A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF THE WAYS MUSIC LEARNING IS USED TO
MEET THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES
EXPERIENCED BY REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SYDNEY

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the ways in which refugee and asylum seeker learners benefit from engaging in community music programs during resettlement or detention. It explores the means by which music learning can address the social, emotional and cultural challenges often experienced after forced migration. This study examines three specific case study contexts: a choir, a general music education program and drumming workshops. As an intrinsic study, this thesis examines the circumstances particular to each case. Using participants’ accounts, observations of learning experiences and program documents, it explores the impact of the organisers’, teachers’ and learners’ expectations of and approaches to the programs. In addition, this project presents successful pedagogical principles on which others working with exiled communities can reflect. A close investigation of factors such as the learning environment, participants’ perceptions of music and motivations for involvement reveals self-identity as a core issue through which the various social, emotional and cultural challenges may be addressed.
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CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Millions of people are either internally or internationally displaced every year as a result of natural disasters, persecution, war or other conflict situations. Motivation for this study came from the relevance of refugee and asylum seeker issues, and the growing numbers of refugees and immigrants, within Australia. In 2006, Australia was the site of approximately 13,400 refugee resettlements, making it the host of the second highest number of resettlements in the world (United Nations Refugee Agency, n.d.).

This study aims to explore how music learning experiences foster social, emotional and cultural development in refugees and asylum seekers. The traumatic nature of their transition to a new country produces challenges for social interaction, emotional recovery and cultural determination in unfamiliar surroundings. Identifying successful approaches to meeting these challenges is a concern not only for refugees and asylum seekers, but for members of the wider society who are involved with such individuals on either a professional or personal level. It is not sufficient to address these issues by reproducing precedents established when working with other marginalised groups. Rather, there is a need to recognise the unique journey undergone by refugees and asylum seekers both collectively and individually.

One approach to meeting the challenges experienced by refugees and asylum seekers has been the establishment of community music programs (Diehl, 1998; Ladkani, 2001; Pesek, 1996; Petten, 2000; Zharinova-Sanderson, 2002). This study seeks to investigate motivations for, and the effect of, involvement in these music learning experiences. The following questions provide the framework for addressing the research topic of music learning in refugee and asylum seeker community music programs in Sydney.

1) What are the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement, and asylum seekers in detention?
2) Why do music teachers, refugees and asylum seekers become involved in community music learning programs?
3) How are music learning experiences used to meet the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement and asylum seekers in detention?

These questions are considered in relation to various aspects of several focus programs. For example, this project explores the outcome of the studied music experiences, identifying the type of music being learnt and available performance opportunities. The extent to which the learners (that is, the refugees and asylum seekers engaged in the community music programs) personally and culturally relate to the musical content is particularly relevant to the study. Also, through public performances refugees are given the opportunity to represent and share aspects of themselves with people with whom they would otherwise have no interaction. Therefore the level of value that learners attribute to music performances is considered pertinent to their potential social development.

Of equal importance to the outcome of the music experiences is the process of music teaching and learning that takes place in refugee and asylum seeker community music programs. Given the music education perspective from which this study has been conducted, an emphasis has been placed on specific music teaching practices. This study seeks to investigate the effect of these practices in relation to the refugees’ and asylum seekers’ motivational and learning responses. By identifying effective pedagogical approaches, this study aims to determine the correlation between the music learning aspects, and the non-music (social, emotional and cultural) aspects, of the community programs. Furthermore, the nature of the relationship between teachers and learners has been considered a significant focus in understanding how music learning experiences are used to meet refugee and asylum seeker challenges.

**Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

In establishing an understanding of these challenges it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the term *refugee*, and in particular, the difference between the categorical terms *refugee* and *asylum seeker*. “There are two aspects of refugee identity: the production of the idealized conception of *what* a refugee is; as well as the individual matter of *who is* and who is not a refugee” (Phillips & Hardy, 1997, p. 160). The first
aspect of refugee identity is commonly understood according to the United Nations definition of the refugee “as any person who is outside their country of nationality and is unable to return due to a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951). The category of *asylum seeker* addresses the second aspect of refugee identity and is assigned to those whose refugee status has not yet been determined. Asylum seekers who migrate to Australia without legal authority are held in detention centres to await a decision on their visa application. The politically charged distinction between refugees and asylum seekers ensures that they experience different challenges in their host society. This distinction, and the challenges particular to each group, will be explored later in the chapter.

**Social, Emotional and Cultural Challenges**

Refugees and asylum seekers often suffer social withdrawal, emotional scarring and loss of cultural identity. Their traumatic experiences set up challenges for developing social interaction skills, emotional healing and cultural security. The term *social, emotional and cultural challenges*, as used in this study, involves three interlocking domains. Given that these domains overlap conceptually, they have been combined in a single operational appellation. In the context of this Australian study, *social, emotional and cultural challenges* refer to those that refugees encounter during the process of resettlement, and that asylum seekers experience in detention.

A number of elements draw together to create these challenges. Figure 1 (Aroche & Coello, 2002), illustrates the suprasystem of experiences that generate the challenges refugees experience during resettlement, or asylum seekers in incarceration. Many of these challenges emanate from experiences occurring in the country of their origin, during the exile process, in fleeing the country of their origin and in situ in the country of current residence.

*Traumatic experiences in the context of organised violence* include physical trauma such as torture and rape. However, witnessing such acts also constitutes a traumatic experience, especially if it leads to fear of persecution. The various stages of *exile*,
migration and settlement – the decision to leave, the process of leaving loved ones behind, and the period of asylum seeking – all contribute to the challenges explored in this study. Finally, normal life cycle refers to experiences shared with non-refugees, such as the period of adolescence or family problems.

Figure 1. Suprasystem of Social, Emotional and Cultural Challenges

Mansouri and Bagdas (2002) explore various spheres of this suprasystem of experiences through the personal accounts of 15 Victorian asylum seekers. All participants were persecuted by authorities in their country of origin for alleged political activities or sympathies against the ruling regime. This persecution came in the form of physical harassment and threats, indefinite prison sentences or imprisonment awaiting execution, all of which constitute ‘traumatic experiences in the context of organised violence’. They fled for their lives, experiencing fearful travel conditions irreconcilable with the smugglers’ promises. Upon arrival in Australia after a number of months, the asylum seekers anticipated freedom at last.
Instead, they experienced prolonged periods of detention before being issued with Temporary Protection Visas, which effectively “imprisoned [them] psychologically because they lacked control over their lives and their futures” (Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002, p. 46). Although they enjoyed living freely in their new neighbourhoods, being restricted from English tuition and job training services left them in a state of perpetual uncertainty and perceived uselessness, which they felt was a punishment. These experiences relate to both remaining suprasystem categories, namely ‘exile, migration and settlement’ and ‘normal life cycle’.

The word “challenge” was chosen to communicate empowerment, its usage intended to give refugees and asylum seekers ownership over their own experiences. Too often these groups are discussed in relation to needs, denoting helplessness and destitution. Instead, their active involvement should be recognised as an essential step towards recovering from their situation (Sachs, 1989). The disparity between the refugee and asylum seeker situations makes it necessary to distinguish between challenges specific to refugees during the resettlement process, and asylum seekers in detention.

**Challenges Facing Refugees during the Resettlement Process**

Scholars have identified various issues influencing refugee resettlement patterns (Askland, 2005; Berry, 1988; Sonderegger, 2002; Wells & Hoikkala, 2004). Challenges common to differing ethnic groups verify the trauma associated specifically with the refugee experience. Positive responses to these challenges have been attributed to numerous circumstantial factors. For example, Berry (1988) suggests that the nature of a migrant’s response to challenges encountered throughout resettlement is dependent on the extent to which the migrant interacts with the host society. This level of interaction is termed acculturative stress. Although the distinction between refugee, asylum seeker and migrant experiences should be recognised, challenges inherent in migration of any nature are shared, to some extent, by all of these groups. Resettlement, as analysed by Berry (1988), is therefore as relevant to refugees as it is to other migrants. Berry’s theoretical framework classifying the different stages of acculturative stress includes, in order of least to most interactive with the host society: separation; marginalisation; integration; and assimilation. The third stage, integration, has been held up as the ideal condition for
resettlement, placing importance on both maintaining one’s traditional culture and relating culturally to the host society (Wells & Hoikkala, 2004).

To empower refugees in self-perceived exile, Askland (2005) calls for support services to provide clients with the opportunity to experience personal agency in the recreation of meaning and identity, and everyday practice within the local community. The homelessness and uprootedness with which refugees are immediately diagnosed can be overcome, she argues, in the process of “negotiation between the two dominant, though conflicting, discourses of their socialisation: individualism [independence] and collectivism [communal]

Challenges Facing Asylum Seekers in Detention

Because refugees enter Australia under the Humanitarian Program (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007), most are able to gain permanent residency on arrival. Asylum seekers who arrive in an unauthorised manner, however, are confined in detention centres awaiting the response of their refugee status application: approval results in a visa grant, whereas refusal could mean deportation (Smith, 2001). The literature relating to asylum seekers in detention primarily addresses health and sociological concerns (Momartin, Steel, Coello & Aroche, 2006; Sales, 2002; Silove, Steel & Mollica, 2001).

Silove et. al. (2001) use Villawood Detention Centre as a case study for highlighting the mental health issues present in immigration detention. They found that detainees displayed mild and severe depressive illness symptoms, psychotic symptoms, and strong aggressive impulsive and persistent self-harming behaviours as a result of incarceration. In general, suicide attempts, acts of mass violence, group breakouts, rioting, burning of facilities, and sporadic hunger strikes are common responses to the psychological distress experienced by inmates. Silove et. al. (2001) also identify the cruel irony in the asylum seekers’ situation: that their extreme fear of persecution leads them to risk illegally migrating, and yet those who probably need the most refuge are denied it.
The asylum seeker policy has been accused of fostering “intense social exclusion” (Sales, 2002, p. 456). The discourse of asylum seekers as ‘undeserving’, as opposed to ‘deserving’ refugees, poses challenges for the former that are not experienced by the latter.

**Refugee and Asylum Seeker Identity**

The various challenges experienced by refugees and asylum seekers are embedded in the complex issue of identity. Self-identity is defined as “the overall view that we have of ourselves . . . although the ways in which individuals accomplish this remain a central and unresolved theoretical question” (Hargreaves, Miell & Macdonald, 2002, p. 8). One such theory is that of social constructivism, which denotes that ideas of the self are in constant revision and wholly based on our interactions with those around us (Hargreaves et. al., 2002). If identity is indeed dependent on social experience, refugees and asylum seekers are put in a position where identity is likely to become a problematic issue. Not only does the refugee and asylum seeker journey foster uncertainty in relation to a sense of self socially and culturally, it also introduces another complex dynamic in the make-up of self-identity, namely the concept of oneself as a refugee or asylum seeker.

Neither the refugee identity, nor the refugee experience, exists as a monolithic entity. In developing an understanding of refugee and asylum seeker needs, it is necessary to be aware of the complexities in which they are enveloped. Philosophically, the nature of the refugee identity is shaped by a capitalist discourse on the rights of the autonomous individual (Hayden, 2006). Autonomous individualism refers to the perception that each person primarily belongs to, and should be free to make decisions for, himself. This ideology opposes that of some non-Western cultures in which the family, or the community, might be considered the smallest unit of society. As a result, Australian refugee and asylum seeker policies may not reflect the cultural and social foundations from which the refugees and asylum seekers themselves construct identity. For example, the Temporary Protection Visa policy means that asylum seekers are refused the right to family reunion, which would enable parents to sponsor their children to migrate (Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002). In addition to parents’ natural fear for their child living in persecution, this separation of the family isolates
some non-Western refugees and asylum seekers from the unit which encompasses their identity.

