:

> Our studio is a bright, airy space with windows along two sides which open onto the street below, and glass doors as an entrance. The woodwork is painted white, the wooden floor with its glossy varnish a refraction and reflection for the light that just floods in…. we love this space. Often M and I will take off our shoes, and dance while we talk and plan. Our conversations are movements. We swoop and whirl, shaping thoughts into choreographic dialogue about life, our processes, movement and spoken word. It is an artist's working space, where the canvas is our minds, the wall and the floor- and in the air that hums between us. We belong here. As teachers, as artists, as performers (Research Journal, 2019, p.12).

The following vignette set down illustrates how the same space was seen quite differently by a workshop participant and how they felt their emotional safety was compromised in the space:

Vignette 4

In the beginning there was participation from the whole group, but as the exercises became more theatre based (Columbian Hypnosis) I noticed that two participants had stopped and were standing apart from each other, just watching. It was interesting to observe my own reaction here: as if I were still working with young adults at school and I should make further efforts to include the participants, as if standing in witness to the work were not enough, despite M and I making it very clear that participation was at each individual's chosen level.

Were they comfy just observing? What was it about the space that had changed? Was it something the other participants were doing that had stilled these two? M and I had joined in the CH exercise, we were lost in our movement conversation, enjoying the aesthetic and I am not sure how long the two had been standing at the side….later one of the participants told me she found it very challenging to "find space" among us, and was keenly aware of the combined levels of experience shared by the rest of the group, where she had very little. The group were noisily buoyant towards the end of the theatre action workshop and opted to use the megaphone through the open windows. R did not find a space at the window to share the megaphone, and felt very marginalised by the group. Despite this feeling however, she was enthusiastic about attending the next workshop which she did, she said it was much more enjoyable and was not full of experienced artists this time! (RJ, 2019, p.14)

From this workshop, as facilitators, we learned that although the dimensions of the physical space can appear to us as sufficient, some players can still feel 'squeezed out'. This participant felt that their belonging in the drama studio space was dependent on specific dramatic skills and experience which they did not possess. The physical location of where we work with our participants is worth exploring closely. It could be affecting the perception held by those outside the workshop and create barriers to recruitment if participants feel excluded.

Vignette 4A: I Call NZ Home

I am walking from my studio towards the Govett Brewster gallery and Monica's Eatery where I will have breakfast today. Monica's Eatery is named after Monica Brewster, whose legacy in New Plymouth is hugely significant. Serendipitously I happen to be wearing a sweat top depicting a logo indicating Aotearoa is home for me. Except there is just NZ, no mention of Aotearoa! I am proud to wear this sweat top because I do call this place home now. Why? How do I belong to this space and place and place now? Curiously, where once I would feel a sense of belonging if I was reminded of seasonal weather in Wales, or I heard an accent from the UK - now I belong to a community which is still coming to terms with colonisation, with deep hurt. And I cannot distance myself from this because I am pākehā. And I feel guilt. There is a greater understanding of the politics of belonging, of activation and activism.

I am walking past Robe St Park, across the road from my studio, where late in 2019 we held our third Climate Change Theatre Action evening workshop, on the grass and amongst the flowers. I look at the statue of West Countryman Robert Carrington, which we ignored during the workshop, and acknowledge just how much this space around my workplace is freighted with West Country influence: Devon Street, New Plymouth…. I could, although I do not, get my coffee and breakfast from the cafe below my studio. Empire Tea Rooms is the quaintest place, with a range of teas and delicate china teacups and saucers. The empire's influence clearly extends 12,000 miles *from* home yet still looks comfortably *at* home. Does this space affect the kind of workshops we facilitate with ensemble? I can't answer this question without asking the participants, although for years I thought I could. Affectively, personally, I want to protest, resist- be with others who interrogate the space, ask why we still name a place in this way. I regularly begin workshops with Boal's 're- naming' gamercise - I expect us to question, to be ready to understand difference.

There is an ongoing conversation on social media (I use the word conversation advisedly since sometimes it becomes more heated) regarding the name of our mounga here in Taranaki. Renamed in 1770 by Captain James Cook after the first lord of the Admiralty who apparently died without ever knowing of the honour, the mounga became known as Mount Egmont/Mount Taranaki in 1986, until January 2020 when the name Mount Egmont was removed. The mountain retains its original Māori name: Taranaki Mounga. Shining Peak. The abbreviated form of Taranaki - *naki* - is deeply offensive since the mounga has person status. There has been considerable dialogue around this, encouraging several commercial enterprises to alter the name of their businesses to reflect respect by using the name Taranaki in its entirety.

Next door to Monica's is the Govett Brewster gallery and the current exhibition until May 2021 is Tai Moana Tai Tangata, a solo exhibition of new work by artist Brett Graham. This exhibition "revisits key events of New Zealand history as witnessed by Māori who suffered the most severe penalties of the colonial process" (govettbrewster.com)

"Tai Moana Tai Tangata electrifies the geography of the Te Uru (the West Coast) and asks visitors to locate themselves in relation to the ongoing process of colonisation in New Zealand" (Exhibition Curator Anna -Marie White 2020 exhibition pamphlet). Art historians, theatre directors and community will come together in conversations, panel discussions about the future of Taranaki as envisioned in Tai Moana Tai Tangata, and the themes and narratives underpinning Graham's work during the exhibition run.

The idea that such powerful art is happening in spaces and places whose names reflect former oppressive relationships makes me smile.

I took these reflections about the importance of place and space into a workshop for Year 12 Drama students. The following vignette foregrounds the innovative ways in which the material environment can be harnessed to make meaning through the ensemble. First, the students utilised an empty space to create unsettlement. When their original plan was disrupted, new meaning emerged through their use of new objects (desks and chairs set up for the exams). Through this engagement with the materiality of space the ensemble produced a

politicised meaning that resonated with the audience, the drama speaking to examinations as a divisive and oppressive experience. By accepting the invitation to work with what was present in the space, the unexpected and unwelcome additions became creative provocations, unleashing a new story and new meanings.

Vignette 4B

Our theatre form study (Theatre of Cruelty) was going well. The year 12 ensemble of 8 students were tasked with exploring the school grounds to find a setting to provoke a new sensory experience for the audience: something unexpected, a different view, a strange texture. They were gone for about 15 minutes before one student rushed back "Miss, come and see what we are thinking of doing!"

I was greeted at the entrance of the school hall by two students wearing white masks (where had they found them?) who opened the doors with a very stylised, silent flourish and urged me through into the vast empty space and across the echoing floor. More masked figures led me through the closed stage curtains to sit on a stool. It was eerie. Once seated I heard scratching and whispering, the hollowed sound of metal bars scraping and clicking fingers… a sigh, a gasp and "this castle hath a pleasant seat" a howl…. Malcolm's Nightmare was taking shape! I was rudely pulled up from my seat, and shown the way out back through the curtains, down the wooden steps and the long, lonely heel clicking walk to the swing doors where the masked figures waited.

Their idea was to invite audiences of six to experience this, unsettling them by separating them from each other. Plans were made to perform Malcolm's Nightmare, a fifteen minute piece two weeks later on Saturday, October 31st at 9pm and 9.30 pm. Very happy students. Their joy turned to despair the following week when they arrived to rehearse at the hall to find over 100 desks and chairs had been set out for the NCEA external examinations, ruining their empty space and the chance to unsettle each audience member with the isolating walk to the stage.

What to do? Overcoming their initial shock and despair, their inventive solution was to use the desks and chairs as part of the set. Four masked students on performance night adopted static poses at the desks, candlelit embodied effigies depicting exhaustion and oppression. Their institutionalised, over-examined state was witnessed by each member of the audience who walked silently through these images. Echoes of "nimbly and sweetly recommends itself" repeated and repeated and repeated.

This experience showcased not only the imaginative possibilities of space, but also the way in which audiences become involved in the making of meaning. The audience reaction to the effigies seated at examination desks was even more engaged than to the staging of Malcolm's Nightmare. Audiences told the cast that they found the images as they exited the space as unsettling as the sensory performance on the stage, many of them recalling their own assessment experiences and its divisive impact.

Spaces and Places We Call Home: Online Spaces

> Methods wear out, stimuli fail. New problems loom up and demand new techniques. Reality alters; to represent it the means of representation must alter too. Nothing arises from nothing; the new springs from the old, but that is just what makes it new (Brecht in Willett,1964, p.110).

On March 25th 2020 Aotearoa New Zealand moved into Alert Level 4, the measures taken in response to the possible community transmission of Covid-19. Looking back on this time of rapid change and different alert levels, I have reflected on the impact of these changing alert levels on my practice-led research. Unsurprisingly, the most significant change for me has come about because of social distancing protocols, and the relocation of embodied practice to online learning environments.

Drama and theatre programmes in schools and universities across the world have continued to engage in dramatic activity beyond the now empty spaces of classrooms, studios, lecture theatres and stages. Never before has it been so vital to be nimble in the facilitation of digital arts teaching, agile and resilient in digital creative learning. Site based drama and theatre has now transformed from applied collaborative practice to domestic monologue; glocal theatres are no longer able to invite you to one of their 100+ seats, instead they stream into your sitting room where you encounter performance, isolated in your headphones. With very little lead in time to adapt to this new digital world as researcher, performer, audience, teacher or learner I have scrambled to maintain practice-led research momentum, to adapt my inquiries to different landscapes.

In 2021, the time of holding workshops and reflecting on them writing, public health advice has been to limit social gatherings and events across the globe. When events have gone ahead, we have been advised to wear masks, and to keep our distance from each other. Living with COVID- 19 has meant that theatres, schools and studios have had to re-envision

the ways in which rehearsals/ staged performances/ workshops could be sustained in the digital space. Whilst we have been fortunate in Aotearoa with far less disruption to our creative events and education programmes we cannot be complacent, and we know we should be ready to move back online with our creative work should a community outbreak occur again. During 2020 there have been several instances of theatre companies maintaining some connections with their members, and continuing to share their work with online audiences in digital environments through film, podcast and video.

Massive Nui Ensemble (MNE) run by artistic director Sam Scott in Auckland, shared an example of adapting quickly to changing circumstances:

> Adapting to the constantly changing circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic, our ensemble moved from working face to face in a workshop room to collaborating online. Our rangatahi[33] committed to one of our favourite sayings: "Restriction is liberating.' They named exploration and discovery as key words to lead them in their creative curiosity and devised solo and group pieces for the seven short videos made for the work: Brilliant Things that Make me Happy. (Massive Nui Ensemble)

Part of MNE's kaupapa (core values) is a sense of belonging and a commitment to the ensemble as whānau- "this company is about everyone involved owning the work and their place within it". (The Massive Story). https://www.massivecompany.co.nz/about-massive-company

I was interested in discussing the notion of belonging with the company and keen to hear if the young people felt that a sense of belonging within MNE had been challenged in the digital space while Aotearoa New Zealand had been in Level 4/3 lockdown.

Their responses during an online interview in May 2020 confirmed that little had changed for them in terms of their relationships with each other and their sense of belonging within the ensemble. They had maintained connection, ascribing this to the way that Sam encouraged the same rigour in the digital space as she expected in the studio. Although workshops were held over Zoom, the structure of work had been carefully considered to maximise energy output and to minimise Zoom fatigue.

Graham's installation Te Namu provides a provocation (see Principle 3) for students exploring a site of local significance for devised ensemble performance. Considerations of how a place, or space is valued, seen through a socio ecological lens of belonging and ensemble performance addresses overarching curriculum intention

> In order to fulfil its function to heal, educate, entertain, or transform society, drama should allow opportunity to be confronting, challenging, and interactive[...] to convey a message, challenge dominant narratives, or raise awareness of important issues, expressing the power of drama to find light in dark places.

Dramatic inquiry frameworks can be set up with ensembles to explore how we belong in a socio-ecological sense. Relationships with the land in Taranaki are complex and diverse. Creatively and collectively, we call for protection and for partnership, and through drama explore the dismantling of oppressive systems and rebuild, heal both physical and metaphorical spaces and places so vital to our well-being.

From the freighted shadows
Bartering with burden
And weight of sorry story

We twist
Dive
Stumble

Unfurling our joy
Framing our epiphany
In the flutter
of
Longing
Be longing

You belong here

In this space, i te kore
In this space here, stripped bare
Inside our skin

Here is the querulous nature of trust
Trusting the spaces between

The architecture of YOU, of the EARTH, of BIRTH

Principle 5: Performativity and Performance

Ehara taku toa he taki tahi, he toa taku tini

My success should not be bestowed onto me alone,

as it is not individual success but success of a collective

Augusto Boal was once asked if people could remain as spectators in a Forum Theatre session. His response was definitive:

> No! As a rule I never give peremptory answers but in this case I answer blithely: No! In a Forum Theatre session no one can remain a spectator in the negative sense of the word. It's impossible. In Forum Theatre all the spect-actors know they can stop the show whenever they want. They know that they can shout 'Stop!' and voice their opinion in a democratic, theatrical, concrete way on stage. Even if they stay on the sidelines, even if they watch from a distance, even if they choose to say nothing, that choice is already a form of participation. In order to say nothing the spect-actor must decide to say nothing - which is already acting (Boal,1992, p.244)

This principle examines the performative aspects of drama education ensemble practice, its pedagogical processes and "conditions and means through which knowledge is produced" (Lather, 1992, p.112). Performative aspects can be described in terms of performance, a term which relates to both drama education and the successful carrying out of tasks in everyday life. Helen Nicholson (2005) describes pedagogy as a "performative encounter" (p.46) and drama as "in itself a performative act, even when the work does not lead to a conventional theatrical performance" (p.46). Performance for drama teachers and their ensembles connotes associations with theatre and aesthetics. "What happens to our thinking about performance when we move it outside of Aesthetics and situate it at the centre of lived experience?" (Conquergood,1991, p.190) One possible response to this question is that performance becomes a relational act within the ensemble.