On a more practical level, various societal bodies claim ownership over the refugee concept, presenting the public with conflicting images determined by their competing motivations (Phillips & Hardy, 1997). For example it has been argued that, in order to promote a charitable response, humanitarian programs emphasise refugee dependency and infirmity, ultimately disempowering those they aim to help (Rajaram, 2002). In contrast, the Australian print media has been accused of engendering the refugee and asylum seeking population as both problematic and deviant (Pickering, 2001). In light of the discourses imposed and perpetuated by stereotypes, the brief exploration into refugee and asylum seeker needs that has been presented is by no means to be considered exhaustive or all-encompassing. Instead, specific experiences have been drawn from the literature to construct a framework for understanding some of the challenges refugees or asylum seekers may meet on arriving in a new country.

The next section of the literature review relates to the various roles music plays in three specific domains of life. In establishing the social, emotional and cultural value of music, a foundation will be laid for its uses in meeting refugee and asylum seeker challenges.

The Social, Emotional and Cultural Value of Music

Various theories have been formulated, and studies conducted, to determine specific qualities of the musical experience that engender social, emotional and cultural change (Bruner, 1990; Crozier, 1997; Davidson, Howe & Sloboda, 1997; Sager, 2006; Skyllstad, 1997). Ethnomusicologist John Blacking theorised that the ability of music to engage an individual’s emotions while simultaneously facilitating social interaction comprises not only its value but its central role as an agent of relative identity (Sager, 2006). Davidson et. al. (1997) explore the social elements of music much more literally, examining the ways in which the various social actors – co-performers, audience members and teachers – contribute to the socio-cultural and interactive aspects of musical performance. This exploration of how the social operates in, and facilitates, musical performance, comprises a significant component
of the current study. However, this study also considers non-performance elements of the music learning experience.

Other inquiries into this field have associated music’s social influence with its capacity to evoke emotions (Bruner, 1990; Crozier, 1997; Galizio & Hendrick, 1972). Galizio and Hendrick (1972) postulate that, through the elicitation of certain emotions, music can affect a person’s attentional processes and therefore influence them in their social decisions. In relation to the emotional effects of music, a meta-analysis of empirical and experimental literature has substantiated a correlation between specific audible musical characteristics and induced listener emotions (Bruner, 1990). However, others have argued against the perception of absolute emotional qualities in music, instead attributing mood response to cultural tradition (Gregory & Varney, 1996; Jones, Baker & Day, 2004).

Similar to its central role in determining emotional idioms in music, traditional practice dictates the nature of music’s value in the culture within which it is developed. One of the primary ways music is valued is as an external indicator of unique cultural identity (Baily, 1994; Grierson, 2006; Kalamida, 2003; Slobin, 1992). Mans (1999) defines cultural identity as the “ways in which people perceive and experience their own culture and those of others – forming and adapting their own [individual] identities through selective assimilation” (p. 82). Music provides a tangible avenue through which this formation and adaptation can take place. Although 21st century globalisation and migration have been catalysts for the increasingly confusing condition in which the term ‘cultural identity’ currently resides, music is an entity that enables people to establish a sense of cultural, social or ethnic identity (Baily, 1994).

Grierson (2006) explores how this sense of identity may be developed, by describing three specific functions of traditional song as an agent of cultural identity within the Romani community of Canada. The first involves music as an enculturative vehicle, through which meaningful social exchanges can take place. The second function is that of catharsis, engaging music as a means through which feelings can be expressed and shared. Finally, Grierson identifies the vital role music plays as an external symbol retaining the Romani culture within the more dominant Canadian culture.
Given the Romani community’s history of displacement, Grierson’s inquiry into the relationship of music to cultural identity is particularly pertinent to the study of music with refugees and asylum seekers.

In the field of ethnomusicology, sensitivity in dealing with non-Western music traditions must be employed to avoid marginalising the studied group by directly comparing them with other cultures. As an alternative, Slobin (1992) has proposed a comparative method for studying micromusics of the West. The concept of micromusics, “small units within big music cultures” (p. 11), is directly relevant to the music making that occurs within the context of the current study. Of particular value to the study is the dual classification of types of ensembles, distinguishing between the divergent processes of “banding” and “bonding” (p. 72). Whereas “bands” are defined as professional or semi-professional musical groups who perform for a paying audience, affinity groups (the “bonders”) are music makers who choose to experience music together because it produces strong, meaningful bonding opportunities.

Zelizer (2004) identifies two approaches to arts-based peacebuilding which can be likened to Slobin’s (1992) “banding” and “bonding” processes. He focuses primarily on the division between explicit and implicit peacebuilding methods employed during the war period in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Programs with explicit peacebuilding goals directly involve content related to conflict themes, placing importance on both process (internal group work) and product (outcome) throughout the creative project. The emphasis on process and the use of conflict-related content is comparable to Slobin’s (1992) “bonding” approach to music making in which the focus lies on relations within the group. On the other hand, programs with implicit peacebuilding goals emphasise product over process, the content of which often has nothing to do with conflict resolution. This approach parallels that of “bands” in which the development of professional musical standards is central.

The dualities explored by Slobin (1992) and Zelizer (2004) relate directly to the context of refugee and asylum seeker community music programs. In exploring the teaching and learning processes employed, this study seeks to investigate how the different approaches embodied by banding versus bonding, explicit versus implicit
Refugee Engagement in Musical Experiences

In recent years, researchers have explored refugee engagement with music from a range of perspectives. One of the primary challenges that refugees experience in forced exile is the loss of the familiar environment, so the theme of ‘place’ is a very important one for them. Stokes (1994) differentiates between space, a physical surrounding environment, and place, a more metaphorical area of belonging. He discusses the way music can be used to help refugees in their space versus place dilemma:

> Amongst the countless ways in which we “relocate” ourselves, music undoubtedly has a vital role to play. The musical event . . . evokes and organises collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity. (Stokes, 1994, p. 3)

Evidently, music can be used to address the social displacement from the familiar and the resulting isolation and loss of social identity. Literature examining the ways refugees use music to do this will be appraised in contextual categories.

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of internally organised refugee musical experiences, that is, those organised by the refugees themselves (Diehl, 1998; Heitzman, 2005; Ladhani, 2001; Parkes, 1994; Reyes, 1999; Turpin, 2004). These studies attest to the various benefits that refugees experience through music in both individual and communal contexts.

Refugee women who have suffered violence have used music as a personal coping mechanism in two primary ways: in performance, as a form of expression in times of trial, and as an organism that evokes a sense of heritage (Heitzman, 2005). Although Heitzman’s ethnographic study involved only seven participants, the findings disclose potential uses of music as a mechanism for coping, as developed and identified by the
refugees themselves. In particular, the participants described the common use of singing, dancing and song-writing as avenues for relieving stress. Several participants recognised the use of music as a vehicle through which a connection to native culture could be maintained.

Similar to Stokes’ (1994) idea of musical place, the Tibetan refugees’ “musical soundscape” has been presented as an embodiment of the community exiled to Dharamsala, India (Diehl, 1998, p. 1). By attending, recording and sometimes participating in live *tashi delek blues* performances over the course of a year, the researcher identified music as the vehicle through which ideas of Tibetan-ism could be negotiated and re-established for those in exile. Comparably, studies of the Palestinian *dabke* – a music and dance experience initiated by Palestinian refugees – have been presented as the agency enabling the construction of an imagined Palestinian nation (Ladkani, 2001). The concept of nationality is fostered in second- and third-generation Palestinian refugees through *dabke* performances, by which they “reinforce their identities not only as Palestinians, but as Palestinian exiles living in another country” (Ladkani, 2001, p. 199).

In theorising the hybridity of refugee music, such as the incorporation of non-traditional elements in the Tibetan *tashi delek blues* and the Palestinian *dabke*, some scholars have emphasised the refugee dependence on the host society as a compelling factor (Reyes, 1999). Arguably, this dependence obliges members of the community in exile to express themselves in a way that the host society can relate to and understand. Such expression could involve acquiring some of the host society’s musical systems of communication. This may entail the adoption of either audible or conceptual features of the host society’s music traditions. For example, Vietnamese refugees may incorporate aspects of the Western harmonic system to musically communicate their experience to the wider society using emotional idioms that society understands (Reyes, 1999). An example of refugees adopting wider society’s conceptualisation of music is provided by Ladkani (2001). The creative licence taken to compose new *dabke* material, and the use of taped (as opposed to live) accompaniment in performances, is something for which members of the famous *dabke* group *al-Funūn* is criticised among traditionalists. However, they defend their
utilisation of non-traditional approaches to music as pertinent to “being perceived internationally as a modern . . . nation” (Ladkani, 2001, p. 171).

The literature in this field of inquiry indicates that there is much less empirical research on externally organised refugee community music programs; that is, music programs organised by persons exclusive to the refugee communities for which the program was designed. Such programs are often organised as social support or community development services. In Europe, ethnomusicologists, music educators and anthropologists have been working together in the arrangement and operation of similar programs. For example, Svanibor Petten (2000) initiated the AZRA project that aimed to offer all Bosnians, regardless of their ethno-religious affiliation, a kind of musical concept with which they could associate themselves. As a result of the war, particular types of songs and certain instruments were considered ethnically exclusive. For example, epic songs and gusle bowed lute accompaniment were considered representative of ethnic Serbs only. The AZRA project primarily addressed its aim by carefully choosing ethnically-neutral repertoire and instruments. Another externally organised refugee community music program was that run for refugee children and their mothers at three Slovenian refugee centres. The project used music to achieve four social, emotional and cultural goals: to overcome the psycho-social problems of children and their mothers; to deepen the emotional relationships between children and their mothers; to preserve their own cultural identity; and to integrate them into the larger society of the host country (Pesek, 1996). Both of these projects have been reported as successful in reaching their goals.

In the music therapy treatment of traumatised refugees, ZhariNova-Sanderson (2002) finds the employment of repertoire from a client’s cultural heritage useful in a number of ways. Firstly, it promotes a positive sense of ethnic identity while simultaneously providing the therapist with a link to the client’s personal history. Given the underlying power relations involved in a client-therapist relationship, the use of familiar repertoire can also become a tool of empowerment for clients, emphasising their role as experts.

Over the past ten years, an understanding of the following has been added to the body of knowledge relating to music education with refugees: new theories concerning the
social, emotional and cultural value of music; some of the ways refugees themselves organise music experiences to meet their needs; the effectiveness of externally organised refugee community programs; and the effectiveness of specific music therapy methods for traumatised refugees. Relevant research studies have been conducted from a range of theoretical perspectives, including that of sociology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, and musical psychology (Diehl, 1998; Heitzman, 2005; Ladkani, 2001; Parkes, 1994; Pesek, 1996; Petten, 2000; Reyes, 1999; Socolov, 2006; Stokes, 1994; Turpin, 2004; Wagner, n.d.). However, none of these studies have exclusively addressed the use of music with incarcerated asylum seekers. The inclusion of this group in this study constitutes one way in which it is potentially significant.

**Significance of the Study**

This study brings an education perspective to the rich body of knowledge related to refugee engagement in musical experiences. As a justification of its practical significance, the study performs two roles: to raise awareness and inform practice. This study will draw attention to the existing uses of music learning as an effective support system for asylum seekers in detention and refugees during resettlement. Evidently, music for the development of social interaction skills, emotional healing and cultural security has already been addressed in many fields of study. Such insights are examined in relation to music teaching and learning experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in an Australian context.

The inquiry into the significance of music teaching and learning processes will fulfil the study’s second role of informing practice. This study provides insight into specific characteristics of music learning experiences that most promote social, emotional and cultural development in refugees and asylum seekers in Sydney. Findings impart principles that music education practitioners working with refugee and asylum seeker populations will be able to apply to their own music teaching contexts. This study seeks to offer an understanding of effective approaches discovered by the music program teachers or facilitators, and the perspective of the refugee and asylum seeker music learners themselves. Such information will be valuable not only in the hands of educators in the same field (working in refugee and asylum seeker community music
programs), but also for those teaching music to refugee or asylum seeker students in a school or individually. Through the lens of music teaching and learning, the findings of this study seek to effect change in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.
CHAPTER 2  METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

For this inquiry into refugee and asylum seeker community music programs, a qualitative approach was adopted. The nature of the research topic, which was exploratory rather than experimental, necessitated the study of individuals and events in their natural settings (Tetnowski & Damico, 2001). Therefore, I examined the chosen contexts as they exist, taking an ‘emic’, or insider, research perspective. This approach, associated with qualitative studies, focuses on interpreting phenomena according to the meanings the participants attach to them.

The emphasis on human experience in the current study calls for the provision of careful details and rich descriptions. Considering the sensitive ethical issues involved in studying refugees and asylum seekers, which will be discussed further in the chapter, a descriptive approach is most appropriate. Providing rich descriptions also best reflects the phenomena that occur within the specific community music programs. The unique features of each refugee and asylum seeker community music program significantly shape the learners’ and teachers’ experiences and motives. To gain deep insight into these experiences and motives I focused on three refugee and asylum seeker community music programs, accounting for the characteristics particular to each case.

Research Design

The chosen methodological research design is that of the multi-case study. Case studies provide detailed descriptions of specific learners and/or classes within their educational settings (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Stake (2000) identifies three categories of the case study design: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The current study combines aspects of the former two. Intrinsic case studies involve studying a particular case (individual, setting or issue) of interest to the researcher. In relation to this study, three settings of refugee and asylum seeker community music programs were studied intrinsically. Descriptions of the context of, and circumstances within,
these settings, were paramount to the generated theories concerning effective music education practices. Instrumental case studies, on the other hand, emphasise a specific issue with the intention of “redrawing generalisation” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Although the case studies’ particular circumstances were fundamental to the aspects of the music learning experience learners deemed beneficial, their characteristics and outcomes will provide other practitioners with principles on which to reflect.

**Case Study Sampling Procedures**

The case studies were selected using purposive sampling, in which the sample is chosen to satisfy criteria central to the research inquiry (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In relation to the current study, the case studies chosen needed to fulfil the following components constituting a refugee or asylum seeker community music program. Firstly, it was necessary that music learning was taking place in a community music program. Secondly, there needed to be identifiable teachers and learners within the music learning context. Finally, it was necessary for the participating learners to represent in some way the larger refugee or asylum seeker population of Sydney.

**Case Study Settings and Participants**

The participants of the study, as already mentioned, included teachers and learners involved in refugee and asylum seeker community music programs. The groups varied in age and gender, and engaged in divergent forms of music learning (choral groups and instrumental groups). By embracing these variables, the study further validates theorised principles for effective music education practices with refugees and asylum seekers. Because pedagogical practices found common to all of the case studies cannot be attributed to similar context, the findings could be generalised, to some extent, as applicable to the refugee and asylum seeker population in Sydney.
Case Study One: Bosnian Women’s Choir

The Bosnian Women’s Choir (BWC), which is comprised of 40 female members, formed ten years ago. Although it developed from a music therapy group for Bosnian refugees, reaching professional performance standards is one of the choir’s primary aims. Music has become a way of sharing and healing the trauma caused by members’ experiences of their past. Through fortnightly rehearsals under the direction of Sonja Halilovic\(^1\), a qualified choral conductor, the choir has grown in both musical prowess and popularity in the sphere of public performance. The rehearsals take place in a western Sydney primary school building on Saturday afternoons. Some of the women travel for two hours on public transport to attend these rehearsals. Despite this humble rehearsal setting, the choir has performed for national and international audiences in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. Most importantly, the choir has become a significant form of rehabilitation for the women, including Sonja, who is also a Bosnian refugee. The current study considers music learning in the BWC in three contexts: rehearsal, performance and social gathering.

Case Study Two: Red Cross Music Education Program

The Red Cross Music Education Program (RCMEP) has been running since June 2006. The program was established in response to a survey conducted in Villawood Detention Centre. This survey was used to determine the type of activities in which asylum seekers wanted to be involved. The advertisements posted around the detention centre target both beginners and musicians, and invite the asylum seekers to share songs from their cultural heritage. The program’s teaching staff is comprised of volunteers, all of whom are accredited music educators, music therapists or professional musicians. The program rosters two or three teachers for each weekly lesson, during which a variety of instrumental and/or vocal skills and repertoire are learnt.

\(^1\) Pseudonyms have been used to maintain confidentiality.
Case Study Three: Drumbeat

Drumbeat (DB) is a program designed to develop individuals’ capacities for listening to others, developing positive relationships, co-operation and self-confidence through learning drumming in a group context. The program is taught to the facilitators, who do not have to be drummers or even musicians, in intensive weekend sessions. These facilitators then implement the program, becoming what the current study identifies as teachers. The program is used in various contexts, with special needs children, at risk high school students and non-English speaking adults. The final drumming performance is central to the ethos of the program as it embodies the goal for which individuals in the group collectively strive.

Data Collection Methods

Data included documents, field notes of observations, audio and visual recordings of interviews and observations, and a researcher’s journal. The process of data collection was cyclical and open-ended. Data collected in earlier stages of the research process narrowed my focus, informing further decisions concerning data collection and analysis. A description of the different forms of data follows.

Documents

Documents were obtained from the organisers of the refugee community music programs. Examples of the types of documents constituting data included: documents that outline the aims of programs (such as mission statements and pamphlets); advertising documents (posters); funding submissions; program proposals and reviews; and program manuals. These documents were collected and annotated for each of the case studies. In particular, these documents gave insight into how each music program was perceived by participants and portrayed to the wider community.
Due to research policies of both the detention centre and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), I was unable to gain entry to directly observe the learning experiences within the RCMEP and DB programs. These research policies highlight the difficulties inherent in studying a group as vulnerable and politically sensitive as refugees and asylum seekers. The nature of their susceptibility stems from the contention born of media interest in, and intense social discussion of, political practices concerning their treatment. Therefore, the study involved the observation of learning experiences (that is, rehearsals and performances) within only one refugee community music program; the BWC. The observations were video recorded and unstructured field notes, providing contextual information about the rehearsal or performance, were written. The two forms of data collection facilitated triangulation. Table 1 documents the dates and locations of the observations.

*Table 1.* Bosnian Women’s Choir Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 24, 2007</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17, 2007</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18, 2007</td>
<td>Public performance at Manly Corso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social gathering at pizza restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31, 2007</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being aware that my very presence was an intrusion upon the natural setting, I sought to gradually establish a familiarity with participants that would draw out behaviours and responses genuinely characteristic of them. To minimise researcher effect during recorded observations, I initially conducted videotaping as unobtrusively as possible. Only when the participants had become accustomed to my presence (as evidenced by their manner towards me) did I begin videotaping from a more noticeable distance and angle.
Interviews

In addition to the audiovisual data recorded in the music learning environment, audio recordings were made of the interviews. Interviewees included: a refugee community development worker; the music teachers (such as the choir conductor); the program organisers; and the refugee learners themselves. The refugee community development worker Dylan Lowe was interviewed during the early stages of data collection. His responses, integrated with document analysis, constituted data relating to the first research question.

Table 2. Interview Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interviewee/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>February 21, 2007</td>
<td>Dylan Lowe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWC</td>
<td>February 23, 2007</td>
<td>Sonja Halilovic (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 13, 2007</td>
<td>Sonja Halilovic (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 18, 2007</td>
<td>Selma (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 31, 2007</td>
<td>Emira (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 31, 2007</td>
<td>Melvina (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 24, 2007</td>
<td>Miloska (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 9, 2007</td>
<td>Eva Javir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMEP (T)</td>
<td>April 27, 2007</td>
<td>Sienna Silesta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 30, 2007</td>
<td>Hilary Tomson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB (T)</td>
<td>February 28, 2007</td>
<td>Bob Benice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 9, 2007</td>
<td>Carolyn Ira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 20, 2007</td>
<td>Bob Benice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T – Teacher
L – Learner

The design of the interviews was semi-structured (Burns, 2000). Written prompts acted as a guide, providing freedom to digress and probe for more information (see Appendices A to D).
Interviewee Sampling Procedures

A mix of purposive and convenience sampling was used to select appropriate interviewees within the context of each case study. In particular, purposive sampling was employed in interviewing the various music teachers (shown in Table 4), who were specifically approached for interviews. On the other hand, learner interviewees formed a convenience sample, defined as “a sample of the most available and/or accessible subjects in the population” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 352). The learners were invited, in a group context and through the teachers, to discuss their perspective with me. Thus, in relation to the learner interviewees, data were collected only from self-elected available members.

Utilising convenience sampling with the learners caused a potential problem with bias. The extent to which the sample represented the population of learners within the program was limited, as the interviewee groups were composed entirely of those confident and interested enough to speak to a researcher. Also, the BWC learner interviewees were all English speakers. Although this bias ultimately placed limitations on the findings and could not be completely eliminated, it was ameliorated through the use of observations. Any data drawn from interviews that were found disputable to data collected in observation were not generalised as characteristic of the learner population.

Table 3. Learner Interviewees: Migration and Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Interviewee (Learner)</th>
<th>In Australia</th>
<th>Involvement in Choir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BWC</td>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emira</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melvina</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miloska</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the learner interviewees, Table 3 shows: their length of time in Australia and the length of time they have been involved in BWC. Unfortunately, due to the
political and ethical issues associated with refugees, asylum seekers and detention centres, I was unable to interview learners in the RCMEP and DB programs.

Table 4 records brief details of the interviewed teachers’ related experiences prior to involvement in the case study community music programs and the length of their involvement in the programs. In addition to the program teachers and learners, Dylan Lowe, who facilitates the development of community music programs such as the BWC and DB, was interviewed.

Table 4. Teacher and Facilitator Interviewees: Involvement and Prior Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Teacher and facilitator interviewees</th>
<th>Involvement in program</th>
<th>Formal music training</th>
<th>Previous experience with Teaching music</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Asylum Seekers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BWC</td>
<td>Sonja Halilovic</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMEP</td>
<td>Sienna Silesta</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eva Javir</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilary Tomson</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB and drumming workshops</td>
<td>Bob Benice</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carolyn Ira</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dylan Lowe</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bosnian Women’s Choir Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Sonja Halilovic at regular intervals throughout the research process. Early interviews explored general issues related to the research topic, whereas data drawn from later observations and interviews informed further themes for questioning.

The four BWC learners were interviewed in pairs. The paired interview setting was consciously used for a number of reasons. Although all of the interviewees spoke
English, some were more fluent than others. Therefore, if the need arose, the
interviewees were able to help each other understand my questions. Considering
some of the traumatic experiences the refugee participants may have encountered,
another reason for interviewing pairs was to minimise the possibility of unintentional
coection. I sought to establish an environment in which the interviewees felt
comfortable to withhold answering a particular question or, if necessary, to withdraw
from the interview entirely. Finally, the paired setting provided an advantageous
interview framework within which interviewees could interact with each other and
stimulate more detailed responses.

The interview places and times were also chosen to provide the learner interviewees
with a level of convenience, comfort and familiarity. The interviews were conducted
following a rehearsal and performance. Because the interviews were audio taped, it
was necessary to withdraw from the rest of the choir who were still engaged in social
activity. However, to establish a safe environment, interviews were conducted in
open spaces near where the remaining choir members continued communal
interaction.

Red Cross Music Education Program Interviews

In addition to document analysis, interviews constituted the primary data collection
method for the RCMEP case study. Because the learning environment and the
asylum seeker participants were not directly accessible, one of the interview focuses
was the content and pedagogical practices within the music lessons. Also, my
developing insight into the asylum seekers’ experience relied heavily on the
perspective of the voluntary teachers.

Drumbeat Interviews

As with the RCMEP data collection, document analysis and interviews constituted the
primary data collection methods for the DB case study. Because the learning
environments were not available for observation, interviews with both teachers
included discussion of pedagogical practices within the drumming workshops. Bob Benice was interviewed at the beginning of his first facilitation of the DB program and then after this program was completed. Because Bob had experience running drumming workshops outside of the domain of the DB program, at times he also alluded to some of his other classes that included refugee learners. Carolyn Ira was interviewed once concerning the two times she has run the DB program, both in a high school context and Intensive English Centre context.

**Journal**

A researcher’s journal was kept throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Field notes written during observations were included in this journal. Field notes included contextual data, such as what happened prior to or following the video recording. As a data collection method, the field notes were used primarily to record observable information. Further entries were written following observations and interviews and during the process of coding. These journal entries were more reflective, providing a description of my feelings concerning, and personal perspective of, the research experience and assisted in the recognition of my own bias (Wolfinger, 2002).