In their comparative study of young adults in rural areas in Australia and Italy, sociologists Mauro Giardello and Hernan Cuervo (2018) found that the concept of community was not seen as a fixed, abstract space but was rather felt as "a relational place. More than a simple relationship between tangible and intangible dimensions, it is determined by the constant performative action of social actors" (p.219). Drama education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand are communal, relational spaces in the sense that they are developed by students, and their teachers and facilitators who share a common interest in performance. Giardello & Cuervo understand belonging in this context as cultural habitus (Bourdieu, n.d.). "conceived not as an ascribed factor or a fixed property but as an ongoing process which results in a more general sense of community" (p. 220).

This can create a “multi faceted character of belonging” (p.220) in drama departments in and outside curricular activity, as exemplified in Principle 1: Identity. Social connections can be created from everyday rituals that operate in schools such as gathering in the drama room at break or lunch times. Groups of students who gather are not necessarily rehearsing for any specific performance, but the act of gathering in this way is underpinned by a performative action, students performing the perceived identities of drama students. Belonging, and othering is spatial and relational in this context. Spatial and relational aspects will change over time, as the identity of the ensemble is impacted by the discovery of new theatre forms, new spaces to inhabit, participation in public performance, experience of dramatic inquiry or Theatre of the Oppressed activities.

Performance in drama education relates to the moments where ensemble participants share the embodied results of explorations undertaken into the dramatic context of the work. This sharing is, usually but not always, an act of exchange of story, emotion or experience between the sharer (s) and the receiver (s). Receivers may be public, community audiences in the case of devised work, or they may be the facilitator, or peers within the dramatic inquiry context, where dramatic conventions are stood up as a prompt for reflective discussion.

Sharing stories, emotions and experiences, in and out of role, has been seen to strengthen connections between members of the ensemble (Skeiker, 2021). However, not all participants who engage in acts of sharing, within the ensemble or with a public audience, in or out of role, do so with equal enthusiasm. In dramatic inquiry for example, moving in and out of a role from the real life version of self to a fictional self, an integral part of dramatic inquiry for both facilitators and participants, places responsibility on participants to embody someone/thing other than themselves (Heathcote & Bolton,1995; Bolton,1985; O’Neill,1995; Wells et al., 2023). Movement between these roles is referred to as “metaxis” (Boal, 1995; Linds, 2005; Vettraino, 2016).

Metaxis is important because it offers a powerful, yet elusive space, connecting real world understanding to classroom learning (Bolton,1985). Metaxis is a term used to describe the chemistry or the ‘unique tension’ between and within the fictional and the real world as students and teachers straddle these worlds simultaneously (Dunn 2016, p.259). As process drama leads to metaxis moments, students are offered opportunities to embody and internalise lived experiences in a fictional space, extending the range of the individual’s actual lived experiences (Edmiston, 2016).

When teachers pose authentic questions within a process drama, they probe students' imagination within the fictional world to develop their commitment to the role, aiding students to make connections between the fictional and the real world. Authentic questions can prompt reflective interpretation and meaning-making Saxton et al. (2018). Authentic questions are those that sanction many possible answers, unlike questions teachers often ask when they have a "prescribed answer in their minds" (Nystrand et al. 2003, p.145). The lived experiences of metaxis moments offered through process drama support students to reflect and consider broader human concerns and alternative viewpoints, as highlighted in the global competencies (Eun, 2010; Schleicher & Ramos, 2018). Unfortunately, there is no magic recipe guaranteeing the cultivation of this potent metaxis state, and there is little research evidence that illustrates what builds and leads to metaxis moments within classroom contexts.

For some participants enacting different roles presents as problematic. Arts and languages educators Erika Piazzolli and Claire Kennedy (2014) discuss the impact of a study in which process drama was used to support learning in other languages. The findings in this study, analysed through a socio-cultural lens, revealed differing levels of engagement with the dramatic context amongst the participants. Of note was the range of responses to working with Teacher-in-Role with one participant claiming that the teacher's action helped her to feel part of the fictional setting. Another participant had a contrasting perspective, reporting feelings of pressure to make the drama happen, that the expectation to perform their role resulted in a feeling of failure when it could not be carried out,

> It was more serious when [the teacher] was involved in it because of that expectation – I should know how to react but I don't. And so again, there was another blockage. There's added pressure to deliver… (Piazzoli & Kennedy, 2014, p.58).

Whilst the use of process drama had no conclusive effect on language acquisition, the researchers did find that it provided an opportunity to see how participants managed what child psychologist Lev Vygotsky (n.d.) called the "dual effect" of play. Play involves social interactions with others and also provides opportunities for personal growth, relevant to the individual experiences in the ensemble.

An interviewee talked about challenges in devised performance as a summative assessment, with student groups judging the quality of their work against a previous group's presentation, finding it wanting, then claiming they are not ready to share. This teacher described the pressure of performance for measurement, a performative act in itself

> they position themselves as a group who have not reached [objective]another group may be struggling to engage with the content emotionally, culturally or physically and sharing something they don't feel when the rest of the ensemble have felt it, it fractures the work and the relationships (TT1)

Karen Lambert et al. (2016, p.22) notes that drama teachers themselves "are not immune to the press of performativity and are both constrained by curricula and the cultural imperative to perform, but are also afforded the opportunity to speak back to these within the drama space" (p.22).

Helen Nicholson makes a case for two interpretations of performance: *performance studies* in which performance is seen as "cultural practice" (p.46) and *performance management* which focuses on "accountability and achievement" (p.46). Nicholson suggests both interpretations are concerned with "articulating the performance of knowledge and power" (Nicholson, 2005, p.46). Both interpretations of performance can be applied to approaches to learning that are impacted by understandings, and enactments, of belonging. Drama education as pedagogy is concerned with keeping the focus on collaborative learning; keeping the space open for performative relational social learning. What performance can teach us about belonging within the ensemble depends on the facilitator's interpretation of performance.

As facilitators we position ourselves, and in turn position participants in our ensembles. Within dramatic inquiry practice, and devised work, we ask our ensemble participants to move between a variety of roles and explorations of identity. Some drama education scholars believe identity is shaped through dramatic play, constructed through dialogue, action and interaction in fictional worlds (Edmiston, 2007; Andersen, 2004). In dramatic inquiry, process drama and forum theatre, we ask participants to step in and out of roles, asking them to imagine how things might be different in the 'as-if' world as well as in the 'as is' world (ref). Anthropologist and sociologist Dorothy Holland's (1998) theory of figured worlds is a useful parallel with drama education practice. The theory of figured worlds holds that our actions and identities are shaped by the social and cultural contexts, or worlds, in which we live. Arts educator Carolyn Swanson's (2016) dramatic inquiry research explored the degree to which 8/ 9 year science learners perceive themselves as competent scientists through positioning the ensemble, or the ethical team, in a fiction as expert scientists revisiting the sinking of The Wāhine in 1968. Focusing the study on theories of positioning and identity, Swanson (2016) found her science learners held diverse views about

what constitutes a good scientist. Some of the girls started the project with assumptions that women did not usually become scientists. Imagining themselves in the role of scientists, and carrying out the work of the ethical team, Swanson found perceptions had shifted significantly by the end of the project.

This principle reminds us about the implications of judging performativity and performance. Do we ascribe more importance to performance? We ask participants to move between the perspectives of performer and audience when reflecting on work and providing peer feedback. We ask participants to adopt the stance of 'spect-actor" (Boal, n.d.) in Forum Theatre, or sculptor in Image Theatre (Boal, n.d.). As Boal has said, even when we say nothing we have decided to say nothing- which is already acting.

Vignette 5

back in the dark studio

the conference community

framing action setting boundary

there's a group of girls about six of them

there's a boy

about

one of him

The following poetic vignette describes my observation of a process drama session carried out at a drama education conference in Aotearoa New Zealand. I noticed that as teachers we were very concerned about one of the students, the only boy, had become separated from the group. The articulate girls, in role as refugees in the camp, were pleading with the teacher, in role as an official. They were pleading for another refugee to be afforded clemency. Many teachers were concerned that the boy was not part of the action, that he was not able to show how role could allow a speaking back to authority in a safe, fictional situation.

there's a spotlight on the desk

and a chair

where- teacher- in- role -as -official is shaking his head

It doesn't look good does it

tackling autocracybureaucracy

youngsters pleading forclemencywhatevernext

It's so urgent, the girls' voices crowd round the official it's so urgent they cry

been in this de-ten-shun centre too long

you have to let him out he's going mad he's only young he has his whole life ahead of him and he plays football

And the voices cover the official /they're so engaged we hum hmm

but look

there's a boy

about

one of him

and he is not covering the official with anything

he's OUTSIDE the action

standing, no voice no whats hes doing

teacher teachers looking

willing him to cover the official with his words, or his hands to plead

to join in with the loud girls

but there's no more space

And hes OUT of the action not speaking- back- to- authority like the abstract said

hes the abstract

notinrole we are not in role

but we are performing

and we don't know how to mark it

Principle Six: Reflexivity- Acknowledge Your Facilitator Power

Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa

Let us keep close together, not wide apart.

A reflexive pedagogy is one in which a facilitator reflects on their beliefs, life experiences, and biases and considers how these characteristics inform interactions with learners. Academic Roxani Krystalli (2023) sees reflexivity as a practice:

> an iterative invitation to consider how different subjects—researchers, students, teachers, and citizens—are enmeshed in power relations and to critically reflect on how those power relations in turn affect the knowledge these subjects create and access, as well as shape the processes and relationships by which knowledge comes into being (p.2).

Reflexive practice then implies a facilitator reflects on a sense of who they are, what beliefs they hold and what they bring to, or withhold from, drama education ensemble pedagogy. For research methods scholars Nicole Brown (2023) and Sioux McKenna (2021) reflexivity is inflected by researcher positionality. Brown (2023) suggests the terms reflexivity and positionality should not be conflated; reflexivity is "a private process whereas positionality is the public end result of that process" (0.21). McKenna (2021) links positionality to reflexivity when she considers how her many personal, and professional, positions influence her research in different contexts.

> Thinking through my positionality entails a lot of reflexivity, in other words reflection plus action but given that much of my positionality emerges from my own assumptions and my own blind spots, you can't actually do this work entirely on your own (McKenna, 2021, 3.03-3.18).

Although adopting a process of reflexivity in which facilitators examine their own positionality, attitudes, assumptions, potential privileges and preferred theoretical lenses may seem self-indulgent, the reflexive process is dialogic.

As McKenna (2021) points out, reflexivity involves acknowledging one' s racialised, gendered, privileged or marginalised self, and accepting that (research) participants might have preconceived expectations about facilitators based on these outward projections of their positionality. She notes that research participants might "bring assumptions into the space before we have even begun" (1.03-1.07). This relates to the facilitation of ensemble pedagogy, and its capacity to impact the conceptualisation of belonging with participants, but carries an additional dimension in terms of the fact that facilitators adopt a range of positions within the dramatic inquiry framework.

Facilitators and teachers in drama education practice take on many roles; teacher-in role (TiR) in dramatic inquiry, joker in Theatre of the Oppressed (ToTO) work are just two examples of roles which are established to maintain learner agency within the ensemble. Both TiR (Ackroyd, 2004; Aitken, 2021) and Joker roles (Duffy & Vettraino, 2010) are bridging devices acting as a connector between the figured worlds of the drama and the ensemble participants.

Participant assumptions may be made in and/or outside the figured worlds built by the ensemble. Research participants in the interviews in Phase 1 spoke about their ensemble experiences as they related to the facilitation of process workshops, the realising of an aesthetic sequence or devised performance, the relationships that developed between the

ensemble and facilitators, and how this relationship impacted their feelings of inclusion or exclusion within the ensemble.

The purpose of this principle, the last to be set out in the thesis, is to open the door wider on self-study, and to circle back to the first principle of practice, identity. This time, as noted, it is the facilitator's identity that we look at. Along with my fellow researchers, practitioners, teachers and facilitators in drama education, I understand the importance of engaging in reflective practices. Initial teacher education (ITE) arts-based programmes stress that deep learning occurs through reflective processes both for teachers and learners. Being critically reflective in practice fosters understanding of how power can be shared with learners, how it might be withheld or used to oppress (Freire,1979; Boal,1995). Through a poststructural lens, conversely, power can be seen as a productive and positive force (Foucault,1979). Looking at our own reflections, even when we consider the criticality of our position, is useful but aspiring to become *reflexive* in our practice is even more important. According to drama educators Christine Hatton and Peter Duffy (2018) however, drama education practitioners and researchers are reluctant to look too closely at their practice:

> When the drama rests on collaborative negotiations of artistic forms and social contexts, researchers can be reticent to interrogate their own role in the work they do, the seductive lure of the hero narrative lurks and licks at the edges of the analysis. Rarely do we tell research stories of failure in the drama research or in the practice of the drama or indeed, of how we make the meanings we do about the drama work under examination. How do our stories shape us as researchers and importantly, make us see particular nuances or patterns in the research work we do? (Duffy & Hatton, 2018, p. 202)

I take up Duffy and Hatton's provocation and consider how I am shaped as a facilitator by my own stories and experiences, and how my drama education practice can be strengthened by looking beyond my own reflection. In this section I examine reflexivity and a reflexive stance as the end goal within a reflective practice continuum.