The dual approach taken in this data collection method, namely the inclusion of both field notes and reflective entries, provided a comparative framework for screening my construction of notes. Becker (1986) has identified that researchers “have already made many choices when [they] sit down to write, but [they] probably don’t know what they are” (p. 17). The reflective journal entries were written as a tool for recognising the subconscious choices present in my observational field notes and approach to data analysis.

**Data Analysis Methods**

The data were evaluated by integrating thematic analysis and grounded theory methods. Both analysis methods involve the process of coding, in which the data are
organised and conceptualised leading to the formation of a theory. This approach is more inductive than content analysis because the codes are not constructed prior to the analysis stage (Ezzy, 2002). This facilitated the study’s emic perspective, which sought to gain insight into the community music programs through the eyes of the participants, in this case, the teachers and learners involved. However, I was aware that the codes, themes and categories generated did not emerge completely from the data, but were significantly informed by the research questions and the literature reviewed. Drawing from grounded theory, the codes generated informed further stages of data collection.

There are three primary stages of coding in grounded theory: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding involves the initial generation of codes. This first set of codes represents the basic level of specific themes drawn from the data. It was necessary to conceptualise codes that reflected all of the data collected. The second stage, axial coding, involved the grouping of codes around major themes. In the third and final stage, selective coding, I identified the core category around which the main themes, and their codes, revolved. Coding was considered complete when ‘saturation’ was achieved (Ezzy, 2002), that is, when the theorised codes, themes and categories adequately supported all the significant data.

**Research Considerations**

The sensitive nature of the refugee and asylum seeker challenges central to the current study calls for serious consideration in both ideological, and methodological, approach. In particular, the following issues were called to the researcher’s attention: cultural etiquette, cultural power relations, and positional power relations.

Language embodies social hierarchies, and the choice of certain terms presented in interviews could breach cultural etiquette (Pernice, 1994). Examples of cultural etiquette issues include felicitous body language, clothing and overall behaviour. I responded to these issues in two ways. Firstly, I spent some time observing the learners before conducting the interviews, paying close attention to behavioural patterns and dress codes. Secondly, I discussed cultural etiquette issues with the teacher. It was assumed that the educator, who works with the learners in a formal
capacity, was in the position to instruct me concerning appropriate behaviour in an interview setting.

Power relations are particularly pertinent to the cross-cultural representation that forms the findings of the study. Given that representation is inherently cultural, I was significantly limited in my attempt to represent the refugees’ and asylum seekers’ emic perspective of the music education experience being studied. Furthermore, the ethnic and cultural differences between the researcher and the participants might also have created an “emancipatory or oppressed discourse” (Heitzman, 2005, p. 157).

Indeed, the nature of the relationship between myself as a researcher, and the participants as the subjects of study, caused power issues. A researcher’s theoretical and methodological authority over a study produces vulnerability within participants (Donnelly, 2002). To counterbalance the effect of these inevitable positional power relations, I designed the methodology to involve extensive reflexivity. The interpretations of the data, as embodied by the codes, themes and categories generated, were presented to the participants following data analysis, providing them with the opportunity to critique any misrepresentation. Nevertheless, both the cultural and positional power relations have been acknowledged as limitations in the documentation of the research.

**Summary of Data Collection and Analysis Methods**

In addition to reflecting on the special considerations of which I, as a researcher, had to be aware in studying refugee and asylum seeker groups, in this chapter I have described my methodological approach to data collection and analysis. The data from multiple sources were analysed and triangulated using within and between method triangulation (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The following chapter presents the findings drawn from these data.
CHAPTER 3  RESEARCH FINDINGS

Addressing Self-Identity

The music learning experiences provided by the case study programs were found to meet the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement and asylum seekers in detention, by addressing the larger issue from which these challenges stem: that of self-identity. Through varying pedagogical approaches, each with a different emphasis, the programs adopted principles that established an atmosphere in which the refugee and asylum seeker learners felt safe to both re-negotiate and express the “overall view [they] have of [themselves]” (Hargreaves, Miell & Macdonald, 2002, p. 8). As an endeavour which involves several aspects of the human social experience, ensemble music was proven to be an appropriate and effective activity through which self-identity could be explored. In this chapter, findings will be presented in relation to how the programs establish a safe atmosphere, offer opportunities for identity formation/achievement, and exemplify different perceptions and uses of music.

Establishing a Safe Atmosphere

It is clear that the establishment of a safe learning environment is of primary significance to refugee and asylum seeker community music programs in Sydney. By fostering an atmosphere in which the learners feel confident to try new things and freely express themselves, teachers help to counterbalance the insecurity and confusion that often surrounds resettlement and detention experiences. It is apparent that learners are helped to feel comfortable through the way they are perceived and treated, as evident in their relationships with teachers and peer learners, as well as the structure and execution of the learning experiences.

Three interlocking methods of establishing a safe atmosphere have emerged from the data. The first method ensures that learners feel both acceptance and belonging, whereas the second impresses upon them that their interests, aptitudes and needs are acknowledged and valued. The final method involves cultivating an environmental equilibrium to offset some of the many fundamental changes that refugees and asylum
seekers experience throughout migration. It is evident that all of the teachers consciously or subconsciously embraced at least one of these methods, and that their approaches were significantly shaped by the various aims of the program.

Acceptance and Belonging

Isolation is one of the fundamental social challenges refugees and asylum seekers experience. When questioned about her motivations for joining the Bosnian Women’s Choir (BWC), choir member Melvina answered:

I came to Australia because the war appeared in our country and I fled with my family and we came to Australia. So at the beginning really I felt like I was isolated from the rest of the world. You know, the first days are different and difficult.

To provide acceptance and a feeling of belonging helps to fulfill the needs produced by this isolation. Past research has shown that musical soundscapes are able to provide a metaphorical place, and embody a community, to which refugees can belong (Stokes, 1994; Diehl, 1998). While this study supports those findings, the results also consider acceptance and belonging outside of the direct music-making experience.

One of the primary ways teachers promoted acceptance and belonging was by adopting a policy of inclusion. The first of a set of rules governing the practices of the BWC states that anybody can become a member. In keeping with this, the organiser and conductor Sonja does not hold auditions for entry into the choir.

Sonja: Anyone can became member of the choir . . . [Ethnicity] doesn’t matter. Everyone, everyone exactly. No barrier.

From its beginnings the choir has included members with ages ranging from 20 to 80. Indeed, the choir’s name is somewhat misleading in suggesting that all of the members are Bosnian. Although there are practical difficulties of language and culture, which may limit the membership, people of all ethnicities are welcome to

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2 As I have endeavoured to transcribe the interviews verbatim, some utterances are grammatically incomplete.
join. While many of the members are actually Bosnian, several other ex-Yugoslav
nationalities are represented in the choir. Even the fact that all of the members are
women is a result of waning interest on the part of the initial male participants in the
choir. ³

A sense of belonging is also promoted by assuming external symbols of unity.
During public performances the BWC follows a colour dress code of black lower
garments, white tops and a red accessory. While the dress code functions as an
observable expression of togetherness, there is also room for individuality. That is, it
is not a strict uniform in that the wearers determine what black ‘bottom’ (skirt, dress
pants, jeans), white top (long sleeved, sleeveless, buttoned, collared), and red
accessory (necklace, earrings, belt, brooch, headband, shoes) to wear. The dress code
therefore represents both the belonging that the members enjoy, and the acceptance of
their individual identities.

Wells and Hoikkala (2004) suggest that integration, which involves a balance
between maintaining one’s traditional culture and relating culturally to the host
society, is the ideal condition for resettlement. The current study supports these
findings, as the community music programs extend the sense of acceptance and
belonging beyond the boundaries of the ensemble community to the wider Australian
society. When asked about what changes the choir members have experienced
through the BWC, conductor Sonja answered:

Involvement with Australian society . . . it is maybe most important
thing what happen. Also involving in Bosnian society, in same time
involving in Australian society.

By singing songs of their original homeland to an appreciative Australian audience, as
well as learning Australian folk and other popular English songs, members of the
BWC promote and practise integration.

³ Although reasons for this were not discussed, it is likely that work commitments and lifestyle
differences account for the men’s lack of participation.
Acceptance and belonging is especially significant to asylum seekers whose incarceration means “intense social exclusion” (Sales, 2002, p. 456). For asylum seekers, the Red Cross Music Education Program (RCMEP) provides an opportunity to interact with people from outside the detention centre. It is suggested that in this program the teachers come to represent the wider Australian society within which the asylum seeker learners can feel accepted.

Interviewer: What are some of the effects of the RCMEP on detainees?
Eva: Some of them come in because it’s a nice social thing and it’s nice to see people from outside the centre. So it’s a bit of a link outside in a way. In a different sense to just visitors, who are family or friends.

The Drumbeat (DB) program endeavours to develop a sense of belonging in relation to overall humanity. This is undertaken through musical activities such as ‘The Heartbeat’, described below:

> Found within all of us this is the most universal rhythm of all. Played together it connects us to each other. Ask one participant to locate their pulse using their fingers on the wrist or neck and once located start to play it. Others join in as the rhythm develops.
> (Drumbeat manual, n.d., p. 5)

Through this activity, learners musically articulate their belonging not only to each other, but to the whole of human society. This notion is particularly relevant to the refugee and asylum seeker persons who feel that they have been subject to impersonal and dehumanising institutional processes. However, while this ensemble experience openly aims to address issues refugee learners may have with being perceived as different or strange, it was not clear from the data whether objectives such as these were actually achieved in the workshops.

It is apparent that refugees and asylum seekers place great significance on feeling accepted and having a sense of belonging. When asked to identify the best thing about being in the BWC, chorister Emira answered:

> Be part of the community. Belonging.
For the participant teachers of this study, cultivating a sense of acceptance and belonging involved developing thoughtful administrative policies and musical activities. Ensemble and performance experiences can be utilised to address isolation on a small, directly relational level while simultaneously attending to learners’ needs to be accepted by the broader Australian society.

Acknowledgement and Value

The results of this study reveal that community music programs provide an opportunity for learners to have their unique interests, aptitudes and needs acknowledged and valued. This is particularly pertinent to refugees and asylum seekers who are often subject to stereotyping (Pickering, 2001; Rajaram, 2002). While related literature discusses the means through which music values entire cultures (Baily, 1994; Grierson, 2006; Kalamida, 2003; Slobin, 1992), this study also focuses on how specific virtues of each individual learner may be appreciated.

Employing a learner-centered teaching approach is a simple and significant way of acknowledging participating refugees’ and asylum seekers’ learning needs. In practice, this translates as adapting any preconditioned teaching methods to suit the ensemble’s interests, abilities and dynamics. When asked about whether she uses additional materials when facilitating, Carolyn Ira discussed her plans for adapting the DB program as set out in the official manual:

As I said, each group is different, each young person is different. So we’ll see. We’ll look at their abilities, the way they understand things, and their ages as well.

The other participating DB teacher, Bob Benice, determines initial learner ability through the use of drumming games. In keeping with the establishment of a safe environment, the dynamic developed through games is one of enjoyment, eliminating any anxiety produced by the idea of being judged by a stranger. Once he has identified the level at which the group appears to be, Bob leads the class in an appropriate rhythm, modifying the pace of the session accordingly. However, Bob also considers the problems behind extensive lesson alteration, and is especially wary of delegating different performing roles to slower learners.
Bob: I just try to keep everyone doing the same thing so that they don’t feel embarrassed that they can’t do it. You can’t wait forever for people to get it, some people will never get it. And I also don’t like to single people out and say, ‘Okay, you do the pulse’, because they’d probably feel pretty bad about themselves.

This approach, which acknowledges the sensitivity learners feel in an unfamiliar group lesson situation, can be contrasted with Sonja’s rigorous conducting methods. Throughout BWC rehearsals it was observed that while Sonja adapted her conducting techniques and style for the needs of the classically untrained choir, unlike Bob she drilled every section of the music until it was absolutely correct. This often meant that she would single out small groups, and on occasion even individuals, who were singing incorrectly.