The development of a thick understanding of social practices, including education and belonging is secured through adopting a process of critical reflection (Benade, 2015; Boal,1995; Dewey, 1910; Edmiston & Towler- Evans, 2022; Freire, 1979; Pässilä et al., 2012; Schon,1983; Vettraino, 2016). Adopting drama and theatre-based education practices such as dramatic inquiry and ToTO can create "reflective spaces both in terms of what promotes and what prevents innovative behaviour and practice" (Pässilä et al, 2015, p.1).

Organisation management researcher Anne Pässilä and her team (2015) employed post- Boalian methods to uncover how "viewing roles and relations 'acted out' in theatre helps to reduce the unconscious acting out of entrenched emotional and political dynamics in practice" in their practice based research into organisational management. Setting up figured worlds alongside real world situations, and facilitating movement between them, as metaxic action, provides the locus for the exploration of innovative behaviour and practice, ensemble pedagogy in action as identified by Pässilä and her team.

Both the action and the metaphor of reflection implies observation and visualisation of self and others through embodied, chronotopic encounters. Despite reflection often assuming a surface conceptualisation, these dramatic encounters are highly complex (Blommaert, 2015) and are served by extending the depth of field. Transformative learning theorist and sociologist Jack Mezirow's (1923-2014) work extends this thinking by agreeing that nothing can change if there is only you looking back at yourself in the mirror. Mezirow (1990) notes that "we are all trapped by our own meaning perspectives, we can never really make interpretations of our experience free of bias" (p.10). Mezirow (1990) advocates for shared discourse as a way of escaping from superficial reflections on practice; dramatic inquiry and ToTO are both structures in which shared discourse is an integral part of the process.

In their discussion focused on the methodological considerations of the use of vignettes as vehicles of reflexivity, qualitative scholars Nicholas Jenkins et al.,(2021) have found that reflexive writing can locate researchers and their research participants within "complex networks and relations of knowledge production. From this perspective, vignettes may be assessed based on their ability to surface authentic feelings, attitudes, prejudices and orientations" (p.977).

Whereas reflection encompasses learning by reflecting on experience, a reflexive approach embraces learning in experience. Reflection is generally characterised as a cognitive activity; practical reflexivity as a dialogic and relational activity. Reflection involves giving order to situations; practical reflexivity means unsettling conventional practices. (Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004: 2 in Reynolds, 2004).

Vignette 6

You might find this difficult to believe but I have been threatened at gunpoint twice in the last ten years. On both occasions strangely enough I could feel it coming, expected it - like the Merchant in the Exception and Rule, not that I had broken anyone's arm or anything like that… nor had those individuals with the gun (they were separate events) been particularly crushed (in servility to me) but I suppose I had hurt them - was about to hurt them …. And they had to stop me. I had challenged their way of living, been judgmental about their values, I had insulted them. Interestingly, I was outnumbered by at least 20:1, but how was it that I could still overpower them? Make them feel overpowered by me?

On both these occasions I was facilitating a process drama which establishes a fictional remote village community whose peaceful, rural way of life is compromised when oppressive, urban government control is exercised as a result of what is perceived by the government to be non-compliance from the community. Several productive tensions drive this drama, the first of which is the mysterious inundation of leaflets/ posters in the village bearing the logo of the (fictitious) Ministry of Information; informing the community that a government bag with unspecified contents has been lost in their vicinity. The government clearly wants this bag returned, offering a "substantial cash reward" (Baldwin & John, 2013, p.175) to anyone who finds it.

Communication with the Ministry of Information in this process drama is effected by teacher-in-role (TiR), in several agreed- or negotiated roles ranging from a low status member of the village community, Gaenor- a gentle, recently bereaved sculptor, to the high status government official Jones, who has clearly got better things to do with her life than travel through treacherous terrain on underdeveloped roads to speak with a community which appears to value rural isolation over urban sophistication.

The gun that was wielded on both occasions was, as mentioned before, a fictional action carried out by a participant in the role of villager. On both occasions, another villager stepped in, spontaneously and undirected, to advise/ urge/ the gun wielder to drop the weapon. Both times this action was justified by reference to the values of the community which had been established at the outset of the process drama. The two communities in this narrative had identified themselves with qualities such as peaceful, self-sufficient, diverse, happy.

Language used to discourage the gun wielders on both occasions made reference to perceptions such as this is not who we are. On both occasions gun wielders did not follow through with their threat, instead they were persuaded by another villager to put their weapon down. On both occasions I was able to signal a move out of role for us all in order to reflect on what had just happened (to the community). The discussions that followed were critically rich as participants considered what, in the fiction, had provoked the gun wielders (one aged 15, the other over 21) to spontaneously react in that way, and what had prompted another two participants to stop them. No one asked where the guns had come from. Although the discussion was unfinished as the process drama continued to develop, it seemed that the majority viewpoint was that the action of pointing a gun at Jones was justified given her deeply offensive and oppressive comments to the community, and also justified was the action of putting the gun down because it was not consistent with the identified values of the community- even in the face of intimidation and threatened violence from the Ministry.

Working within ensemble pedagogy teachers have artist identities and educator identities; this impacts knowledge and perspectives we bring to interactions between ourselves and the ensemble (Strangeways, 2016). Self-reflexivity offers a means of checking how belonging in, and for, the ensemble can be activated.

Memories of being outside

of insider's access

I'm in and out

Unearned privilege-

Currency of advocacy

The Principles of Practice set out here, as suggested in the preface, can be explored separately in ensemble drama education practice. Autoethnographic reflections in each of the principles reflect my developing understanding of critical belonging and its activation in facilitation. Reflection through the written word is valuable but as embodied practice I now provide an example of the principles in action, in a single dramatic inquiry workshop design.

Herekorenga: Dramatic Inquiry Workshop

In this section I outline Phase 3 of the research process. In Phase 3 I evaluate how the six principles of practice, set out in the previous section, activate aspects of belonging in an ensemble context. This exploration is conducted through the design and facilitation of a three-hour dramatic inquiry workshop for high school drama students. The workshop has been designed to set the stage for analysis and interpretation of the significance and implications of this research into the activation of belonging within drama education ensemble pedagogy In Aotearaoa New Zealand. The workshop functions, in addition, as a site of inquiry into self -study (S-STEP) where I can reflect on my own practice, refining the principles of practice through embodied engagement (Forgasz & Mc Donagh, 2017) with the ensemble.

As foregrounded in the methodology chapter, a critical belonging lens is employed here as a framing perspective through which I analyse and interpret the effectiveness of the dramatic inquiry workshop design. Through this lens I draw on critical theory, as critical pedagogy, explored in process drama research (Coleman, 2019) and research into ensemble pedagogy (Neelands, 2009; Kitchen, 2018). Critical belonging is also informed by post humanist thinking as contextualised for education in the work of Karen Barad (2007) Karen Gravett et al. (2021) and Christine Hatton's (2023) analysis of dramatic inquiry frames.

Highlighted in the contextual review, contemporary research in the two fields of study in this project, drama education and the sociology of belonging, contends with a post Covid interconnected landscape and its inherent relational, technological, and ecological concerns. By adopting a critical belonging lens these concerns can be understood in terms of how drama education practice, ensemble pedagogy, responds to the interconnectedness of the human and non-human world. The interconnectedness of the human and non-human world has long been acknowledged in indigenous cultures, and underpins matauranga Māori knowledge systems, integral to contemporary drama education ensemble practice in Aotearoa New Zealand where this study is set.

Three aspects of belonging, central to critical belonging, are incorporated for activation in the drama education ensemble workshop frame. One, the workshop design provides opportunities for participants in the ensemble to feel affective belonging, the sense that as themselves they can feel part of the dramatic process, that their participation and contribution is valued and respected (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Darke et al., 2023) Two, in and out of role, participants of the ensemble can explore how creative boundaries are affirmed through an understanding of the politics of belonging (Halse et al. 2018; Hazou, 2018; Yuval Davis, 2006). Finally, in the workshop design, the ensemble can consider how relationships with place, land, and non-human entities develop as part of an interrelated web through socio-ecological belonging (Barad, 2007). The ephemeral nature of the three-hour dramatic inquiry workshop is justified by Barad's view of intra-action acknowledged as entanglement,

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating (Barad, 2007, p.1).

Ensemble entanglements, even within a short time frame, contribute to the exploration of each of the three aspects of belonging set out above.

In the following sections I provide a rationale, and brief outline, for the dramatic inquiry workshop: Herekorenga. I then move to an analysis and discussion of each of the principles of practice and their application within the workshop frame.

Specifically constructed for drama educators in Aotearoa New Zealand working with students aged 12-18, the structure and design of workshop Herekorenga is intended as a model for the exploration of the principles of practice and the activation of belonging in

dramatic episodic action, with ensemble participants, over the duration of a one-off three-hour dramatic inquiry workshop incorporating a process drama experience. The experience introduces provocations for the development of anti-models for enhanced forum theatre (EFT) Provocations are also established for devised performance assessed for the NCEA Level 1 achievement standard for students aged 15-16: "explore collaborative creation using the concepts of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and akoranga while remaining mindful of tikanga" (https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama).

Herekorenga Design and Rationale

There are four overarching influences on the design and rationale of Herekorenga.

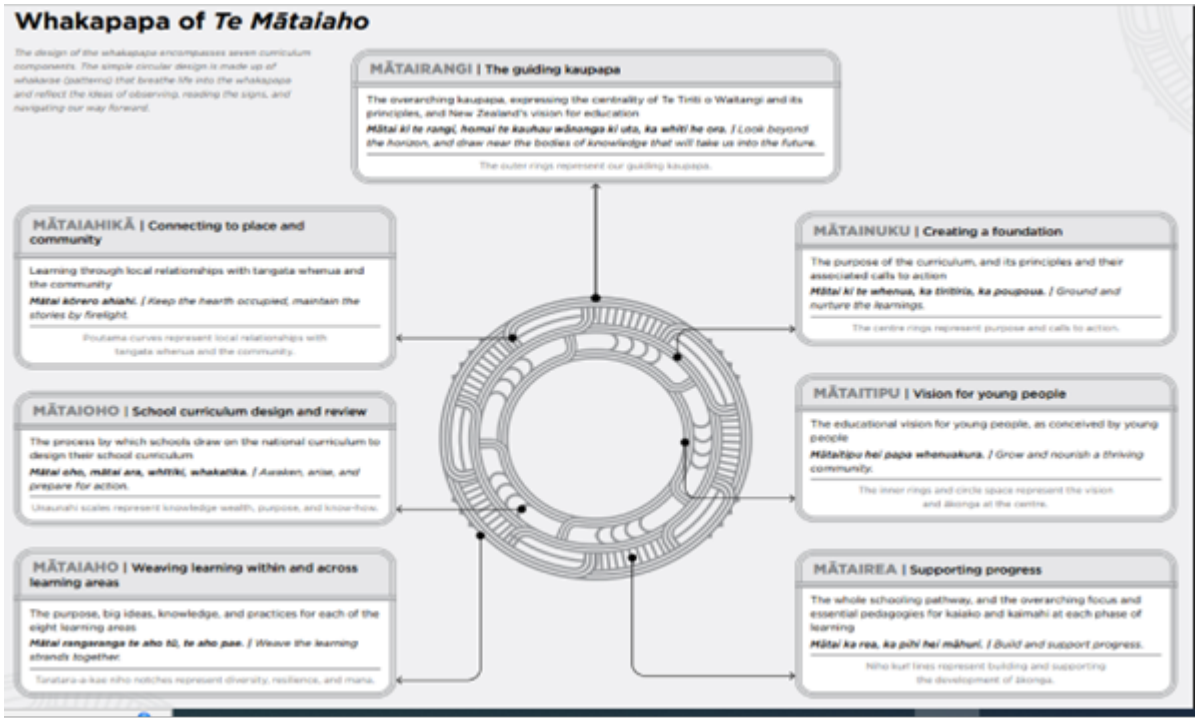
1. Responsivity to Changing Curricula

With the research conducted here in Aotearoa New Zealand the design recognises Mātauranga Māori knowledge by way of incorporating concepts and values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and kaitiakitanga, all of significance to aspects of belonging in te ao Māori. A Māori perspective on the cornerstone principles of relational, inclusive pedagogical practice the design is planned to reflect the situated, relational, spatial and temporal dimensions of belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand. A culturally responsive, holistic approach reflects the changing direction of the refreshed curriculum, Te Mātaiaho. Te Mātaiaho is 'a curriculum designed for all ākonga, to ensure their sense of belonging and ability to flourish through high-quality learning experiences" (https://www.learningcircle.co.nz).

In the refreshed qualifications framework, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) students are to demonstrate conceptual and practical understanding of both manaakitanga and whanaungatanga in devised work, and study of New Zealand Theatre. Manaakitanga is described as "the very essence of respectful caring and protection of others" (Elder, 2020, p.14) with generosity and hospitality being shown to others as paramount. Whanaungatanga relates closely to notions of being and belonging. A third concept, whakapapa, frequently translated as 'genealogy' or 'history', (Rameka,2018)provides a contextual container for manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, for the "close relationship developed and maintained between members of the whanau (family) as a result of working together" (Rameka, 2018, p.372). Whilst Rameka is discussing whakapapa in general

education contexts, the drama education ensemble can be seen as family who work together (Gallagher, 2016; Kitchen, 2021).

The genealogy of Te Mātaiaho is represented in Figure 1 and shows that its essence is one of knowledge weaving. Earlier in this chapter, I highlighted the metaphor of weaving with regard to the essence of creative ensemble collaboration in the six principles of practice.