The difference between Bob and Sonja’s performance expectations can be attributed to their relationship with the ensembles and the purpose of their community music programs. Because Bob’s interaction with his DB groups was temporary and strictly professional, it was important for him to value the learners’ feelings as beginners in a situation that could potentially lower their self esteem. Conversely, at the time this study was conducted, the BWC had been operating under Sonja’s lead for ten years. As the years progressed Sonja gradually raised her standards concerning the BWC’s repertoire and performance level. Given the familiar relationships between the learners and their teacher, and because performance standards had become a priority to all of the BWC members, Sonja valued the choristers by acknowledging their developing professional musical abilities. The contrast between these two approaches demonstrates that while the tenets espoused by these findings can be implemented by all music education practitioners working with refugee and asylum seeker populations, their application should be carefully considered and modified to meet the specific needs of the learners.

Equilibrium

Dylan: They have to sort out where they’re going to live, how they’re going to support themselves, how their children are going to be educated, where are they going to find jobs? There is an enormous amount of dislocation . . . On top of that you bring a lot of griefs with you. The pain from being separated from loved ones, from all you’ve known,
from all you’ve left behind. You might also bring a lot of trauma. You might be a torture survivor. You might have witnessed the most horrific things. That’s what happens when you leave your old society. And then you bring all that baggage when you come to this new one.

The learning environment of the case study programs was used to redress the turbulent nature of the learners’ experiences, some of which are described in the transcript above. By building a music learning environment on foundations of relaxation, stability, enjoyment, purpose and positive energy, teachers fostered an atmospheric equilibrium opposed to some of the negativity dominating the learners’ sphere of existence. In its contrast to the trauma that refugees and asylum seekers undergo, the music learning experience can act as something of a counterbalance, giving learners a place and an opportunity to understand and express what they have gone through and who they are.

Evidently, the experiences of refugee resettlement and asylum seeker detention are unsettling. To offset the anxiety inherent in these circumstances, the program teachers fostered a climate of relaxation through rehearsal and workshop structure. Over four BWC rehearsals it was observed that Sonja consistently maintained an easygoing disposition with choristers who turned up late or left briefly to answer their mobile phones. Similarly, complete participation was not demanded from learners in the RCMEP, who were able to come and go whenever they chose. Although the teachers initially approached the program with formal lesson planning in mind, this changed almost immediately.

Eva: Basically, it’s not that they responded a certain way, it’s just that we felt that it couldn’t happen. It just wasn’t going to work because we could see that some of them wandered in and out of the room. So we wouldn’t have one person for an entire lesson necessarily, which meant that we couldn’t rely on there being a certain structure.

Volunteer RCMEP teachers learned to replace their previous music education training concerning lesson structure with a method reliant upon instinctual interpretation of the class mood, dynamic and interest.

Although all of the teachers encouraged a relaxed atmosphere, the uncertainty common to recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers made it important to provide
learners with some degree of stability. For the members of the BWC, Sonja’s character and continual commitment came to represent a regularity on which they could depend. In associating Sonja’s happy nature with the choir, choristers could retreat to rehearsals and performances knowing something of what to expect. The participant learners communicated great security in the stability that Sonja embodied.

Melvina: And Sonja is at the first place, maybe, the person who is always happy and good . . . And she makes an atmosphere, really good and happy.

Emira: And sometimes we say, ‘I’m so tired, I can’t go today’. But if she doesn’t come, we can’t have rehearsal. But she always come.

Another approach to nurturing a sense of stability in refugee and asylum seeker learners is through specific music-making activities. For example, many DB activities centre on the rhythmic bass note, which is depicted through several metaphorical images symbolising stability. These include “anchor” and “home” (Drumbeat manual, n.d., p. 4). The theme of home and having somewhere to return is of course particularly relevant to refugees and asylum seekers, whose dislocation means that they often lack such a haven. By participating in activities that involved focusing on the steady aspects of music, which were then discussed in terms of life, learners worked towards the identification of new anchors on which they could depend.

A fundamental feature of each of the community music programs was the emphasis on enjoyment. Ensuring that the learners had fun was directly identified by all of the teachers as one of the fundamental aims of the programs. This was achieved through several means. The BWC consciously dedicated the final section of each rehearsal to singing solely for members’ own entertainment. At the end of BWC rehearsals it was observed that Sonja accompanied on the piano while individual choristers chose a song and performed solo, often inspiring others to sing and dance along with them. In addition to serving as an informal music learning experience, these fun segments of the rehearsal functioned as an accurate reflection of the women’s cultural singing traditions, reminding choristers of social gatherings from the past.
Although the RCMEP organiser identified the free structure of the workshops as detrimental to any cohesion in the learners’ musical development, she also identified enjoyment as the program’s major priority.

Sienna: You want people to feel like they’re actually learning, like they’re progressing . . . It doesn’t have to be perfect like music school or whatever, but I think that it’s still important. It is important but it’s not crucial. I think that what is crucial is to have fun things happening and to have people there.

The transcript above illustrates another experiential imbalance born of the refugee and asylum seeker experience; that of losing a sense of direction. Music learning can address this challenge by giving learners something to do, a goal for which to aim, an end for which to strive. In the BWC and DB programs, this aim takes the form of public performances. Conversely, the very presence of the RCMEP gives detainees a simple sense of purpose in its provision of something to do.

Finally, community music programs can re-establish an environmental equilibrium for learners by giving them a situation in which they can release energy positively. DB teacher Carolyn Ira identified her learners’ behavioural issues as stemming from the refugee experience. Because many of her refugee students had never encountered institutional education, they found it difficult to adjust to the Australian high school system and were frustrated with their apparent inadequacies. Such frustrations often translated into violent behaviour. The members of Carolyn’s ensemble had been reported as particularly aggressive students, having participated in several school fights. Based on the evaluation forms completed by the learners’ school teachers, Carolyn surmised that the physical and emotional exertion of drumming provided the students with a positive way of releasing energy.

Carolyn: Even teachers told us that the amount of fights that used to happen, it was reduced. They were more attentive to the class rather than before. They were more focused.

Community music programs involving refugees and asylum seekers of different ages, genders, social classes, educational and ethnic backgrounds commonly aim to establish a learning environment in which their learners feel acceptance, belonging,
acknowledgement and value. Through fostering experiences contrary to some of the learners’ negative circumstances, teachers work towards counterbalancing the turbulence that dominates resettlement and detention. It is suggested that this supportive environment forms the foundation for refugees and asylum seekers to explore and express their ideas of self. I now turn to a discussion of the specific opportunities and resources adopted by learners for identity negotiation.

Accommodating the Renegotiation of Identity

Dylan: If you come as a refugee as distinct from a migrant, it’s a forced movement. In other words, you don’t have time to plan. I was talking the other day to a very highly educated woman who came from Bosnia. She had fifteen minutes to leave home. How do you prepare for where you’re going to end up, when you’ve got fifteen minutes to leave home? Husband came home, said, ‘We’ve got fifteen minutes to get out, or we’re dead.’ That’s how it was.

Throughout the migration process refugees and asylum seekers often develop certain qualities related to their circumstances. In the interview quoted above, community development worker Dylan discussed the survival and resilience characteristic of the small percentage of refugees and asylum seekers who successfully reach Australia. Sadly, refugees and asylum seekers can often be understood solely through the lens of their traumatic experiences. For refugees and asylum seekers themselves, the pursuit of refuge has often been so long and intensely sought, and their treatment as those considered faceless among millions, that the concept of themselves as a refugee or asylum seeker can easily dominate their self-identity. For this reason Askland (2005) calls for support services to provide refugees with the opportunity to experience personal agency in the recreation of meaning and identity. The next section outlines the ways in which community music programs offer these opportunities for learners to renegotiate their identity considering, and external to, their existence as refugees and asylum seekers.

Empowerment

Related literature discusses the various effects of the exile of forced migration (Aroche & Coello, 2006; Askland, 2005; Berry, 1988; Diehl, 1998; Ladhani, 2001).
While significant will power is inherent in surviving the arduous refugee process, the absolute reliance on favourable foreign policies can often leave individuals with a sense of invalidation. Some writers propose that asylum seekers are psychologically imprisoned by the lack of control they have over their lives and futures (Mansouri & Bagdas, 2002). The boundaries situational to forced migration and detention restrict refugee and asylum seeker choice further than what is enjoyed by many Australian individuals. The current study suggests that community music programs can empower learners, offering opportunities to develop personal agency.

In the programs studied, one of the primary ways learners were empowered was through exercising choice. In all of the community music programs, learner participation was voluntary. Other opportunities to choose related to performance repertoire. BWC conductor Sonja simply said:

> We are singing whatever they like.

Teacher Carolyn Ira discussed the therapeutic use of choice learnt at the DB training weekend:

> He gave us a lot of other skills. Sometimes young people might not engage. Okay, so how we can make them engage . . . He gave us some exercises that if young people are not following what we teaching them, then we give them the tools, we give them the role, ‘What you want to do?’

In addition to delegating control over activities and repertoire to the learners, community music programs also facilitated the practice of choice through specific music-making activities. For example, the RCMEP organiser and teachers made extensive use of improvisation activities. While beginners would repeat a simple chord progression in an accessible key, more advanced learners were invited to improvise melodically within that. All players in the ensemble had a self-appointed role and were free to modify their part according to their interpretation of the piece. The improvised piece would go through several sectional and rhythmic changes, its development often coming from the simplest ideas spontaneously performed by beginner learners. The detainee learners were then empowered not only by being
given a rare opportunity to exercise choice, but also through the successful musical outcome of those choices.

Teachers also empowered learners by giving them equal ownership over the community music programs. From its very beginnings the RCMEP was organised around the requests of the learners. The program’s focus on music was in itself a response to the detainees’ objectives. The following is an excerpt from an RCMEP volunteer recruitment letter:

Our research indicated that the majority of people in Villawood IDC would like to take part in music classes. We are now in the process of developing a music education class that would be taking place once per week. (Volunteer recruitment letter, November 2005)

By having this request acknowledged and met, asylum seeker learners were assigned ownership of the content of the recreation program. Similarly, the DB manual provided evaluation forms through which learners were given the opportunity to suggest program improvements. This instrument represents the learners’ ownership of the evaluation process, as evident in the instruction of the participant feedback sheet:

Please answer the following questions, by circling the correct answer, to help us make this a better program for you.
(Drumbeat manual, n.d., p. 21)

In a similar way, Sonja imparted primary responsibility for performance evaluation to the members of the BWC. During the rehearsal following each performance the choir would communally discuss the positives and negatives of the entire performance experience. At the end of my second BWC observation I witnessed one of these discussions. While the choristers were pleased with the performance quality and repertoire, they identified a need for improvement in relation to behaviour. Their request that Sonja assert more authority during performances exemplifies their self-regulation and ownership of professional conduct.

Conversely, individual learners exercised ownership and personal agency through volunteering responsibility concerning various aspects of the ensemble. This took
several forms. Some individuals acted as translators for non-English members of the ensembles. In the RCMEP especially, learners adopted a mediator role to assist teachers with understanding and responding to certain cultural conventions. Eva discussed gender as one of the primary issues that arose in relation to the role of teacher:

I think that some of them are not culturally used to being instructed by women, and most of the volunteers are women so there’s a cultural issue there occasionally. The idea of a potential authority figure being a woman. So in those cases it’s nice to have one of the other detainees who’s a bit more easygoing doing a bit of a go-between, sort of a mediator type of role.

Learners also often took on several organisational roles. In the BWC, specific social outings or road trips were planned by volunteer choristers, while others coordinated the ensemble uniform.

Finally, learners were empowered through recognition of their expertise as culture bearers. The effects of inviting RCMEP learners to share music from their culture with others will be discussed in the section on ‘The Musical Self’ (see pp. 40-41). Similarly, BWC conductor Sonja learnt a significant portion of the choir’s repertoire from individual choristers before arranging and teaching it to the rest of the ensemble.

Emira: Bosnia was central part of ex-Yugoslavia, and we used to sing all songs. From Macedonia, from Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia. So sometimes Sonja didn’t know some Macedonian songs so I teach her.

Maintaining and Developing Identity

While identity has been defined as “the overall view that we have of ourselves” (Hargreaves et. al., 2002, p. 8), it was found that community music programs usually address several specific categories of learners’ identities, offering opportunities to maintain, develop and clarify their understanding of these aspects of themselves. In particular, the following facets of identity were found to be active agents in the music learning experiences: the musical self; the cultural self; and the self as a member of society.
The Musical Self

The musical self constitutes one of the most obvious aspects of learners’ identities that were developed through the community music programs. For some learners this involved significant augmentation of the music category in their identity as they had never particularly thought of themselves as musical. For others, especially RCMEP learners, it meant an opportunity to continue in familiar music pursuits.

Eva: Some of them are already musicians so it gives them an opportunity to keep going with whatever they played in the past, you know?

In the BWC, the learners’ original concept of their musicality was both maintained and expanded. The BWC choristers came from a culture within which singing is integral to most forms of entertainment and all forms of celebration.

Emira: Music is big part of everyday life in Bosnia. My parents sings, my friends . . . and every time when we have a party, as you notice, we sing. It’s hard to express but music help us to express our sadness, our love, our happiness.

The BWC provided a community in which the Bosnian musical self, described above, could remain alive. This integral nature of music in celebration was observed at a BWC social gathering. In the public area of a pizza restaurant, members of the choir and their friends engaged in the performance of several folk songs, often standing up to dance to the music.

Being grounded in folk singing customs presented the learners with difficulties when adapting to choral practices and in particular, the perception of singing as knowledge. While Sonja always tried to incorporate the raw sound of the choristers’ folk timbre, throughout the course of their various rehearsal and performance experiences the BWC members developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of both technical warm-ups and multi-part choral arrangements of well-known Slavic songs. As well as improving their general ensemble skills, including following the conductor, the BWC recently took up the classical tradition of sight-singing. It is suggested that the BWC fostered maintenance of the learners’ musical identities in the repertoire, singing style, and preservation of celebratory singing customs. By adopting classical
choral practices, the choristers’ musical selves acquired a new perception of music as knowledge.

*The Cultural Self*

Stokes (1994) identified music as a vehicle through which ideas of nationality could be negotiated and re-established for those in exile. Similarly, this study suggests that music may be used to explore the cultural self within the wider multicultural frame of Australian society. It was found that learners achieve cultural delineation in community music programs primarily through engaging in, and sharing, musical symbols of their culture. The RCMEP learners were encouraged to “contribute to the workshops by sharing songs and music unique to [their] culture” (RCMEP poster). Eva discussed the significance of this opportunity in the lives of the detainees:

> I think, from what I’ve noticed, is that every culture has music so it’s a familiar universality between everyone. And we allow them to communicate their cultural music to us sometimes and they really love that. So for example the Iraqi guys played some Arabic music to us and they were absolutely so happy to see that someone is interested in the music of their culture. It gives them a sense of place and being.

Similarly, BWC member Miloska identified a passion and preference for performing traditional Bosnian urban songs about love and suffering:

> And especially I love sevdalinka, it’s our traditional songs and music. We perform usually the music for other people and they love it as well.

Notably, some members of the BWC adopted *sevdalinka* as a symbol of their culture, despite having had no familiarity with the music until their migration to Australia.

Selma: My town is never singing *sevdalinka*. Singing other song but all of them I learn from Sonja . . . When I was young, I was singing Italian song, maybe because Italy is very near . . . I am happy because I learn Bosnian song, it touch me very deeply.

As well as maintaining a grasp of their original culture, it is equally important for integration that the refugees negotiate an idea of the cultural self as Australian
Bosnians. Although *I Am Australian*[^4] does have a firm place in the BWC repertoire, determining the place of Australia in their identity is not limited to stereotypical and tokenistic displays of Australian-ness, such as singing patriotic songs or wearing green and gold. It is primarily the ensemble’s immersion in the wider Australian music industry that constitutes the group’s establishment as Australian refugees. In addition to singing at multiple events directed specifically at the Bosnian community, such as Bosnian art exhibition openings and Bosnian community youth program launches, the BWC has been equally active in functions celebrating or publicising multicultural, refugee, healthcare, or senior issues. These broader Australian events provide a setting in which members of the choir can determine the place of being Australian in the construction of their cultural selves.

*The Self as a Member of Society*

The refugee community music groups also provided learners with practical tools for life outside of the music ensemble, establishing their confidence and assertion of personal agency as members of Sydney society. These included the development of English skills as well as general life skills. One of the obvious ways English could be developed in the BWC was through the singing of songs with English lyrics.

Miloska: Actually I always wanted to learn some English music. Some English words, sing English. But I never had chance. And today I have chance I learn a few. Actually not many, but a few and I’m really happy because of that.

Another way English was learned was through informal peer-teaching. Various members of the choir were observed translating personal and official letters for their friends, casually acquainting them with the language by first reading sentences in English prose and then translating them into the listener’s first language. As well as fulfilling the role of translators, these members were often seen to give advice to their friends regarding the content of the official letters, explaining the significance of each

[^4]: *I Am Australian* is a popular patriotic Australian song composed by Bruce Woodley. It is particularly relevant to Australian refugees because the lyrics celebrate the multicultural nature of Australian society, as emphasised in the chorus lines: “We are one, but we are many, and from all the lands on Earth we come, we share a dream and sing with one voice - I am, you are, we are Australian”.

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letter and suggesting appropriate responses. Certainly, Sonja recognised the exchange and development of life skills as some of the major changes in the BWC learners:

Amazing changes in this choir... They are exchanging their experience... In the job, in where to learn things, where to go, where to travel. They learn to travel in the choir, they learn how to go to city. When we first performed, we all used to meet in Auburn where we have rehearsal, and then I came and we go together... wherever we are going, city, Parramatta, I took them to the place... But now, I just give them address, they are organised, they go by themselves, there is no problem.

Evidently, performance and networking opportunities led the BWC learners in gradually developing practical knowledge and skills relevant to life in Sydney.

In addition to learning pragmatic competencies like travelling by public transport, refugee participants were also found to apply some of the attitudes and perspectives adopted in learning music to broader life situations.

Emira: The choir is like teamwork, you learn a lot. You learn to be patient, to improve yourself, to be better and better. It’s never good enough, you can achieve more. It’s surprising how we sounded when we start, and how we sound now. Because we can sing in three different voices... That’s big success. You can put that in your work, your job. Now every time when I do something, I say, ‘Maybe I can do that better. It will take time, but I can do it.’

In the interview quoted above Emira described how her learning experiences in the BWC helped motivate her in other areas of life. Indeed, community music programs proved to be useful not only in the development of practical life skills, but also in the promotion of certain perspectives on life and the self. For example, in the DB program activities were designed to foster specific ideals concerning relationships, peer pressure, effective communication, self-expression, discipline and teamwork. Teacher Bob Benice described how he delivered a life-skill lesson on listening:

We did one today about listening to other people and respecting them. It was ‘Drum like I dance’. So I moved my feet and they drummed what I was dancing, and then I got them to get up and move in relation to my drumming. So they had to listen to what I said, and I had to
listen to what they said, on the drum. It’s good in that way, it does teach a lot of life lessons.

It is suggested that community music programs empower learners in the exploration and maturation of their identity beyond being refugees and asylum seekers. This empowerment occurs through the opportunity to exercise choice, ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, it was found that because of its multifaceted nature, engagement in ensemble music experiences addressed various aspects of learners’ identities, providing opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to develop personal agency in relation to their selves as musicians, culture bearers, and members of society.

**Perceptions of Music and Motivations for Involvement**

Ethnomusicologist John Blacking proposed that ensemble music is a suitable medium through which identity can be explored because it involves both the individual’s emotions and social interaction (Sager, 2006). Building on this idea, the current study suggests that community music programs address the complex province of refugee and asylum seeker identity through the multiple ways that ensemble activities can be perceived and therefore approached. While common themes emerged from the data, participating organisers, teachers, and learners all identified different characteristics of music-making that were particularly significant in meeting the social, emotional, and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement and asylum seekers in detention. The characteristics emphasised were evident in the teachers’ motivations for involvement and pedagogical approaches, as well as the nature of the learners’ engagement in the ensemble activities. What follows is an account of the various perceptions of music that were evident in each individual case study, as used and appreciated by both teachers and learners. The influence of the participants’ perceptions on their motivations for involvement in the programs will also be discussed.
The BWC conductor Sonja identified music as a positive way of connecting people who would otherwise be connected through their negative experiences.

Sonja: The main thing is to put one group of people with similar problem together. To try to connect them by music, not by problem . . . When you make connection with music, it is really very strong connection because music doesn’t have nothing bad in. It is something what is beautiful. And if beauty connects people, then that connection is going that way.

As the interview transcript illustrates, Sonja perceived the beautiful nature of music as something that would promote an equally beautiful relationship between the learners. In particular she emphasised a desire for the choir to embody and reflect the Bosnian community as it existed before the war. To some extent Sonja’s perception of music as an agent of communion proceeded from her extensive experience with choirs, having been involved in them as both a chorister and a conductor from a young age. Notably, her conducting career includes leading the Sarajevo City Choir. However, Sonja’s desire to continue pursuing the art of choral music constituted only one aspect of her motivations for finding, organising and conducting the BWC. Having been a refugee herself, Sonja’s relationship with the refugees in the BWC was always one of personal understanding. Therefore her passion for choral music as a professional conductor, coupled with the kinship she felt for other Bosnian refugees, saw the formation of a choir as an opportunity the address the isolation experienced by war-torn Bosnians. The perception of creating beautiful music as impetus for valuable relationships translated into Sonja’s pedagogical practices concerning the expectation of a high performance standard. Sonja maintained that by working as a united team towards the goal of an emotionally effective performance, the choir created beautiful musical impressions that they would then have a tendency to be lived out in friendship.

While Sonja’s approach to music made a significant impact on the choir’s experiences, the choristers were observed to utilise music towards several other ends. The learners’ perceptions of music and what it offered them were evident in the nature of their engagement during a performance. It was observed that some
choristers were deeply and internally absorbed while singing, often closing their eyes for an entire piece. It is possible that this intense level of personal contemplation signified the perception of music as a link to the past or a vehicle for emotional expression.

Emira: I think Bosnian songs are special in the whole world. Because through singing we communicate. So many times I think, ‘Oh this song, it’s a hundred years old.’ But that’s my father’s song. So I sing that song, I remember my father, or my brother, or my mother, you know? It’s not just singing. It’s remembering people . . . What is interesting about our choir, when I compare with others, we are the same on rehearsal and on the stage. More concentrated on stage, to look [at] Sonja. But all of us sing with pleasure. We sing for us. And because we enjoy, people can feel that. Recently we had performance in Canberra and when we finished one Australian man came and said to us, ‘I didn’t understand any word about what you are singing about, but I can tell that you sing from your heart’. And that’s really how we do.

Others were extremely open during performances, often smiling broadly at the audience the entire time. Perhaps these choristers felt greater significance in sharing their culture, or themselves as musicians, with others, as also indicated by Emira’s preceding statement.

Despite their contrasting responses to music-making, most of the BWC participant learners referred to the social aspect of the choir as their primary reason for joining. When asked why she originally wanted to sing in the choir, Selma answered:

I like seeing all of them. Is important for me to sing but is important for me I will be with my friends and share all of them. Sonja is very good teacher, very good friend. I like be with her.

Selma’s stated reasons were consistent with the chorister’s previous experiences of music as communal, as discussed in the section on ‘The Musical Self’ (see p. 41). Only once they started adopting the understanding of music as knowledge did the choristers’ motivations for involvement in the choir start to include performance ambitions. In a group performance evaluation, the choristers expressed a desire to expand the choir’s membership by audition and increase the complexity of their repertoire.
Sonja: They’re really starting to listening . . . Before they just enjoy company and singing but now they’re really starting to listen to themselves, to others, and they would like better performance.