2. Responsivity to Drama Education Practice

Herekorenga is structured to accommodate both a dramatic inquiry (DI) approach using process drama, and a Theatre of the Oppressed (TotO) approach using activities based on aspects of Image Theatre, Forum Theatre and Rainbow of Desire. Drama education practices in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia regularly include DI and TotO for exploring social, cultural and political issues through the community and education ensemble as a collective (Forgasz & McDonagh, 2019; Hazou, 2023).

Herekorenga workshops begin with a pre-text, a term coined by drama educator Cicely O'Neill, (1995) a starter activity for the drama which contains seeds of possible future action. In process drama a pre-text functions as a hook to engage participants in the creation of a fictional world (O'Neill,1995; Taylor, 2018; Aitken, 2021 Heathcote,1984; Edmiston, 2021).The pre- text may be in the form of a dramatic convention, a story, a sound, an image, a piece of text or an artefact. Its purpose is to help shape dramatic action (Schneider et al.,

2006, p.72). A dramatic tension, introduced by the teacher or facilitator, propels the dramatic action by presenting the fictional community with a problem. Whilst this problem does not necessarily require a resolution, it does require that the community engage in dialogue to respond and determine alternative courses of action (Aitken, 2021; Boal,1979). The pre-text for Herekorenga uses the drama convention of mapping (Neelands and Goode, 2000) to construct a fictional self-sufficient community somewhere in Aotearoa New Zealand celebrating twenty-five years of liberation from an oppressive regime. Dramatic tension is introduced by a group of teenagers, without prior discussion, altering the appearance of the cherished sculpture, commissioned to represent everyone's conception of freedom twenty-five years ago.

The episodic structure of Herekorenga functions through a conventions approach (Bethlenfalvy, 2020; Cziboly et al., 2022; Gregorzewski & O'Connor, 2021; Neelands, 2018) deriving from the work of Dorothy Heathcote (1926-2011). Conventions such as gossip mill, image theatre, spoken thoughts and freeze frames, or tableaux are used in process drama to "puncture the illusion of 'reality' […] and to make the contents of drama strange rather than to make it familiar" (O'Connor, 2010, p. xviii). Drama conventions and the strategy of teacher in role serves as an introduction to creating dramatic action with participants who have limited experience of process drama.

The different conventions used in this design, set out in the graphic, are intended to provide scope during the workshop for the development of drama elements such as role, action time and space. Conventions are selected, in addition, to provide focus on aspects of affective, political and socio ecological belonging. In the Herekorenga workshop design the drama conventions are conceptualised as boundary objects (Star & Griesemer,1989). Boundary objects, as discussed in Chapter 3, are artifacts, ideas and discourses fulfilling a bridging function (Star, 2010; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) between the two knowledge domains of drama education and belonging. The mapping convention used at the start of the workshop is an example of a boundary object; the map functions as a mise en scene, and also as an historic connection to the whenua/land.

3. Metaxis

Herekorenga, as dramatic inquiry, establishes a space where dimensions of belonging might be examined and discussed and drama education (DE) ensembles collaborate in the creation of dramatic action. Firstly, the space includes the facilitator and participants exploring

belonging as themselves, actors. Secondly, belonging can be explored by the facilitator and participants in role(s) determined by the dramatic context, for example performing a role in a developing devised work, or stepping into a role within one of the episodes in a process drama. Movement between these positions has been described as "moments of metaxis" (p.1) in a process drama study by drama educators Trish Wells, Susan Sandretto and Jane Tilson (2023) discussed in Chapter 3. Metaxis can support a space for deep learning, but Wells et al. note that the concept is "elusive" (p.195) and they set out to investigate where the "precursors to metaxis moments" (p.195) might be found. Preparing participants to identify precursors for movement between fictional and real worlds can be helpful in establishing a sense of emotional or cultural safety in the ensemble and this movement is managed in *Herekorenga* by ensuring sufficient opportunities to discuss how signalling in and out of role takes place (Aitken,2021).

Metaxis, a term originating from both Aristotle and Plato's reference to the in between state of existence, in which humans can belong to two different worlds simultaneously has been put to use in Boal's (1995) ToTO describing it as

> …the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds; the image of reality and the reality of the image. The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds; their reality and the image of their reality, which she herself has created (Boal, 1995, p.43).

Images of reality, and reality of images, will be different for each participant. Sharing the images with the ensemble provides opportunities for discussion around diverse views and attitudes held by others. Aotearoa New Zealand's curriculum achievement objectives for example, state that senior secondary school students should "research, analyse and critically evaluate how drama, including New Zealand drama, interprets, records or challenges social and cultural discourse" (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Applied theatre practitioner Warren Linds (1998) has suggested that metaxis, as explored in a "social situation like a drama workshop" (p.74) aids an understanding in the ensemble of self and other, realised through stories told "exclusively through non verbal image[s]" (p.74). In Image theatre (Boal, 1992) nonverbal images, or freeze frames, are dynamised through "mime movements and physical improvisations which are designed to explore particular aspects of social and cultural behaviour " (Burton, 2001, p.242) without the constraints of language. In an interview with Peter Duffy in 2004, Boal suggests that image theatre can more effectively engage young people who find articulating their thoughts a

challenge, either because there are language limitations or their thoughts are not developed (Boal, in Duffy & Vettraino, 2010, p.252). Boal notes

> [I]f you ask them in image, they are going to build their own vocabulary. They don't have to learn a vocabulary because they have to invent a vocabulary. The image is invented. And then, as the image is invented it is more precise because they say exactly what they want to say in image whereas they can only approximate in words" (p. 252)

In image theatre the body is used to form a wide, expressive representation of emotions, ideas and attitudes to real world situations (Cohen Cruz & Schutzman, 2002). In Herekorenga, four stages of image theatre are explored. Ensemble participants are led through these stages starting with exercises which mobilise the body. Encouraging participants to think into their own bodies beyond a word, or text is the intention here.

Mobilising body- making body expressive- theatre as language- theatre as discourse

- Mobilising body- physicalising awareness,
- Making your body expressive- sculpting, engaging in the image exercises
- Theatre as language- constructing the images
- Theatre as discourse- deconstructing the images

In image theatre, particularly in stages 2 onwards, participants have opportunities to "write themselves into the stories of others. A dialogical relationship of self and other is created" (Linds, 1998, p.74). Image theatre in Herekorenga provides a context in which the politics of belonging become visible. Tensions may arise, for example, between individually and collectively (ensemble) held values. Through a physicalisation of values, as in the creation of the sculpture exercise, the ensemble work towards incorporating diverse opinions into an holistic aesthetic.

[insert graphic]

Developing a dialogical relationship through metaxis is beneficial to interaction and group reflections regarding the concepts of belonging in the ensemble workshop. Herekorenga has been designed with opportunities for the ensemble to consider critical belonging in the context of metaxis within image (TotO) based work focused on transitions between "I" to "we" as noted by Glenn Hudak (in Duffy & Vettraino, 2010, p.264).

4. Praxis

Finally, Herekorenga allows space to consider the development of critical ensemble pedagogy, guided by the principles of practice and outlined in the theoretical framework of the study. As an exercise in self-study (S-STEP) the methodological approach undertaken in this research, engaging in this embodied pedagogy (Forgasz & McDonagh, 2017) I deepen my own understanding of facilitation of ensemble practice, development and notions of belonging. In particular, the adoption of a diffractive stance (Barad, 2007) as a cyclical responsivity tool enables me to evaluate my faciliatory practice as an ongoing process.

In the contextual review earlier in this thesis, I have foregrounded the critical process drama research of drama educator Claire Coleman (2019) and Jennifer Kitchen's (2021) feminist pedagogy which repositions the ensemble as a space for dialogic empathy and civic care. Both scholars consider their pedagogy in light of praxis. Building on their work, in this phase of the research I theorise the principles of practice in practical application, considered through the critical lens of belonging. I direct the focus of my practice towards the situated sense of connection with others, and the development of individual and group identity. Spatial theories focused on place-belongingness, give attention to the impact of political belonging on individuals and groups, their sense of safety, disconnection from /attachment to place, and sense of inclusion within national ideologies.

Looking at ensemble practice in Aotearoa New Zealand through the lenses of belonging asks us to consider different senses of being, our own developing relationship with our practice as facilitators and ensemble participants. Rameka (2018) reminds us that "contemporary frames of belonging and being stress increasingly complex and diverse positionings that require negotiation of radically different terrains of assumptions, behaviours, values and beliefs" (p. 367). In traversing these different terrains, I aim to develop a culturally and critically responsive pedagogy which acknowledges Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous knowledges within contemporary ensemble practice in the context of secondary DE, students aged 15-18, I include considerations of processes, histories, space and place, and what we understand by performance. These principles of practice, set out in the previous chapter, are interwoven throughout the narrative framework of the workshop.

Herekorenga: The Narrative

Herekorenga is a dramatic inquiry framework for the exploration of concepts of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, kinship, and reconnection. These concepts, explored in the contextual review and built into the principles of practice, are woven into episodes of the workshop. Exploratory work is undertaken through process drama incorporating dramatic conventions which include context building action through mapping, narrative action through teacher in role, poetic action through flashback and reflective action through conscience alley, image and forum theatre (Neelands & Goode, 2000) . The creative aims include the development of highly visual, physicalised bodywork and spoken word images, putting performer bodies at the centre of the storytelling process. These creative aims, deriving from activities assessed in the national achievement standards Level 1 NCEA qualifications framework for drama students, connect with aspects of belonging by providing a chance for ensemble participants to "to express their identities and heritages, and explore the heritages of others, creating empathy and understanding for the experiences and whakapapa of people from diverse backgrounds" (https://ncea.education.govt.nz/arts/drama). Students reflect on, and articulate, their developing understanding of belonging in and out of role. The workshop provides teachers and facilitators, particularly when working in role and image theatre themselves, a space to consider their own embodied knowledge undertaken as self-study research (McDonogh & Forgasz, 2017; Meskin & van der Walt, 2018).

The narrative of Herekorenga has been influenced by two existing process dramas conceived by two drama education practitioners, Adam Cziboly and Patrice Baldwin. Firstly, drama researcher Adam Cziboly's work explores the facilitation of process drama in online contexts, and subsequently trialled with BA Drama students in Norway during the first lockdown days of Covid 19. The drama is set in a small fictional North-Italian town during the days of the first international lockdowns. The key tension that Cziboly employs to drive the dramatic action concerns the vandalizing of an iconic statue,

> [I]n addition to online crisis management, we need to deal with a disturbing incident: the previous night someone broke lockdown regulations and vandalised the symbolic statue. Out of our role, we discuss in detail how the statue was vandalised. The perpetrator, a student from the city, is caught, and back in our roles again, we decide what to do with her/him. The mayor's office sends her/him a letter, but a week later, the letter is returned with a few words scribbled on it in red: 'Idiots. This is art.' We discuss what we think about this. A few days later in fictitious time, we attend an

> online press conference where the participants take on the role of journalists from different types of media and ask the perpetrator (Teacher-in-Role, then a participant) anything they want. Following the press conference, the participants as journalists write headlines, then one-sentence Facebook comments as responses to these headlines. Finally, the headlines and the comments are transformed into a contemporary poem (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2020, p.646).

Cziboly raises an important question in this process drama concerning what is collectively considered as 'art' in a particular community. I considered my own powerful position as drama teacher in terms of influencing the direction of devised work, for instance with the ensemble.

Principle of Practice 6 guides teachers to adopt a reflexive stance with ensembles, acknowledging that we have the power to create boundaries around what we deem worthy art. This principle is explored in Herekorenga by incorporating a similar key tension to the one used by Cziboly. Built into the narrative of Herekorenga is the discovery of the alteration of the cherished sculpture celebrating 25 years of freedom. This tension is contrived to drive intergenerationally contested views about what enhances, versus what destroys, art works in the community. Principle of Practice 2 which guides teachers to transport participants rather than transform them, is explored in the image theatre activity of sculpture creation.

Secondly, I use the same introductory convention of mapping a fictional community "The Village" from drama educators Patrice Baldwin and Rob John's (2012) process drama "The Lost Bag". As described in the vignette in Principle of Practice 6, the narrative of the Lost Bag depicts a peaceful, self-sustaining fictional community under siege from an oppressive regime who regulate the freedom of the community as punishment for refusing to hand over a bag dropped accidentally by government agents. It is inferred that the community have no knowledge of the bag. Dramatic tension increases as the government continue to accuse the community of hiding the bag. The government instructs rigorous searches be carried out to locate the bag. During the searches members of the community are harmed, their possessions damaged. Teacher notes accompanying this process drama lesson plan guide participants to imagine how these searches could be enacted with slow motion using atmospheric music. Some primary student teacher participants have found this dramatic action triggering, and suggested that it was not a particularly safe activity for their 12- 13 year olds, some of whom had suffered domestic violence. Another student teacher said it produced images that reflected news coming from the invasion of Ukraine. Whilst she could

see the value in the Lost Bag as a social studies and drama exercise, she would not attempt this particular convention in her own classroom. I now use a frame distancing device to build the violent history of the ultimate liberation of the Village into Herekorenga, introducing the idea of conflicting values and attitudes concerning art, rather than physicalising conflict.

Frame distancing the narrative in this way provides opportunity for consideration of the name of the township before it was liberated, and named Herekorenga, the Māori word for freedom. The workshop provides scope to explore Principles of Practice 1 and 3 which focus on nourishing the ensemble culture and identity, and selecting provocations and stories which strengthen relationships and connections within the ensemble.