Red Cross Music Education Program

For those in detention, music was seen first as a recreational activity; something to do. In discussing her opinion on why music was the recreation of choice, RCMEP organiser Sienna identified several significant characteristics of music:

It’s not a very tangible thing, it’s very spiritual in a way. And I think it goes directly to the emotions, that’s why people need it so much . . . I think it’s universal, it’s everywhere. It’s in every culture in all these different forms, and people can communicate through it . . . So I think, especially in that kind of environment, it works because it’s non-verbal. Maybe that’s why people chose music over all the rest because it’s just very, very important in life.

In aiming to achieve whatever the learners wanted to achieve at the time, the RCMEP workshops adapted to the asylum seekers’ current perceptions of music. The various uses of music in the RCMEP were evident in the learners’ feedback, as provided in the program’s six month review:

Learner A: The program is relaxing and enjoyable.
Learner B: The program and the people in the program make you feel welcome.
Learner C: You forget about hard times while taking part in the program
Learner D: You feel like a part of the group and have a sense of community with the other participants.

(Australian Red Cross, 2006, p. 2)

These comments demonstrate perceptions of music as a form of relaxation, fun and distraction, and as a vehicle for cultivating belonging and community. Although the program was designed primarily as a recreational activity, the learners’ references to these attributes of music identify motivating factors for involvement other than enjoyment and the alleviation of boredom.

As professional musicians, awareness of how their skills would be appreciated in the detention centre was the common motivating factor for the RCMEP teachers’
involvement. Both Eva and Hilary described their voluntary occupation in the program as a response to their interest in humanitarianism and social justice, and in particular, to asylum seeker issues witnessed through the media.

Eva: I mean I could just see a lot of the agony these people were going through from media releases and all those sorts of things. And I was always feeling a little bit helpless in that I couldn’t do much to make a difference . . . Well this is a great opportunity to do something. Also, on a selfish level, it’s an experience for me. It’s giving me a different experience of music teaching or conveying music to people.

Like Sonja’s desire to continue practising choral work, Eva also recognised her own personal interest in music education as impetus for involvement.

_Drumbeat_

The two participating DB teachers held contrasting perspectives on the uses of music. Their varying perceptions were evident in their differing pedagogical approaches to the drumming workshops, which ultimately determined the principal benefits their learners would obtain from the programs. The first teacher, Bob Benice, initially spoke about the therapeutic benefits inherent in music-making:

It makes you feel relaxed and music’s good for the soul. It puts you in a very good mood.

Following this perception, Bob emphasised the performance element of the DB program, rarely bringing the life lesson being taught into an explicit ensemble discussion. Instead he relied heavily on the positive emotional effects of music, trusting that life skills such as listening were implicitly fostered through engagement in the activity. Indeed, Bob cited the subordination of developing drumming skills as his reasons for involvement in the program:

The reason I got involved was because I think the downfall of the Drumbeat program is that I think it’s extremely hard for somebody who’s not a drummer to teach drumming . . . If I was a student and my teacher wasn’t really a good drummer then I would wonder what she’s doing teaching drumming.
Because he prioritised the musical element in the drumming workshops, learners in his program had more performance opportunities than those in Carolyn’s. These performances became an ideal medium for students to develop confidence.

Bob:  It’s really great for someone’s self esteem . . . Especially on Harmony Day, that ACL group, first group I did. It was only four of them but after that they were like superstars at ACL. And a lot of the teachers were really impressed by them performing. So they’re well known, and people got up and danced, and there were like one and a half thousand people there, so it was really good for their confidence.

The second teacher, Carolyn Ira, held an almost opposite view to Bob on how refugee drumming workshops should be approached.

Carolyn:   This program it wasn’t just only music. It’s more than music, it’s more than drumming . . . That’s why my main aim is not for them to be drummers or to be performers, yeah they can perform one too, but my aim is not that. My aim is to see their behaviour change, their life change. This is my main aim. And if they can drum on top of that then this is a bonus.

Because Carolyn saw music primarily for its external therapeutic uses she spent much more rehearsal time translating musical activities into conversations about parallel life scenarios. Carolyn’s thorough use of the questions, evaluation sheets and lesson outlines provided in the DB manual resulted in learners involved in Carolyn’s ensembles benefiting primarily in their school behaviour.

Carolyn:   Drumming assisted them in that . . . their behaviour it’s less aggressive now, there is less fights in the school.

Notably, Bob’s DB students were also reported to have improved behaviour both in school and the home. Therefore while the principal accomplishments of the community music program were significantly shaped by the teachers’ motivations for involvement, perceptions of music and pedagogical approaches, engagement in ensemble drumming seemed to produce the common outcome of improved behaviour.

There is no right or wrong way to perceive music and its most significant uses in these settings. The current study found that music was viewed and appreciated in
multiple ways by organisers, teachers and learners within the same community music programs. While approaches to teaching music differed according to the individual teacher’s perspective on music, learners were able to relate to several aspects of the ensemble music-making experience simultaneously, addressing the aspects of identity negotiation that they found most relevant to them personally.

Conclusion

The various approaches to using music learning experiences to meet the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced in resettlement and detention indicate that self-identity is a key issue for both refugees and asylum seekers. The data also raised the importance of establishing a safe atmosphere and empowerment in accommodating the maintenance and development of learners’ identities. Furthermore, several relevant perceptions and uses of ensemble music substantiated the activity as beneficial to refugee and asylum seeker learners.

The final chapter discusses the implications of these results for music education involving refugee and asylum seeker populations. It also presents specific principles that practitioners may adapt and apply to their own music teaching contexts.
CHAPTER 4  CONCLUSION

Study Overview

While many social, emotional and cultural challenges could be considered general human experiences, awareness of the heightened complexity of such challenges in the aftermath of trauma and forced migration was a considerable motivator for this study. Furthermore, the need to identify and publish successful existing methods of addressing resettlement and detention challenges was recognised. Awareness of the therapeutic potential of music, and in particular the existence of refugee and asylum seeker community music programs, directed the focus of the study. The following questions were used as a framework for exploring these matters:

1) What are the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement and asylum seekers in detention?
2) Why do music teachers, refugees and asylum seekers become involved in community music learning programs?
3) How are music learning experiences used to meet the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees during resettlement and asylum seekers in detention?

Existing methods of addressing challenges during resettlement and detention were explored through a qualitative multi-case study of three community music programs in Sydney. These were the Bosnian Women’s Choir (BWC), the Red Cross Music Education Program (RCMEP) and Drumbeat workshops (DB). The case studies were examined both intrinsically, as unique settings of interest, and instrumentally, focusing on particular issues namely, addressing resettlement and detention challenges with the intention of “redrawing generalisation” (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Identifying the Challenges

Although the learners’ interview questions did not directly inquire about the specific challenges they experienced (see Appendix D), the data collected were rich in detail and included various references to some of the arduous circumstances confronting
refugees and asylum seekers. The nature and type of these challenges can be
categorised according to Aroche and Coello’s (2006) suprasystem. Particularly
relevant to refugee resettlement and asylum seeker detention are the difficulties
inherent in exile, migration and settlement and the normal life cycle. Both teachers
and learners reported the significant isolation born of forced migration. This
challenge emerged especially from the data related to the BWC, whose conductor and
choristers all experienced seclusion as a consequence of leaving familiar people,
places and cultural practices. Certainly for the RCMEP learners, seclusion was
perpetuated in the very nature of their detention. Associated with this was another
pertinent issue for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers: becoming acquainted
with various aspects of the new society. For members of the BWC, this included
using the NSW public transport system and generally finding their own way around.
For many high school-aged DB learners, institutional education was a foreign
experience and in its highly structured and competitive nature very overwhelming.
Similarly, adapting to culturally accepted practices such as being taught by a female
posed integration challenges for some RCMEP and DB learners.

Challenges that emerged as common to learners of all the case studies included that of
communication. Two particular difficulties were identified as complicating effective
communication: language and opportunity. While developing an adequate command
of the English language was reported as one of the challenges in resettlement, both
refugee and asylum seeker learners expressed a deeper desire to share themselves,
their experiences and their culture with others.

Finally, throughout forced migration, settlement and detention, refugees and asylum
seekers are subject to institutional processes over which they have little or no control.
It was found that one of the primary challenges learners needed to meet was regaining
a sense of autonomy or personal agency within their lives. This was especially the
case with the asylum seeker learners, whose entire lifestyles were planned for them
according to the policies of their detention.
Involvement in Community Music Programs

Participants reported varying motivations for becoming involved in the community music programs. While some of the teachers emphasised the opportunity to maintain and develop their experience as music practitioners, almost all of them determined that the benefits to the learners were the primary goal of their facilitation. Some teachers identified specific challenges that they had hoped to help the learners to meet, namely isolation, boredom, behavioural problems and developing an overall sense of well-being. Others referred more generally to their program as the ideal mechanism to use their musical knowledge and experience for the good of others, a chance to contribute to society.

Similar to their teaching counterparts, learners provided diverse motivations for involvement in the community music programs. Data from the four BWC learner interviews indicated that interest in music was initially only a secondary motivating factor. The choristers were driven more strongly by the social aspect of the choir, perceiving rehearsals primarily as a gathering of friends. However, over the choir’s ten year history there has been a shift in the choristers’ priorities, which now focus more on professional music development and the achievement of more difficult performance goals. While the RCMEP was organised as a means of introducing detainees’ recreational activity of choice, learners became involved for much more than the alleviation of boredom. The data collected indicated that learners’ motivations for involvement ranged from the building sense of community and the promotion of relaxation to the opportunity to share their culture and maintain their competence as practising musicians.

Addressing the Challenges

Each learner, in his or her own way, used music as a means for addressing social, emotional and cultural challenges. Members of the BWC regularly sang and danced in informal learning situations, both at the conclusion of rehearsals and during strictly social gatherings, as a way of maintaining their native culture. The friendly environment of the BWC gatherings, whether rehearsals, performances or social occasions, fostered a networking community in which members would support each
other in both music and non-music related challenges. Some members associated repertoire with events and people from the past, and in performing these songs engaged in the act of remembering. One interviewee identified the choir’s growing musical ability as a testament to the fruits of perseverance and effort. In this way her experiences with music became a source of confidence she would draw on in other areas of life.

DB was seen to address some of the high school learners’ perceived inadequacies in the education system by developing confidence and personal agency. By exercising choice in certain drumming activities and participating in successful performances, learners were reminded of their competency and potential to be achieving students. Consequently, the programs were seen to help improve the aggressive behaviours born of the frustrations common to refugee high school students who may feel that they are failing learners.

Because the RCMEP offered asylum seeker learners the opportunity to exercise control over repertoire, activities and the overall structure of the workshops, the program and musical experiences embodied a place where the detainees were autonomous. Not only did the program accommodate learners’ personal agency, but the musical focus provided an ideal activity for the exploration and expression of cultural heritage. Learners were empowered as experts and culture bearers whenever they were invited to share a piece of music with the rest of the class.

**The Significance of Self-Identity**

Hargreaves et. al. (2002) determine the social constructivist theory of identity as that in which our understanding of ourselves is determined by social experience. Given the homelessness and uprootedness inherent in forced migration, self-identity is a key issue for all refugees and asylum seekers. This is evident in that self-identity emerged as a common theme among the various challenges described. All of the challenges represented hindrances to the maintenance, exploration and expression of the learners’ identities. In response to the social seclusion born of refugee migration, Askland (2005) calls for opportunities to negotiate between individualism and collectivism; the two discourses of socialisation. Certainly John Blacking attributed music’s role as an
agent of relative identity to its nature as both social and personal (Sager, 2006). This study supports that theory, as the community music programs addressed the various social, emotional and cultural challenges through diverse pedagogical practices, but all significantly within the context of an ensemble. Both teachers and learners made considerable references to the social aspects of the community music programs, which were facilitated with the distinct group dynamic in mind.

**Implications for Practice**

It was found that the studied music experiences helped the learner participants in meeting several resettlement and detention challenges, proving the implementation of these types of community music programs as generally beneficial. Therefore, this study justifies the involvement of refugees and asylum seekers in community music programs and calls for the provision of these experiences for those in resettlement and detention. The notion is congruent with literature on the generalised social, emotional and cultural value of music (Bruner, 1990; Crozier, 1997; Davidson, Howe & Sloboda, 1997; Sager, 2006; Skyllstad, 1997). Distinct pedagogical principles common to all of the programs emerged from the data. It is suggested that the adoption of these ideas would be favourable to all ensemble music situations with refugee and asylum seeker learners, although the application of each principle should be modified for each unique group of learners.