At the time of writing, Aotearoa New Zealand is in its second year of the implementation of the New Histories Curriculum 2023, which focuses on four key understandings: Māori history is foundational and continuous, colonisation and settlement have been central to Aotearoa's "difficult" (Royal Society Te Aparangi, n.d.) history for over 200 years, and have been shaped by the use of power, relationships and connections between people across boundaries as depicted in the history curriculum guidelines below:

Image from: Aotearoa NZ's Histories

Built into Herekorenga's framework are opportunities to explore each of the Principles of Practice, as seen through a critical belonging lens. As related in the methodology section, the workshops were intended to be run with secondary school students but repeated school closures during the pandemic meant I had to cancel and run workshops

when I could, as part of my practice in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Five workshops were held with participants training to teach students in 12-18 age group. In the next chapter I report the findings from these five workshops. Findings derive from my self-study practice (S-STEP), and from voluntary responses from participants.

Chapter Four: Discussion – The Principles of Practice in Action

This discussion of the principles of practice in action focuses in more detail on the dramatic inquiry workshop, Herekorenga, that was first introduced in Chapter Two and explored in Chapter Three. This workshop was run in five different iterations, all of which will be discussed here. In the first and second workshops primary student teachers met on campus, with 28 participants in each group. In the third iteration eight secondary student teachers met on campus There were also two online iterations of the same workshop attended by secondary student teachers, with four in one group and five in the other. In keeping with the autoehnographic wayfinding introduced in the Introduction, what follows is first an overview of the workshop plan and then a personal reflection that moves in and out of the experience as I shift between immersive and analytical stances.

Herekorenga Workshop Design

To make visible how the six principles of practice were tested in a practical context, I embed the Herekorenga workshop design within this chapter. Rather than functioning as an instructional appendix, the workshop plan is presented here as a pedagogical artefact of practice-through-research demonstrating how the principles are operationalised across time, space, and relational encounter. Its inclusion allows readers to follow the dramaturgical sequencing, facilitation choices, and ensemble interactions that shape the experiences analysed in the discussion. As such, the plan operates as methodological evidence of how belonging can be activated through designed dramatic inquiry.

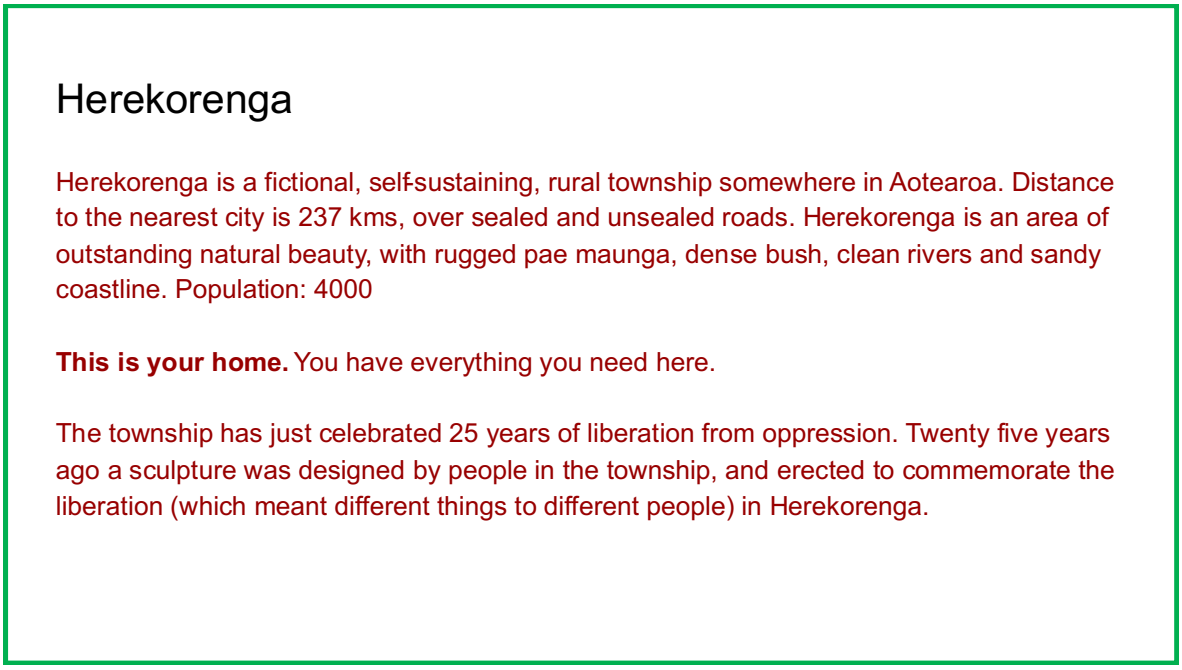
The Herekorenga workshop was conceived as a three-hour dramatic inquiry episodic encounter inviting participants into a collectively imagined world structured around themes of arrival, connection, provocation, co-creation, and reflection. The session was designed to test, refine, and embody the six principles of practice: nourishing identity, cultivating process, igniting story, attending to space and place, embracing performativity, and sustaining reflexivity. Each phase of the workshop intentionally foregrounds one or more principles, while allowing emergent ensemble dynamics to shape the unfolding work.

The Herekorenga workshop is facilitated through a visual slide sequence that functions as a dramaturgical score for the session. Each slide introduces an image, prompt, or provocation that guides ensemble attention, pacing, and imaginative entry into the dramatic world. Rather than serving as instructional content, the slide deck operates as a performative cueing system, a scaffold for collective meaning-making and relational emergence. I include several of the slides below, but have also translated the slide sequence into the narrative walkthrough below in order to make visible the underlying pedagogical architecture of the workshop while preserving the responsive, improvised quality of each episode. The narrative walkthrough likewise illustrates how key moments align with the principles and inform the analytic discussion that follows.

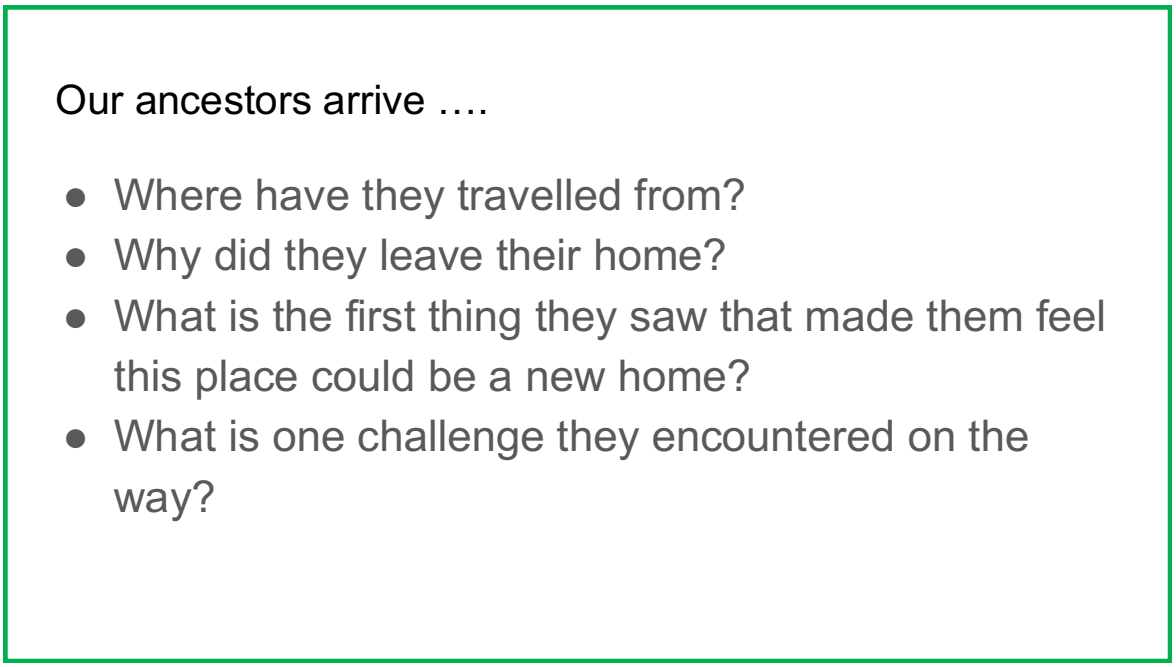
***Episode 1*:**

The workshop opens with a sequence that invites participants to locate themselves, culturally, personally, and imaginatively within the emerging ensemble, asking participants to reflect on the key question: What does home mean to you?. Using the drama convention of mapping this sequence enacts Principle 1: Nourishing Ensemble Identity, foregrounding story-sharing, name, voice, and presence as the foundation for relational belonging. Rather than positioning participants as learners entering a pre-existing group, the ensemble is developed through mutual witnessing and acknowledgement.

***Episode 2*:**



The session then moves into exploratory dramatic play, using image theatre, freeze frames exploring the arrival of ancestors in Herekorenga, building belief in the ongoing activity of the community. This is structured to privilege Principle 2: Transport before transforming, exploring dramatic processes. Here, uncertainty, experimentation, and collective meaning-making are prioritised over product or performance. Participants navigate improvised encounters within the fictional frame, discovering narrative direction through relational responsiveness rather than facilitator instruction. This phase emphasises trust in process as a condition for belonging.



***Episode 3*:**

This ignites the story and narrative tensions, inviting participants to co-author the dramatic world. Creating moving sculptures representing Herekorenga's celebrated freedom from oppression functions as catalysts for ensemble negotiation, encouraging participants to listen, adapt, and build upon each other's offers. Story, as in Principle 3 emerges not as individual expression but as shared construction.

Creative work

Create group “sculptures” which must have all players connected and may be static, or moving images. These sculptures are **abstract** representations of all your different interpretations of freedom.

Share this work in a canon, with or without accompanying sound/music.

Each group has bamboo poles, fabric and masks to use in their sequences.

***Episode 4*:**

This episode highlights Principle 4: Space and Place, as the physical room is reconfigured to signal shifts in imagined location, proximity, and power as participants share their creative sculptures, exploring aspects of Principle 5, how sharing and performance is enacted. Collaborative movement through space becomes a means of exploring relational positioning, inclusion, exclusion, and thresholds of entry into group life.

***Episode 5*:**

Throughout the workshop, I use teacher-in-role facilitation, embodied gesture, voice, and symbolic action. Participants engage not only as themselves but as performative agents shaping and being shaped by the fictional world. In this episode the sculptures are reportedly damaged by young people in the community, participants must choose how they respond to the young adults’ admission of guilt. What should the consequences entail?

Teacher in Role- discussion

Herekorenga's Mayor Joan Armatrading (signifier is a coat, jacket) calls people into a meeting- she needs help: the following may be an improvised speech or you could write it out as text for audio announcement.

"Thank you for coming at such short notice- need your help to decide next steps re this tragedy, **our** beloved art work has been **trashed/ ruined/ defaced/ damaged beyond all recognition/** and we know who has done it… Four Year 11 students from the school. They have admitted it and are currently at home with parent/parents. What shall we do with them?"

***Episode 6*:**

In this episode, the ensemble are made aware of the young people's apology about the perceived damage to the sculpture(s). Principles 5 and 6, reflective witnessing and collective meaning-making are explored here. Participants have the opportunity to articulate personal and ensemble insights, linking affective experience to emerging understandings of belonging. The reflexive dialogue directly informs the discussion undertaken in the rest of the chapter.

The Apology

We are really sorry that we have created bad feelings in Herekorenga and upset you.
We thought that you would appreciate what we added to the sculpture, as art- we did not think you would see it as damage. We actually thought you would be pleased that the sculpture represents all of us now, not just the older people in the town. As you know, last month we went to the city to see the graffiti exhibition with our art teacher and we learned lots about the power of this art form to raise awareness. We are so happy to live freely here in Herekorenga and wanted to celebrate that. We thought we were adding value, not being destructive. We are sorry you don't like what we have done.

Personal Reflections on Herekorenga Workshop

We gather outside the Drama studio at the university, ready to experience a three-hour dramatic inquiry session. I make a point of entering the drama space at the same as the students, to share that moment of crossing the threshold. From the daybright outdoors we move into the dark void of the studio together. I ask them to notice their physical reactions as they enter this space, their heart beats, their breath. There is always some nervous laughter from a few of the Primary participants, always some ribald comments about themselves as "drama queens". A mixture of drama experiences, some who move with others to watch quietly at the back, where the greying black curtains hang hiding the mirrors. Others join with those relishing opportunities to perform in what looks to be the 'front' of this chairless, deskless space. In the same week these students have experienced a three-hour dance education workshop. They have some expectations that whatever happens in this space is likely to happen to their physical bodies. Clearly not everyone will belong to the confident performer group. Belonging is situated. It will mean different things to each of us in this drama space. These primary preservice teachers are learning to plan and teach all curriculum subjects with students aged 12-13. Drama is not a compulsory curriculum subject for students aged 12-13 in Aotearoa New Zealand. If participants can see educational value in a dramatic inquiry workshop, they will be more likely to offer their students opportunities to learn in drama frameworks.

In a separate workshop with the secondary ITE students it's a different story. Mostly theatre graduates, these students are preparing to plan and teach drama lessons to senior high school students aged 15-18. There are only 8 participants in this workshop and they are all enthusiastic about performing. It is likely that the drama classes these students will be teaching will be smaller than the core subject classes, given Drama is an optional subject in secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Herekorenga workshop is intended as a model for the students to deliver in their own classrooms.

I introduce myself, with a pepeha, so the students discover I am originally from Wales and I now live in Taranaki. In both of the primary workshops two or three students have also come from Taranaki, or have relatives from Wales, and ripples of connection begin.

I start all the workshop sessions (primary and secondary) by letting participants know that drama space should feel safe for us all, enacting Principle of Practice 1. In keeping with the principle, the space should feel physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually safe, and a place where our differences can be respected, our contribution valued and we can feel a

sense of belonging. I explain that we are not putting on a performance. There are some disappointed faces, others show relief.

Instead, I say, we are going to use elements from theatre and drama like role and action, space and symbol to create a fictional community space. A space where we can safely collaborate as an ensemble on the building of a fictional township. In this township we will face fictional challenges which may be mirrored in the real world. Through a dramatic frame we will think about some of the same situations we might face as individuals, as a society and as humanity (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2020). The slide is changed and participants are invited to read.

As described earlier, the process begins with mapping (Neelands & Goode, 2000; Baldwin & John, 2012) the area in and around *Herekorenga.* The mapping activity in on campus workshops described makes use of long strips of brown paper placed in the shape of a cross on the floor of the studio. This shape allows for maximum conversation while players are making their contributions and maximum access to the paper, or whatever material is being used. The short description of *Herekorenga* is considered and players are invited to add natural features of the landscape. The image below shows man-made structures that have been added after the natural features have been discussed.

During this process participants chat informally with one another, some ask questions about the activity, but I leave these questions deliberately unanswered, it feels important to maintain a sense of discovery along with the participants. Providing too much information means that the mapping convention becomes a monologic enactment or simply a re-enactment of the image provided. The ensemble form individual pictures in their minds as the text is interpreted and once the mapping begins, as participants move into the mapping space, it's important to allow for the picture to start becoming collectively shared. While participants are adding natural features to the map I muse about what a community might value about this landscape. I ask what we value about the environment, how we might look after the things we care about in this community.

Starting the Fiction

I ask participants: What do YOU think a community would value about this place - what would WE value about this place? How do we look after the things we care about in this landscape? I leave these wonderings in the air for inspiration, curiosity.

The Physical Landscape

Starting the ensemble mapping activity with depictions of the physical land is significant. Pepeha[4] in Aotearoa New Zealand start with an acknowledgement of the whēnua: the land- the mountains and the rivers, formed before any of us and powerful shapers of who we are and who we become. In Māori world view "land gives birth to all things including humankind and provides the physical and spiritual basis for life. Papatūānuku, the land, is a powerful mother earth figure who gives many blessings to her children" (Royal, n.d. Environment Guide)

Beginning the *Herekorenga* workshops with explorations of a fictional landscape allows for critical readings of relationships we might develop with the land, and a collective understanding of the notion of socio- ecological belonging. This intimately connects to both my first Principle of identity and my fourth Principle of place.

In terms of belonging, Māori relate to land and landscape through whakapapa, tipuna and marae[LH74] .

> Landforms, like mountains and coastal spits, trigger tribal stories and memories of ancestral feats, harvest areas and renowned tipuna. Some are associated with past battle sites and urupa. Even where there has been marked change in the landscape through the influence of the built environment, remnant landscapes can trigger memories of what was once the papakainga (Environment Guide, n.d.).

Indigenous relationships with land and landscape might be somewhat different from tangata tiriti:

> non Māori recognises that Aotearoa New Zealand is also our home, that we feel a sense of belonging here- alongside Māori /tangata whenua . But it is also a reminder that, while this is home, non-Māori are not indigenous [...] our roots are not the same as Māori or as deeply set in time and in the land. It was not our ancestors who first explored, named and learnt how to live in this place. We are not of that unique culture that developed as a result (Bell, 2024, p.10).

As applied theatre practitioner Sally Mackey (2002) points out in her writings describing drama students' projects in Cornwall, "Theoretically, landscape need not be beautiful. Culturally, we assume it is" (p.13). My own assumptions have become embedded in the first

slide for the participants to begin mapping: “Herekorenga is an area of outstanding natural beauty”. In this statement I present the space in a particular way. “In education, what’s imposed on students then contributes towards producing the power relations” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 51).

Reflecting on Principle of Practice 6 – adopting a reflexive stance – I can see I will need to change the slide and remove the description of the landscape. Not everyone’s positive relationship with landscape is considered here. I am reminded that some of our students have been unable to attend this week on campus because of severe flooding on the East Coast of Aotearoa and the widespread destruction of many homes and businesses. Sally Mackey’s comment is a salient reminder about how different experiences of belonging in place and space Principle of Practice 4 might emerge, “For everyone who is comfortable in their place there is someone whose place is disrupted, maybe even torn apart” (TedXTalks, 2017). Climate changes impact Aotearoa New Zealand creating extreme weather conditions mean that some workshop participants may have a very different relationship, or experience with the land.

According to (Royal, n.d. in Environment Guide) there is no sense of ownership when the land is your ancestor. As we work with the map, I notice there is no talk of boundaries in terms of where the forest ends and the coastline begins. The limitations, the boundaries, are the paper for some participants, despite encouragement to see beyond the paper and utilise the floor space outside it. There is more thinking and work to be done to enact Principle 4 its invitation to relate to the space in a dynamic way and use what is present to make meaning together.

What is Home?

Herekorenga is our home. After we have considered the natural features of the land, we turn our attention to these aspects of Herekorenga that we have constructed: homes, workplaces. Schools and shops spring up, lots of shops- reflecting more urban than rural settings. These places and spaces are mapped, possibly they are named. We talk about how their names came to be in informal conversation. We begin to consider who we might be, as individuals within the collective, and as a collective. Sticky notes are placed where we live - these notes indicate names, ages, perhaps a profession or job. Places are specially constructed: landscape isn’t specially constructed but our relationships to it are most certainly constructed and relate to the socio-cultural currency the landscape works with.

> A special place is somewhere where you are at liberty to do a number of things: question; be 'under the same orders' as others; be 'emotionally vulnerable'; feel 'in limbo'; feel secure; develop and share values; recall an idealistic past; travel inside yourself; be at peace; recharge. The special place may be physically and aesthetically attractive: somewhere you want to see because it pleases your senses and when there, you are at ease (Mackey, 2002, p.13).

Intertwined with this consideration of space and place, I draw on Principle 1 with its focus on the complexities of identity. Participants have been asked to imagine themselves as twenty-one-year-old adults. This is one of the directions so that the community can make legitimate decision when required, using a collective voice and mirroring the responsibilities of adults as participatory citizens in the real world. We begin to talk about our favourite places here in Herekorenga. Here we offer an opportunity to share the beginnings of what ultimately become values. What do we cherish, what is a taonga, in Herekorenga? Do these boundary objects impact our sense of belonging?

Sometimes I will start, as facilitator, by connecting to a land feature that another player has contributed, using my role to guide the direction of the narrative in keeping with Principle of Practice 6. If I am working with teenagers who are challenged by the conventions, I will connect with a land feature which has been contributed by a participant who finds engagement challenging in this space. My fictional story will attempt to affirm their contribution and support its capacity to hold value through commentary. Bowell and Heap remind us "process drama demonstrates itself as a genre of theatre in which the human need and desire to make symbolic representations of life experiences, explore them, and comment upon them are central" (2005, p.60). The fictional life experiences in this drama space encompass intergenerational relationships (in role) which Wood and Black (2018) identify as "significant in our understandings of young people's citizenship and belonging. An intergenerational focus can show how adults can regulate and control the citizenship actions and sense of belonging of young people" (p.174).

Citing Baker (2015), Wood and Black make clear that young people are vital participants in the making of a creative local community, in spaces where graffiti writers for example might find themselves trapped between conflicting attitudes to their art as art or "art or vandalism, professional or amateur, artist or criminal, and legitimate or illegitimate citizens'' (p. 997).

Once a rough mapping of Herekorenga has been initiated, the people and their livelihoods established, an exploration of values in the location is carried out. The people are celebrating 25 years of freedom, but the freedom is not yet defined, nor is it one specific idea of freedom- it's whatever freedom means to each of the participants in the ensemble, including the facilitator, in role. The physical landscape is explored through chronotopes, embodied stories (Principle of Practice 3 - Stories and provocations.) Chronotopes (Bakhtin,1979) are interconnected temporal and spatial elements which can help shape a story, narrative. Imagined memories of how our ancestors arrived in Herekorenga are considered and enacted in image theatre exercises as we connect to Principle of Practice 3 and the igniting power of story. The abstract notion of freedom is explored through the convention of choral movement, statues and captioning. This abstraction is created in groups and shared with the town. It provides a safe frame of distanced enactment as an abstract of freedom. Students attending the on-campus sessions are familiar with the connotations that link the notion of freedom to anti-vaccination activism. The on-campus workshops took place after Aotearoa New Zealand's vaccination programme had started to roll out. Two primary participants in one workshop shared with me that the school where they were on placement was near the Beehive, Aotearoa New Zealand's parliament, where several anti-vaccination activists had gathered in protest against the vaccine mandates. This participant was concerned that exploring the concept of freedom with primary aged students 12-13 might trigger some difficult feelings/conversations about attitudes to vaccination. Mandatory vaccination against Covid -19 for certain professions (teaching) in Aotearoa New Zealand had created some tensions in local communities with the notion of freedom in some instances being seen as a personal choice between accepting or refusing vaccination - and in some cases losing jobs as an outcome. National demonstrations took place, polarising viewpoints. Marches showed banners depicting anti-government sentiment, and speeches were delivered with anti-government rhetoric, creating division and feelings of exclusion, inequity. By establishing that the sculptures should be a choral abstraction, we discuss how working together with different physical responses creates a safe framework for participants, the sculpture as boundary object, invested with nuances of freedom that could be honoured as aesthetic without making value judgements about diverse attitudes espoused in the group.

In informal discussion after the artwork images are shared, I ask the ensemble to reflect on how abstraction helped or hindered engagement in the exploration of the concept of freedom. The participant who had raised the potential issues reported feeling that their group discussed freedom without contention. They report that the required abstracted aesthetic

enabled an (easier) discussion to take place. These 'artworks' are then used as the central symbol of freedom for Herekorenga, with participants negotiating as an ensemble where their artwork would have originally been physically placed 25 years ago in the township, and this is subsequently recorded on the collective map.

In the workshops we allow time for the sharing and appreciation of the living statues, artworks and discussion of the concept of freedom, and how it is represented in these spaces. This enacts Principle of Practice 2 with its emphasis on travelling with the ensemble. Groups present their moving sculptures in canon around the studio, instrumental tracks play over the canon. Several participants express their admiration for the presentation surprised by the pleasure they get from working creatively together. After the canon, out of role we focus discussion on how freedom is enacted as an established value in the community.

The key tension is then introduced which acts as a challenge to several values in the community, news is received (delivered to the community through Teacher in Role (TiR)) that the artwork has been seriously damaged. TiRs deliberately chosen emotive language emphasises a specific opinion held by an older adult (with some authority) in the community.

I don't know if any of you saw the extensive damage to the artwork before I did this morning. I got a call at 6am and went straight down to look for myself… it's with a very heavy heart that I tell you it's touch and go as to whether this structure can ever be restored. Basically it's ruined- certainly doesn't say freedom to me anymore. It's mutilated, broken, wrecked. We know who is responsible. Four students from Year 11. They are currently at home with their families awaiting the result of this meeting. The artwork (or what is left of it) has been removed to a place where we can get advice on its repair. and some idea of the cost the repair will incur.

I have no idea how to proceed with this. I am hoping we can consider together what we do / how we can move forward with this. It certainly -to me at least- feels like a grave injustice has been dealt to us all. The artwork represents all of us, it's hard to understand why the kids would do this to our community. [Herekorenga Workshop Session plan- Mayoral address TiR]

In small groups (4-5) we take ten minutes to think about what should happen next - what we want to say to the young people who have damaged the artwork, what we want to

hear from the young people in turn. At this point in the drama I question again what power, if any, the drama space is exerting on our decision making. In the on campus workshops we were in a large studio space on the university campus. Participants make suggestions such

- as ask the young people to pay for the damage
- ask the young people to repair the artwork
- demand a public apology from them
- keep them at home, no freedom until there is a resolution.

In the primary teacher workshops, two participants suggest that the artworks don't need to be restored. The relationships with the young adults do. This prompts a discussion about how the artwork is representative of all the community in Herekorenga. In on campus workshops suggestions are subsequently made by participants that it would be helpful to meet with the young people. I make a decision to explore the drama convention of Conscience Alley (rather than hot seating) as I am keen to understand the spatial impact of that convention (Principles of Practice 2 and 4).

Two lines are set up and 4 'volunteer' pre-service teachers in role as young people walk through the adult commentary. It becomes clear that this convention, used in this way (the pre service teachers generally repeating comments to the young adults that communicated disappointment, or failure of respect for artworks) perpetuated normative school frames (Kitchen, 2015) in which discipline was highly prized and largely meted out to the young people. The artwork becomes invested as an "immovable object of 'high culture' to be lived up to, rather than played with" (Kitchen, 2015, p.99).

The powerful cultural capital operating in the space may prevent affective belonging for everyone, yet it does highlight *how* space and ensemble (Principle 6) are working together. Once identified, there is opportunity for reflection and for imagining how issues of power, an aspect of critical belonging, in terms of the politics of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006) might be resolved.

After Conscience Alley, the apology from the young adults is projected on the studio screen to the Herekorenga adults. This apology is text based and could be delivered in alternative ways such as Facilitator in Role as one of the young people making a public statement. I was keen to examine how the large expanse of space between the players and the studio screen operated on our critical reading of belonging and how players *felt* reading the apology in the very silent space.

Participants report feeling they had made unfounded assumptions about the young adults (Principle 6). Several expressed that there should have been opportunities for the young people to talk with the adults before "adding" to the artwork. In both workshops questions about how we value art are raised. In particular, we note that this pedagogic space [Principle 4] allows us to identify entrenched forms of cultural capital "as those who possess the capital either explicitly or implicitly defend its value" (Claussen and Osborne, 2013, p.59). Several participants now suggest it is the relationship between the adults and the teenagers which needs to be restored rather than restoring the art work. Entrenched attitudes, according to several participants, may serve to drive a wedge between the young adults and the older members of the community.