**Flexibility and Responsiveness**

Fostering flexibility in both teaching methods and workshop structure was a significant factor in the effectiveness of the community music programs. The formally trained BWC conductor responded appropriately to her amateur choir, adapting the repertoire, difficulty level and her conducting manner and technique for the comprehension and interest of the choristers. Similarly, the volunteer RCMEP teachers, having come from a formal music education background, substituted their habitual lesson plan formats for a more suitable free-form workshop structure. Therefore this study espouses individualising each community music program to meet both the needs of the particular learners and the abilities of the teachers.
**Personal Agency and Ownership**

In all of the programs, learners had the opportunity to exercise choice and control. This occurred in a variety of ways, ranging from the simple act of volunteering to participate in the program to engaging in significantly decision-based music activities like improvisation. RCMEP learners were in control of what was being learned and the pace of the lesson, therefore exerting ownership over their own learning. Similarly, DB learners collectively chose the final performance repertoire, and the BWC contributed repertoire suggestions and evaluated each performance as a group. Refugee and asylum seeker music program teachers are encouraged to include practices from which learners will experience personal agency.

**Life Skill Development**

Although music constituted the content focus for the BWC and RCMEP programs, the experiences shared by the ensembles either explicitly or implicitly involved the promotion of certain life skills. Through networking, BWC members became proficient commuters and developed their understanding of English and the Australian institutions with which they came into personal contact. In contrast, DB was designed with life skill development in mind, and directly addressed communication, behavioural and self-esteem issues. This is not a recommendation for music facilitators to practise therapy or life skill sessions, but rather to be aware of their ensemble as an avenue for learners to address practical challenges related to life outside of the program.

**Community Building**

The social aspect of the music programs was central not only to their effectiveness in addressing challenges, but also to the learners’ enjoyment in participating. Especially in the BWC and RCMEP, the fostered sense of community comprised one of the primary motivating factors cited by learners. The perception of the ensemble not only as a group of individuals interested in music, but as those assembled to achieve a common performance goal, proved a powerful approach to community building similar to Slobin’s (1992) “banding” process. All of the programs also included
elements of “bonding” (Slobin, 1992) in which music makers chose to experience music together because it produced a strong connection between peers. In trying to establish practices beneficial to refugee and asylum seeker learners, it would be easy to forget simple solutions. Like all social experiences, ensemble music making can be encouraged for its provision of an activity in which one can enjoy the company of others.

**Teacher Attributes**

The three community music programs were facilitated by teachers of varying backgrounds. In the RCMEP, the only necessary qualifications for volunteer teachers were musical. Having been organised primarily as a recreational program, RCMEP volunteers’ roles were only to teach music. Similarly, DB teacher Bob Benice’s suitability for the role was based exclusively on his experiences in running drum workshops and teaching non-English speakers. The other participating DB teacher Carolyn Ira became involved in the program through her work as a project officer for the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). Although she had no formal music training, she was particularly competent in addressing refugee challenges because of her own background as a refugee migrant. Certainly conductor Sonja Holza’s ethnicity as a Bosnian, history as a refugee and shared experiences with her choristers fed into her commendable success with the BWC.

Despite their differences, all of the teachers described above have accomplished many things in the process of facilitating their community music programs. Therefore this is not a determination of any particular type of person as most suitable for the role of teaching refugees and asylum seekers music. Instead it is a call for facilitators to be aware of the impact on the direction and dynamic of the program depending on the teacher’s knowledge of the refugee experience, status as a musician and understanding of the cultural conventions and practices of the learners. In considering teachers, organisers are encouraged to keep the purpose of the program and the interests and desires of the learners firmly in mind.
Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

This study was designed in order to gain insight into how community music programs can benefit refugees and asylum seekers. While this thesis has addressed several matters, it is by no means an exhaustive study of the uses of music during a refugee’s resettlement or asylum seeker’s detention. Through more access to the learning environment, a complementary study with a greater emphasis on the learners’ perspectives is suggested. While this study focused on the function of ensemble experiences in identity negotiation, other studies might consider the benefits of engaging in solo music pursuits during resettlement and detention. Rather than addressing music education, another approach might investigate ways in which refugee and asylum seeker professional musicians utilise their skills post-migration. An inquiry into how music is used as a coping mechanism throughout the process of forced migration would provide insight into the benefits of musical engagement prior to the resettlement or detention stage. Other studies might examine how refugees and asylum seekers renegotiate and represent musical symbols of their culture in their new society. Finally, a study directly related to the field of music education could consider refugee students in the context of a high school music classroom.

Music plays a unique role in addressing the challenges that still exist for many refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. As an art form it can engage the music-maker in both focussing on the self while simultaneously embracing a sense of belonging and community. Sonja’s lyrical translation of the song *Jesenje Lišće* illustrates the power of music to reflect on both the past and the present, something which is particularly relevant to those who have experienced forced migration:

```
Autumn leaves on the ground is lying,
And it reminds me of my own.
That is what I’m thinking about,
That is what I’m suffering for.
But now it is past, all is past,
And now it is the end.
```
REFERENCES


Topics
The social, emotional and cultural challenges of refugees during resettlement

Interview introduction
Thank you

Make sure participant is aware of his/her rights within the study
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Opportunity to withdraw at any time
- Opportunity to destroy data
- Option to terminate interview at any time

Ask for permission to record the interview
- Record their consent for taping

Interview prompts
Basic information to warm up
- Name
- Position

How long have you been working with refugees?

What exactly is the nature of your involvement with refugees?

Could you explain the main social, emotional and cultural challenges facing the refugees during the resettlement stage of exile?
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TWO: FOR RESEARCHER USE ONLY

Guide for semi-structured interview with teachers

Topics
The social, emotional and cultural challenges of refugees during resettlement
The uses of music education to face these challenges

Interview introduction
Thank you

Make sure participant is aware of his/her rights within the study
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Opportunity to withdraw at any time
- Opportunity to destroy data
- Option to terminate interview at any time

Ask for permission to record the interview
- Record their consent for taping

Interview prompts
Basic information to warm up
- Name
- Position

How long have you been working with name of refugee community music group?

Why did you initially get involved with name of refugee community music group?

What are the overall aims of name of refugee community music group?

In what ways have you seen name of refugee community music group reaching these aims?

Further prompts will be generated from earlier stages of data collection (ie. document analysis).
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 3

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL THREE: FOR RESEARCHER USE ONLY
Guide for semi-structured interview with teachers

Topics
The social, emotional and cultural challenges of refugees during resettlement
The uses of music education to face these challenges

Interview introduction
Thank you

Make sure participant is aware of his/her rights within the study
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Opportunity to withdraw at any time
- Opportunity to destroy data
- Option to terminate interview at any time

Ask for permission to record the interview
- Record their consent for taping

Interview prompts
What is the group learning at the moment?

Who chooses the pieces/songs? Why were these pieces/songs chosen?

Can you tell me something about the way you teach the group music?
- Specific music education practices
- Where they were instructed to teach like this
- Why they teach like this

Was the lesson observed characteristic of the learning experiences that usually occur during rehearsal? How was it similar/different?

Further prompts for this interview will be informed by earlier stages of data collection (ie. document analysis and observation).
Topics
The social, emotional and cultural challenges of refugees during resettlement
The uses of music education to face these challenges

Interview introduction
Thank you
Make sure participant is aware of his/her rights within the study
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Opportunity to withdraw at any time
- Opportunity to destroy data
- Option to terminate interview at any time

Ask for permission to record the interview
- Record their consent for taping

Interview prompts
Did you have fun during this lesson? Why/why not? What was the most fun thing about this lesson?

Do you like the song/piece you are learning? Why/why not?

Is it hard to learn music in name of community refugee music program? What is hard/easy about it?

Why did you originally join name of community refugee music program?

What do you like most about name of community refugee music program?

Do you come to name of community refugee music program just for the music?

Further prompts for this interview will be informed by earlier stages of data collection (ie. document analysis, observation and interview with educator).
6 February 2007

Mr James M Renwick
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Building C41
The University of Sydney

Dear Mr Renwick

Thank you for your correspondence dated 14 January 2007 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). After considering the additional information, the Executive Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2007 approved your protocol entitled “A multi-case study of the ways in which music education is used to meet the social, emotional and cultural challenges experienced by refugees”

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.: 02-2007/8799
Approval Period: February 2007 to February 2008
Authorised Personnel: Mr J Renwick
Ms S Sebastian

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-June 1999 under Section 2.6.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed.

Special Conditions of Approval

- Please provide a copy of the approval letter from the Catholic Education office, when available.
- Please provide a copy of the formal permission from organisation authorities i.e. community group co-ordinators, support service providers when available.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events are to be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
(2) All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project are to be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(3) The HREC must be notified of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:

- If there are any changes to investigators (e.g. Leaving the University)
- Any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.

(4) All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

(5) The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.

(6) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Associate Professor J D Watson
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

cc: Ms Samantha Sebastian

Encl:
Participant Information Statement
Parental (Or Guardian) Consent Form
Dialogue Statement
This study investigates the effectiveness of the music education components of refugee and asylum seeker community music programs in relation to the social, emotional and cultural development of its members. The study is being conducted by student researcher Samantha Sebastian. It will form the basis for the degree of a B. Music Education (Honours) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, under the supervision of Dr Kathryn Marsh, Chair of Music Education (contact number 9351 1333).

The study involves the observation of learning experiences (ie. rehearsals and performances) within the context of refugee community music programs. Three observations will be conducted between February 2007 and June 2007. If permitted, these observations will be video recorded. A migrant resource worker or refugee counsellor will be interviewed to help identify some of the social, emotional and cultural challenges during resettlement. The teachers, learners and (if applicable) translators will also be interviewed. The learners will be interviewed in a focus group context, and will involve a small number of volunteer participants. If necessary, translators will be provided for these interviews. If permitted, these interviews will be audio recorded.

Observations will take place at the convenience of the participants (ie. normal rehearsal time). The group interviews will run between half an hour to an hour. The time these interviews will be conducted will be arranged with interviewees. Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent. Therefore, you are guaranteed the right to withdraw from the research at anytime, without having to give a reason and without consequences. Also, you have the option of having any data already collected destroyed, should you withdraw from the study.
The findings of the study will be published in an honours thesis. However, any personal details gathered in the course of the research will be confidential. Transcriptions of interviews and videos of observations will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s personal study room. These will be kept for a minimum of seven years at the conclusion of the study, after which the data will be securely destroyed. In the publication of the findings, pseudonyms will be created for both the refugee community group and volunteer interviewees. No identifying information will be disclosed.

It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the development and improvement of music education practices used with refugees and asylum seekers in community programs and school contexts. You will be permitted to discuss the study, and your involvement, with other people. When you have read this information, Samantha Sebastian will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact her on 0425 331 595 or sseb0564@usyd.edu.au

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

Postal Address Telephone: +61 2 9351 2222
Building C41
The University of Sydney NSW 2006 http://www.music.usyd.edu.au
I am interested in the music learning of refugees in community music programs like name the relevant program. I am very interested to see how learning music helps you in your new life in Australia.

I would like to watch how you learn music during your *ie. rehearsals*. If you give your permission, I will record you learning the music with a video. If you agree to talk to me, I would like to talk to you about this. When you let me know that you would like to talk about this, I will record your permission. I will have a conversation with a group of you. This conversation will be recorded. If it is needed, we will get a translator to help us during our talk. You can stop talking to me when you want to.

If you would like one, I will give you a copy of the *ie. rehearsal* videos, and I will keep a copy. If you would like to know more, you can ask me or name of educator about what I am doing.
APPENDIX H	PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The University of Sydney
SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ……………………………………………………………………………………………………… , give consent to my participation in the research project –

MUSIC EDUCATION WITH REFUGEES

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Name: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).