There are not enough participants in the secondary student teachers workshop to run Conscience Alley. For this I am grateful. Reflecting, as self-study, on my practice with Conscience Alley I feel that the convention lacks integrity, and criticality. None of the aspects of belonging can be sufficiently identified. It feels like I have overtly manipulated and influenced the responses from the two lines (Coleman, 2019). There is a tangible lack of conviction amongst participants, some half-heartedly repeat the comment made by the person next to them in the line.

- you're a disgrace, a let down
- why have you done this?
- you need to pay for the repairs

TiR's deficit language which emphasises destruction, and damage has been repurposed in this convention. I resolve to find another way, in future workshops, of bringing the teenagers and the adults together in dialogue to move through the issue. Enhanced Forum Theatre provides an effective strategy.

For the secondary students we devise an anti-model for enhanced forum theatre session (EFT) EFT (Burton, 2005) provides an opportunity for participants to explore through three scenes built from image theatre the alternative actions the young people could have taken with the artwork. The complex aspects of belonging; affective, political and socio ecological belonging are considered "through engagement with posthuman and sociomaterial sensibilities" (Gravett et al.2023, p.1972). In this way we are focused on interrogating our relationship with one another, with art works, and with the environment. As such, "we contemplate how belonging might be understood within sociomaterial configurations which

allow us to connect to spaces, things and each other where we otherwise would not" (Gravett et al., 2023, p.1972).

I now turn my attention to a summary observation of each of the principles of practice in action, as applied in the Herekorenga design workshops. As foregrounded in the methodology chapter these observations of my own practice have been undertaken as an S-STEP approach, from a researcher-teacher stance.

Principle 1 Nourish Identity Within Ensemble

The workshop begins by building trust between the facilitator and the participants.

Showing manaakitanga across the ensemble, acknowledging and respecting diversity in the workshop. Some participants as themselves, out of role, are anxious, others are confident in the drama space. My priority as facilitator is to ensure participants feel safe physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually in the workshop space before any activities commence. This is effected through a process of using clear signalling (Heathcote, 1979; O'Neill, 1984) that we will be moving into a fictional space of our own making, with freedom to self select roles. Cultural connections are strengthened by way of the process starting in the same way as a pepeha, acknowledging the land, whenua comes first, our ancestors paving the way for us. We draw the natural landscape on the map first. Considering the values that emerge from our arrival in Herekorenga, and our relationship to the whenua we nourish our community with focusing on the positive connection to our environment and relationships, our freedom.

Principle 2: Transport Before You Transform:

Moving with the ensemble, as Teacher in Role (TiR) through the drama supports a sense of journeying, of wayfinding. In the workshops there is no fixed destination , each iteration is unique to the ensemble present. This aligns with belonging as situated (Gravett et al, 2021) and with Hatton's (2003) idea of boundary crossing, "travelling to landscapes that are both familiar and unfamiliar" (p.154) for the development of ensemble and its capacity to collaborate. Design of the workshop allows for an exploration of whanaungatanga, of interrogating, building relationships within the fiction. Self selection of role, engagement in the physical embodied exercises of the journey to Herekorenga depicted in (moving) image theatre and the creation of the abstracted sculpture provide participants with agency and choice regarding creative practice.

Principle 3: Ensemble as Storytellers

Exploring the fictional history of Herekorenga in the initial image theatre exercise provides a safe, frame distanced parallel to Aotearoa New Zealand's history. Stories emerge from the connections made with the journey to Herekorenga, and throughout exercises in which roles are developed and attitudes performed.The creation of the kinetic sculpture provides participants with opportunities to connect with each other through their personal interpretations of freedom and storying these into a collaborative piece of art work, making decisions together about where this art work should stand on the land. Effective drama is created when stories are told with respect and this includes respect for each other, the land and the story itself (NZQA, 2025).Our mapping of Herekorenga may tell many stories about connection with the landscape, but it's not just one story. The use of the mapping convention with the ensemble is intended as a means of generating a collective voice about this fictional landscape, but I am reminded as facilitator that we should consider "whose version of unified place is being represented" (Hazou & Cain, in Shaw, 2021, p.133). We acknowledge each self within the ensemble has a unique connection with the landscape, (Principle 1- Identity) as pre-service teachers and their facilitator outside the drama, and in adopting a role in the fictional space inside the drama. These two ensemble positions, the outsider and the insider, offer opportunities to consider connections to landscape from different perspectives. In the movement between these two worlds, in and out of the drama, the ensemble engages in a process of metaxis. (Aitken, 2021; Boal,1979; Linds & Vettraino, 2015).

Principle 4 Spaces and Places to Call Home

The studio space is set up for the creation of a map in the first instance. The ensemble need to be able to physically access the map which is on the floor of the studio. Members of the ensemble who are unable to sit on the floor should be given alternative opportunities to contribute to the map. Starting with the imagined physical features of *Herekorenga* acknowledges a post-human perspective of our symbiotic, complex relationships with/to the physical environment and landform, towards a systemic decentring of the human (Gravett et al., 2021). Principle 4 is concerned with facilitating the exploration of interconnectedness of identity and the areas 'to which one belongs" (Moriarty, in Shaw, 2021, p.157). For Maori, the concept of kainga, a home, can mean a range of places " a village, a fortified area, the place of the community, a whare, a place of residence" (p.157). Kainga is where a person's

ancestors have lived and died, and where their relatives perhaps still live. According to Moriarty (in Shaw, 2021) even though many people move away to cities from marae, kainga will always provide an important reminder

> Once I return to the kainga, see Kapiti Island, read the place names and arrive at my marae I am reminded of my tupuna, their feats, their lives, their knowledge and their stories- and that makes me feel that I belong, which is where my whanau, hapu and iwi belong [...]The notion of kainga is inseparable from the mountains ascended, the waterways swum, the forests walked, the gardens dug, the places named and the homes occupied by our tupuna (p.157).

Dramatic sequencing of ancestors' journeying through challenging terrain to Herekorenga is designed for consideration about the way we speak about our relationships to space and place, whether or not we can call these places home.

Principle 5 Performativity and Performance

The ensemble move in and out of the fiction to reflect- as- themselves and also in role as members of the Herekorenga community. This is consistent with belonging explored as intra-action (Barad, 2007). Gravett et al (2023) liken this movement in and out of belonging to a "flickering" (p.1973). Depending on the convention used in the workshop, participants may find a sense of connection or disconnection to the ensemble. Hearing the news about the damaged sculpture from the point of view of the adults in the town for example is different from taking on a role as one of the perpetrators of the damage in Conscience Alley. Gravett et al. 2023 suggest

> we think about belonging as intermittent flares of belonging, as something that is discontinuous, partial, multiple. There is a need then to handle belonging with care, to recognise its associated elements of exclusion, boundedness, to use it cautiously and to be open to new ways of understanding this nuanced concept" (p.1973).

Principle 6: Be Reflexive: A Teacher's Superpower

Karen Barad (2007) argues that groups, in this case ensembles, experience belonging not as an individual internal quality but as produced through entanglements, or relationships. To one another, to the non-human world, seen in the abstraction of the sculpture for instance. Adopting a reflexive stance in the workshop is evidenced by engaging with the participants

by means of Teacher in Role and across more than one role, as a nurse, a member of the Herekorenga community and as Mayor, in a leadership role. These stances provide participants with an opportunity to examine how they respond differently to both of these roles, in dramatic conventions such as conversational gossip mill and the more formal retelling of the strong language used by the Mayor by relating the information to another member of the community(TiR) These entanglements create further opportunities to explore different aspects of belonging as patterns "we can understand diffraction patterns – as patterns of difference that make a difference – to be the fundamental constituents that make up the world" (Barad, 2007, p.72).

Online workshops

Two workshops were conducted online, through a two hour zoom session with the secondary student teachers. Numbers were small. There were five students in one group, four in the other. Student teachers enrolled in the education programme are based across Aotearoa New Zealand; curriculum programmes must provide access for all students which means running drama curriculum sessions online. For an embodied practice, learning online is significantly compromised. Both workshops provided participants with little more than an outline of the dramatic inquiry workshop. The initial pre-text, mapping Herekorenga was tackled by using a digital application. Students who felt digitally confident did most of the sketching of landmarks but not everyone was able to contribute to this. Building belief was very challenging; whilst we could signal our movement in an out of role by changing profile on the zoom frames, this was clumsy and interrupted the dramatic flow. Many of the drama conventions such as gossip mill could not be successfully activated; to work well there needs to be complicité within the group, and a sense of presence we simply could not get to. For the most part of the session I was demonstrating how the dramatic inquiry could be run in classrooms. In terms of application of the principles of practice, these were presented descriptively as afterthoughts; they were meaningless without being experienced in an embodied session.

Delivering drama programmes online is unsatisfactory. To this end our ITE delivery now incorporates at least one opportunity for drama students to attend on campus session.

Conclusion

For each of these workshop iterations, belonging is situated. Differently sized groups, diverse drama and theatre experience, motivation to participate, all impact participant experience of a sense of belonging, the politics of belonging and socio ecological belonging. In the live workshop sessions, snapshots of the relational, spatial and temporal aspects of belonging became visible. A single workshop design has not generated sufficient evidence for any substantial changes to be made to practice, although it has provided opportunities to see where changes could be made.

Conclusion

Kia tōwhakamuri te haere whakamua

I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past

The whakataukī that opens this Conclusion points, from a Māori perspective, to the interconnectedness of time, acknowledging that the past plays a key role in influencing the present and the future. As a drama educator with a background shaped by Western pedagogical traditions, I recognise that some of the practices I first brought into the ensemble space were grounded in Eurocentric assumptions about drama education and its processes. Throughout the wayfinding journey of this research, from the past to the present, as teacher and researcher in my new home, Aotearoa, I have seen the need for my practice to be unsettled and re-imagined in ways that align with mātauranga Māori. I have endeavoured to step carefully and respectfully through this research landscape. I am travelling in closer dialogue with, and in respect of, indigenous ways of knowing, into a future committed to ongoing listening and, learning. Navigating the terrain of ensemble pedagogy within the unique Aotearoa New Zealand context, through the lens of critical belonging, has enabled a revitalised perspective. It has challenged and expanded my thinking, highlighting new possibilities for the way I perceive, enact and share my practice. This Conclusion begins by returning to my original research questions and then turns to my original contribution to knowledge, acknowledging limitations but also mapping out the potential for future investigation and dynamic practice.

My research uses a methodological framework that combines creative, reflexive autoethnographic inquiry combined with a self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP). In this framework I interrogate my own pedagogical assumptions, and map how my practice fosters, or fractures, belonging. I return now to the three questions, central to both my practice as a drama teacher educator and researcher, that underpin this research project.

- How do sociological theories of belonging support and enhance understandings of high school ensemble pedagogy, its development and current practices in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- How can a sense of belonging, an understanding of the politics of belonging and socio-ecological belonging be explored and facilitated in drama education ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand?

- How has my own practice changed in response to this research and how may the principles of practice emerging from this research inform other practitioners?

Throughout my discussion I have been alert to the ways in which sociological theories of belonging support and enhance understandings of high school ensemble pedagogy and practice. Interconnectedness is crucial to my approach. Drawing on sociological theories that position belonging in school contexts as affective (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), political (Kidman, 2012) and socio-ecologically based (Allen et al., 2016) I offer the term critical belonging, a vital and responsive lens through which all three aspects of belonging can be considered under. Teachers such as myself and the Initial Teacher Education students who tested my theories in workshops are uniquely placed to explore the complexities of critical belonging with their students. Through this journey I have been affirmed in my knowledge that ensemble pedagogy can be framed as a context for cultivating connection and collaboration.

Epistemological and ontological understandings of both fields — ensemble pedagogy and the sociology of belonging — are interrogated through embodied practice. Belonging is a "situated, embodied concept, fluid and sociomaterially constituted" (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2022, p.1393). The facilitation of ensemble pedagogy, as a creative drama education practice, is evolutionary, embodied and reflexive (Forgasz, 2014) and contingent on sociomaterial understandings. Understanding the nuanced entanglement of human bodies with one another and the more- than human world as situated, relationally, spatially and temporally inflected informs drama education practice. Positioning ensemble pedagogy and belonging in an epistemic frame of interconnectedness has revealed gaps where practice falls short of developing effective connections with each other and with the more- than-human world.

These theories are foundational to my ensemble pedagogy and practice. I position the ensemble as a site not only for artistic collaboration, but as a relational space in which students negotiate identity and inclusion with each other and their teachers. This emphasis on creating physically, culturally, emotionally and spiritually safe places underpinned by these theories fits well with my developing ensemble processes that privilege trust and collective, creative risk taking.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, political and socio ecological theories of belonging throw light on marginalising, monocultural practices in education. Māori understandings of belonging, grounded in a deep affinity with the land, and concepts of whakapapa, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga provide a more reciprocal conception of

ensemble pedagogy, one which contests the celebration of the individual. My integration of belonging theory with ensemble practice enables a social space in which students can flourish (Brown, 2025).

My second research question directs attention to the way critical belonging is facilitated through the articulation of six principles of drama education practice which I created to activate belonging in high school ensembles in Aotearoa New Zealand. Here critical belonging is understood as more than an affective, inclusive practice but as a process that interrogates power, identity, spatial and cultural contexts. Critical belonging invites and embraces diversity, fostering spaces for ensemble participants to experience presence, agency and connection.

These six principles and their imperatives nourish identity, transport before transforming, ignite story, claim space, honour presence and practise reflexivity work as orientations rather than procedures. They are offered, as noted in the introduction to Chapter 3, as good advice for teachers rather than rules. The principles are not universally applicable; they are situated, and work in relationship with the specific cultural and historical context of teaching within a bi-cultural education system. Each ensemble we teach is different. With each ensemble, our facilitation will make a difference. Our facilitation has the power to affirm identity and strengthen collaboration, participation, and performance.

Reflecting on my own journey, this research has reinforced that ongoing self-study is essential to ensemble pedagogy, with corresponding adjustments and refinements to my practice. I have become acutely aware that working with mainstream or marginalised communities of young people requires much more than a superficial level of inclusion. This research has also compelled me to reconsider how I create ensemble spaces which are relevant and connecting for Pacific ākonga and contexts and in which diverse individuals can feel safe, accepted, respected and included. Throughout the course of this research, significant changes to curriculum policy have occurred in tangent with successive governments. There have been developments in the management of national assessment which in turn have impacted pedagogical content knowledge in drama. As a teacher educator working with preservice drama teachers in a tertiary setting, my practice responds to these changes by acknowledging and embedding "[p]acific knowledges, languages, cultures and identities" as a key element of ensemble pedagogy (Ministry of Education,n.d.).

A key objective of my study, as S-STEP, has been to scrutinise my own facilitation processes. The application of the six principles of practice within the Herekorenga workshop

frame has led to findings that further inform and refine my facilitation. The workshops affirmed that both ensemble pedagogy and the experiences of belonging are fundamentally embodied. Within the workshop this was evident in the ways participants engaged with role, process and space through movement, gesture and image making.

Young people find themselves in a number of situations where their developing identities, relationships and connectedness, all integral to belonging, may be challenged by hegemonic educational discourses (Allen et al.,2021; Gallagher & Riviere, 2007). School belonging can manifest as spatially and temporally precarious (Wood & Black, 2014). Through this research I identify where and when creative collaborative work is predicated on precarity, how limitations of time, space or support for the ensemble can reproduce or expose the precarity of belonging in young people's lives. By engaging in dialogue with research participants with experience of ensemble practices, I have identified opportunities for young people to navigate their experiences of belonging through creative work.

The dramatic inquiry workshop structure supported participants to navigate complex personal and social issues. What emerged was a preoccupation with the importance of freedom, the value we ascribe in communities to art making, and our care of the land. These physicalised interactions foregrounded the body as a generative site of aesthetic knowing (Nguyen & Larsen, 2015; Linds, 2016) and developing perceptions of belonging and othering.

A key learning from the application of the principles in a workshop context is that ensemble pedagogy supports the action of metaxis, the embodied movement between two worlds: the present real world of the ensemble participant and the fictional world of the dramatic action. Underpinning all the principles of practice, metaxis offers facilitators a unique way to explore these two worlds simultaneously with the ensemble. Belonging can be individually felt, but the politics of belonging is also evident once participants step into different roles in the fictional community. Creative work can establish boundaries of belonging which enact both inclusion and exclusion, opening participants' understanding of the political and social structures which serve to privilege or marginalise.

This original transdisciplinary research offers a new lens, critical belonging, to the field of drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand. By weaving together the affective, political and socio-ecological dimensions of belonging I advance understandings of belonging beyond the reductive notion of inclusion or fit, positioning it rather as an ethical, embodied and culturally responsive force. Its application in a practical drama education

context breathes life into understandings of community. I extend the definition of ensemble pedagogy to process drama and dramatic inquiry-based communities and groups. Here, the drama experience has the capacity to create equally powerful relational and pedagogical conditions, challenging normative assumptions that performance is the ultimate aim of ensemble experiences.

My six principles of practice have emerged in response to the unique educational landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. They serve as critical belonging activators, originally conceived tools offered to teachers, practitioners and researchers to use as they engage responsively with ensemble pedagogy. In chapters three and four I consider these in turn, but here meditate on the connections and divergences that have emerged, all enriching my practice and offering similar opportunities for other practitioners.

Principles two and six work in tandem to highlight the complex role of the teacher as facilitator. It is vital for the facilitator to take the students on a journey of discovery, being careful not to impose a preconceived outcome. Yet, as principle six demonstrates it is equally important to acknowledge that the facilitator does also have the power to direct and change attitudes and assumptions by through their work in role. In order to achieve this it is vital to continue to work reflexively.

Likewise, principles and three draw attention to the transformational capacity of the workshop experience. It begins with the crucial nurturing role of the facilitator. In order for the ensemble to work, individuals must feel safe, seen, and included. This then enables them to move forward as a strong group nourished through manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. In is only when this foundation has been established that principle three can be enacted. Through understanding both our unique identities and histories and the way in which these connect that story can be ignited to move the ensemble forward into fresh perspectives of belonging.

Principles four and five speak to the importance of claiming a place to stand. Principle four focuses on the physical and material aspects of space, encouraging participants to find a place to stand but also to work with what is present in the space, be it the desks, the chairs, the parameters of the space. The potential limitations of the space can become creative provocations, unleashing the stories and discourses that play out in dramatic action. Place is also important for principle five which focuses on the power that comes from honouring presence in that space. This encourages facilitators and participants to realise that it is not

always through loud voices and exaggerated movements that belonging and dramatic accomplishment is enacted. This can also come through witness, silence and complicité.

Throughout developing these principles, I have been conscious of my own reflective practice. This has been integral to my journey and has been made possible through my use of the valuable S-STEP methodology. Through this practice I am making a significant contribution to the development of teaching practice in New Zealand and beyond, particularly through my transdisciplinary focus on ensemble pedagogy and critical belonging. Through my development of an autoethnographic performative methodological tool to document the research process I likewise offer fresh knowledge about the complementary nature of these two fields and to the possibilities of creative practice. The vignettes and poetic imagery contained in each of the principles of practice represent my dialogic encounters with research participants. I position myself, the researcher-facilitator, as an affective archive, both as a memory curator and meaning maker. The resulting polyphonic, ethnographic conversation set out in the principles of practice explores and highlights learnings from experiential embodied practice, and new knowledge emerging from these learnings.

A perceived limitation of the research is its deliberate positioning within the self-study methodological frame (S-STEP). As set out in Chapter 2, S-STEP, is an intentional and systematic examination by teachers of their own practice, undertaken in order to gain a deeper understanding of practice as well as the context in which the practice takes place (Hauge, 2021). This examination is carried out with a view to strengthening or improving learning outcomes. S-STEP requires extensive critical reflection so that it avoids becoming superficial self-justification (Hauge, 2021). While it could be argued that this focus on the self narrows the perspective of the study to the individual researcher, I have demonstrated that the close examination of self can result in a widened scope. My focus on critical belonging urges both myself as researcher-facilitator and my participants to marry self-awareness with an outward gaze that looks for connection and divergent points in practice. This likewise mitigates the effects of the necessary purposive sampling for the recruitment of interview participation. Given my prior and ongoing involvement in drama education in Aotearoa New Zealand, my participants were all connected to me as either former students/colleagues or brought to my attention through established professional networks. The size and scale of the participant sample was consequently modest, but I contend that the findings from my interviews and the workshops provided rich material for analysis. The research is grounded in the specific context of Aotearoa New Zealand, bounded by specific

times, histories and socio-cultural and socio -ecological knowledge construction. This specificity constrains any attempts to generalise the findings, or their application in other international contexts, but this is counterbalanced by the nuanced discoveries about this place and her people.

Each of the principles of practice developed through this study offers a rich seam for further exploration. I have begun deeper excavation with published work on manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, and belonging in the drama education ensemble (Brown, 2025). I intend to continue developing scholarly and practice-led and -based outputs which extend the current transdisciplinary lines of inquiry. Of particular interest is Principle 4: Space and Place which calls for expanded investigation into the socio-ecological dimensions of ensemble pedagogy, focusing on the material, relational and cultural connections vital to the development of creative collaborative learning communities. Tensions evident in the online teaching of drama emerging from this study must be addressed as part of this spatial investigation. Drama education spaces provide opportunities for research to trace critical belonging through affective, political and more than human entanglements.

The principles of practice were developed from one purposive sample data set, and applied in one specific workshop design only, a dramatic inquiry-based design including elements of process drama, image theatre and forum theatre anti models. With a different data set of participants based on a diverse range of socio-cultural demographics, new principles of practice and approaches to embodied critical ensemble pedagogy will likely emerge.

An invitation to perform the autoethnographic reflections as part of the IDIERI conference in Vancouver, Canada 2025 brings with it opportunities to develop performance ethnography, through further S-STEP inquiries. Performance at IDIERI brings with it the beginning of a development of creative critical practice. Inviting fellow researchers and teachers to bring embodied memory, and critical ensemble pedagogical reflection to co-authored performances, will breathe life into collective exchange and make the sharing of research more vital and engaging. The principles of practice offer future research opportunities to other facilitators for the activation of belonging in application to text based or fully developed devised performances. Ensemble ethnographies written from future workshop designs will provide the basis for performance texts. These performances could in turn provide further insights into the experiences of belonging in not only ensemble contexts but within broader arts communities of practice.

This concluding chapter represents an arrival at a destination planned out some time ago. Writing about the facilitation of ensemble pedagogy has felt like a struggle, a wrangling of words, an entanglement of resisting any order. Writing about belonging, about ensemble pedagogy, I have become. I have become a wayfinder. This term emphasises my focus on and fostering of an understanding of aspects of belonging within the drama education ensemble. It describes the role I play in documenting, promoting understanding, and activating a sense of community and inclusion within the ensemble. Like bell hooks (2009) 'I dreamed about a culture of belonging. I still dream that dream. I contemplate what our lives would be like if we knew how to cultivate awareness, to live mindfully, peacefully; if we learned habits of being that would bring us closer together, that would help us build beloved community' ()

I dream with bell and end with a final poetic reflection.

End of the road

We begin

we

scene set

mapping

Herekorenga. The waterfalls, the rocks, the caves

And yes the birds, of course the birds

everything that was here before you.

More than human, yes human perspectives

of a place to call home

symbiotic, complex

relationships with/to landform, I/we

a systemic

decentring of the human

towards kainga. towards home.

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Geography Programme
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4466 ext 9174
E-mail colin.mcleay@waikato.ac.nz
www.waikato.ac.nz

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Gaenor Stoate
Kirstine Moffat
Laura Haughey

Theatre Studies

21 June 2017

Dear Gaenor,

Re: **FS2017-23 Act-ivating Citizenship**

Thank you for submitting your revised application to the FASS Human Research Ethics Committee. We have reviewed the final electronic version of your application and the Committee is now pleased to offer formal approval for your research activities, including the following:

- semi-structured interviews with participants who have been involved in (a) applied drama project(s).
- a practice–led creative project.

We would ask that you please provide Eileen Fenner, the FASS Ethics Committee Administrator, with a paper copy of your final application that has been signed by yourself and your supervisors.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank-you for engaging with the process of Ethical Review.

Regards,

Colin McLeay, Chair

Geography Programme
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240
New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4466 ext 9174
E-mail
colin.mcleay@waikato.ac.nz
www.waikato.ac.nz

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Appendix 1a

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Act-ivating Citizenship RESEARCH PROJECT

Interview schedule Stage One

Dear Participants

This schedule outlines the aspects of devised theatre practice and questions I would like to discuss during our 60-minute interview. You do not have to answer every question and you are welcome to bring up other issues not covered by these questions in the hour we have together. I am interested in hearing about your experiences with devised theatre practice and any differences you might have observed between devised theatre practice and text based production (creative work based on pre written scripts). I am particularly interested in any links you might have observed between working collaboratively in devised theatre process and the way you now work/teach/facilitate in a group or team.

Tell me about your group(s)- the other participants in the devised work.
Were you a teacher, facilitator or learner?

- How many people were in your group?
- Gender?
- Age range?
- How did the members of your group come together?
- Did you experience / observe any challenges working as a group? If so how did you resolve issues?

Tell me about the subject matter of your devised piece(s).
What did you observe as teacher/facilitator/lecturer?

- What was your devised piece about?
- Did your group choose this content?
- Did this content engage you or not?
- How did you arrive at this idea for the devised work?
- Was this piece performed to an audience? If so, are you aware of any responses to your performance?

Tell me about how working in a devised theatre process made you feel/ What did you observe as teacher, facilitator/lecturer?

- Did you feel valued / that you were heard?
- Was it easy to make a contribution (ideas, physical or vocal offer, supporting other group members) and did you feel that you were encouraged to participate?
- Differences between this process and other theatre processes/ experiences?
- Did working in this way affirm any sense of identity for you?

Tell me about any special observations/ experiences/ relationships/ surprises that emerged or developed for you in this process.

Tell me about any skills you developed, or attitudes you adopted, during the devising process that you still work with now.

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 1b

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Act-ivating Citizenship RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
Stage One

Description of Project: This research aims to identify any links between participating and contributing to the creation of devised theatre and participating and contributing to active citizenship processes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I have read the consent form and understand that:

- I can refuse to answer any question, or terminate the interview.
- I will receive an emailed copy of the quotes from the interview intended for publication and I will have four weeks from the date the email was sent to amend this information or withdraw consent.
- I can request that my privacy and anonymity be protected by the use of a pseudonym.
- All information will remain secure in a locked cupboard or on a computer accessible by password only.

I consent to our conversation being audio recorded YES / NO (please circle)

I have discussed the representation of my identity with the researcher and I would like (please tick)

a) to be named in the research and to have my comments attributed to me. ☐

or

b) to be anonymous in the research. ☐

I (your name)……agree to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of this consent form and the research information sheet.

Signature of Participant …… Date ……

Appendices

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